

# Foreword

In this Year of God's Love, nothing is more central than to focus on Christ who is the personification of God's love. In this second devotional material, we examine the Cross and God's intentions.

Our faith is a response to God's initiatives. We love only because He first loved us. We have faith for salvation only because God has given us grace in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. *Faith is the appropriation of what God has already provided for us in Christ.* It is therefore needful that we *know, believe and apply* what Jesus has been through for us at the Cross. Everything that we need is accomplished by Jesus in His suffering, death, burial, resurrection and ascension. No matter how big our problems may be at this very moment, God is not going to send Jesus down again and go to the Cross for us all over again. Everything accomplished by Jesus is more than enough for meeting our every need. When we look at what Christ has done, our problems become small in comparison.

As you go through this series of devotional material, please look to Jesus and let a heart of appreciation arise for the love that God and Jesus had extended to you personally. Your needs will be met.

*God's love came down and everything changed!*

This year, you too can be changed wonderfully and be one fulfilled person in the love of Christ.

God bless you,

Jeremiah Yap  
Group Senior Pastor  
New Life Restoration Centre

## *Day One – An Instrument of Punishment*

Today's Scripture: *Luke 23:13-38*

Crucifixion was designed by the Romans to produce the maximum amount of pain over the longest period of torture that man can bear. Jesus was whipped, spat upon, hammered onto the cross and displayed in nakedness and humiliation for all to jeer at. So brutal and cruel was it that only the worst class of criminals was executed this way.

An author wrote of crucifixion with graphic realism when she penned these words:

A crucified slave beside the Roman road,  
Screamed until his voice died,  
And then hung- a filthy, festering clot of flies,  
Sometimes for days.

All these should bear on our hearts the reality of what it meant for our Lord to suffer and die for our sins. Sin is awful and it demands the worst form of punishment. This punishment we deserve from the consequence of our sins was laid upon Jesus. The sentence of capital punishment which the law imposed on a sinner has been carried out, but carried out in the body of Christ on the cross. The curse which included eternal death that is upon all sinners was taken by our Lord and dealt with on the cross.

Thus, the sinner who would be condemned to death by the law can now be alive to God. Free from the curse, he is open to the blessing of God that comes through Christ. Christ has borne our shame and has put to death the demands of the law over us. Had he not died, I would never have been saved. The bad happened to Him that the good might happen to me. Our gratitude should know no bounds.

It is because of what Christ did on the cross that the power of God is now available to each and every one of us. Because Jesus took the curse in our stead when He hung on the cross, the curse that was upon us was removed and we are now blessed by the Almighty God. There is an exchange of all that is bad for all that is good. Instead of suffering the consequences of our sin, we are now candidates of blessings from God's glorious riches in heaven. Instead of being condemned to hell we are now saved by the cross for abundant and eternal life. The power of sin is broken from our lives and we are no longer slaves to sin. We begin a new life (2 Cor. 5:17).

## *My Journal*

Which aspect of Jesus' death on the cross affected you most?

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What would be your response knowing that Jesus took the punishment in your stead?

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Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for taking my place on that cross. The more I dwelt on the shocking nature of crucifixion the more I appreciated what You did for me. Help me never to take salvation for granted. It cost me nothing but You everything. Thank you my Savior. Amen.

## *Day Two – An Instrument of Love*

Today's Scripture: *Romans 8:35-39*

Have you ever considered what made Jesus leave heaven to come to earth to endure the pain of being crucified on the cross? It is His love for you and me. It is difficult to comprehend this fact because we have never experienced such love. Love, it has been said, is the greatest force in the world. That being so, then Calvary, the hill on which Jesus was crucified, is the greatest exhibition of that force which has touched men and women all over the world. I hope that each of us will take the time this Easter to reflect on the love of God for us.

When the Bible says 'God is love' (1 John 4:16), it is saying that love is the power behind everything He does for you and me. God's love is uninfluenced and unconditional. We cannot do anything to make Him love us more. His love for us does not increase because we read more of the Bible or give more to the church. We will reap the rewards for those acts accordingly but His perfect love for us will never be diminished and never be taken away from us. This knowledge will make us secure in life and we must not doubt His love for us even when we go through difficult circumstances in life.

God's love was behind an apparent tragedy in my life when as a student, I failed one paper in my A-levels examinations. As a result, I was unable to enter into one of the local universities and applied for one of the universities in Australia. It was there that I found the love of my life and Grace became my wife after our graduation. It was there that I met Jeremiah, Lawrence, Chin Ban and Patrick and we are now pastoring the New Life churches together. This is what the love of God does for us. He works everything, including apparent failures and unreasonable tragedies, out for good.

