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The message of the cross has a brighter side – a positive one. It is this, that the cross is not an end in itself. It is the pathway to the resurrection life. There is a joy set before all who are willing to accept the working of the cross (Hebrews 12:2). The corn of wheat that falls into the ground and dies, does not remain there forever; it springs forth into a triumphant fruitfulness. The believer who accepts the pathway of the cross, no matter how much he may be misunderstood by others, will ultimately be vindicated by God. Fruitfulness comes through death to Self. Some of this fruit we may see even while on earth, but all of it will be seen only at the judgment seat of Christ, when the Lord will reward His faithful ones.

The way of the cross is the only way of victory. That is why Satan tried his best to prevent Jesus from going that way. That is also why Satan is constantly trying to prevent men and women from accepting that way for their lives. Peter sought, in well-meant love, to prevent Jesus from going through the suffering of the cross, but Jesus instantly recognized the voice of Satan there (Matthew 16:21-23). Our friends and relatives may give us similar advice too, when our pathway is hard. But remember that the voices we hear, whether inside our hearts or from others, that would divert us from the way of the cross are always the whisperings of the Devil. Do we always recognize them as such?

In the book of Revelation, we see the Lord Jesus as the slain Lamb. There we have heaven's view of Calvary. In the eyes of man, Calvary was a defeat. We have no account of any unbeliever seeing Jesus after His resurrection, and Calvary is therefore still viewed as a defeat by man. But in heaven's eyes, Calvary was the greatest victory ever won on earth. On earth they crucified the Lamb of God, but in heaven they worship Him. When, in following Jesus, you surrender your rights, men on earth may say that you have no backbone, but in heaven there will be rejoicing over a child of God who has taken a position of victory. – They overcame him (Satan) – they loved not their lives unto the death (of the cross) – Therefore, rejoice ye heavens! (Revelation 12:11, 12).

In Psalm 124:7, we have the Christian life pictured in the symbol of a bird that has escaped from a snare. A bird soaring in the sky is a perfect picture of the glorious liberty that God wants all His children to experience. Mountains and rivers can hinder the onward course of earthbound creatures, but not of a bird. It soars high over them all. God created man in order that he might be like that bird, perfectly free, having dominion over everything and subduing everything under him (Genesis 1:28). But man's disobedience has made him like a bird trapped in a snare, unable to fly.

Only the cross can break that snare and set us free. There is no other way. Accept death to this world and to your own self, and you will therein die to the Devil's power as well. His hold upon you will be broken, and nothing can then prevent you from soaring upwards like that bird. That is true liberty – and that is what the Holy Spirit seeks to bring in our lives (2 Corinthians 3:17). But the way of the cross is the only pathway to that liberty.

In Mark 4:17 Jesus speaks of such Christians as those who do not have any root. Their Christianity was superficial. When God sought to strengthen its roots by giving them opportunities to accept the cross in their lives, they always avoided it. There is only one pathway that can lead a man into the fullness of life that there is in Christ. We can walk along other paths if we like, but we shall never fulfil God's purpose along any other road. All our gifts and talents will only be wasted if we avoid the pathway of the cross in our lives. We can accept it or reject it – the choice is entirely ours.

Sadhu Sundar Singh used to say that, when we reach heaven, there will be no second chance to bear the cross for Jesus' sake. We may reject it now, but we shall have no opportunity in eternity to follow in the blood-stained path that Jesus walked in. When we meet our blessed Lord, He will yet have nail prints in His hands and feet. What will it be then to look back over our own earthly lives and find that we carefully avoided the cross at every step? God grant, rather, that at every step we may yield to it, and thus have no regrets in that day.