Despite being stoned, persecuted and whipped, the Apostle Paul is so convinced of God's love for us that he boldly asked, "Can anything separate us from Christ's love?" (Rom 8:35). Let us celebrate this Easter with this confidence that no matter what we are experiencing in life, we can be so secure and we can celebrate life because we are loved by the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

## *My Journal*

God's love is behind every life's circumstance. Reflect on a 'failure' in your life that turned good at the end. How does it make you feel to know that God is in control of your life?

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Have you experienced or seen any examples of sacrificial love? What do you think it would take for someone who is without fault to sacrifice and die on behalf of others?

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Prayer: Heavenly Father, as I gaze on Your Son dying on a cross for me I see love and only love. Love for everybody, everywhere. But best of all - love for me. I am so deeply, deeply thankful. Amen.

## ***Day Three – An Instrument of Forgiveness and Reconciliation***

Today's Scripture: *Colossians 2:13-14*

Jesus final cry on the cross was 'tetelestai' which means 'It is finished'. This word was used in ancient times to indicate that an account had been paid in full. Whenever a debtor presented a bill for payment, it was customary, after the full amount of money had been handed over, for the creditor to write across the bill – 'tetelestai' - Paid in Full. This word is in the perfect tense in the Greek, and so it means, "it has been and will for ever remain finished".

This Easter, let the wonder of it take a fresh hold upon you that our Lord has written over the bill of debt that sin had piled up against us- 'tetelestai' – PAID IN FULL. This means that full payment for our sins has been paid and that God has forgiven us completely and forever.

Through this act of sacrifice, every hindrance that separates us from God is removed and at Calvary, our reconciliation with our Heavenly Father is restored. We are therefore exhorted to be bold in coming before God (Heb. 4:16).

Following what Christ did on the cross, God forgave our sins and He expects us to forgive others of their sins towards us. In Matthew chapter 18, we read how God was angry with a man who did not forgive another man of his debt although the former was forgiven of a bigger debt than the latter. Nothing that our brother or sister has done against us is greater than our sin which condemned us to eternal fire. If God can forgive our sin, we must be more than ready to forgive others their sin against us.

Mat 18:32-35 Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. "That's what My heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart."

## *My Journal*

How would you feel if someone were to settle your debt in full for you? Considering that Jesus paid your debt of sin in full, how does that make you feel?

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What should be your response towards others with regards to what has been accomplished on the cross for you? Is there anyone whom the Lord would want you to forgive even as He has forgiven you of your sins?

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Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am forever grateful for Your Son who paid my debt of sin in full. Help me to forgive others in the same manner You have forgiven me. Amen.

## ***Day Four – An Instrument of Healing***

Today's Scripture: *Isaiah 53:5*

Dr. Felix Ruh, a Jewish doctor in Paris, had watched as his granddaughter died of “black diphtheria” and vowed that he would find a cure for this dreaded disease.

The idea of combating germs was still just a theory when Dr. Ruh invited the area's scientists to his farm to watch as he swabbed twenty horses' nostril, tongue, and throat with the germs that he had cultured with “black diphtheria.” One by one the horses began to die until there was only one horse left. The scientists all gave up and left. But Dr Ruh remained with his assistant who watched the horse throughout the night. When the fever of the horse began to break, he woke Dr. Ruh. The doctor watched as the horse fought off the germs and by the next day was standing and eating as if nothing had ever been wrong.

At this, Dr. Ruh killed the horse and extracted all of the blood from this animal that had overcome this disease. He rushed to the municipal hospital. He forced his way past the superintendent and the guards and went into the ward where three hundred babies lay, segregated to die from “black diphtheria.” With the blood of the horse, they forcibly inoculated every one of the babies. All but three lived and recovered completely. They were saved by the blood of an overcomer.

It is the power of the Blood of Jesus who overcame sin that broke the bondage of sin from our lives. His blood cleansed us from every stain caused by sin. He does not just cleanse us and leave us in the grips of Satan but by the power of the Blood of Christ, we also experienced freedom from the power of sin (Gal. 5:1). The Blood of Christ has broken the power of the devil and set us free from the power of sin, the power of death and the power of curses. The Bible says we are now more than conquerors through Jesus who conquered sin and overcame death. We are no longer under the dominion of the evil one but under the jurisdiction of God's kingdom; of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Col. 1:13).

Jesus overcame all curses including the curse of sicknesses and diseases and we were healed by the stripes and the punishment laid on Him.

## *My Journal*

How have you encountered the power of God in your life, e.g. with regards to addiction, habit, sickness, bondage etc?

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What are some keys in your walk with God that have helped you to overcome sin or challenges in your life?

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Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for providing Jesus so that I can experience freedom from the power of sin, death and curses. Help me each day to reign in life as an overcomer by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## ***Day Five – An Instrument of Righteousness***

Today's Scripture: *1 Corinthians 1:18; Colossians 2:14-15*

The most powerful weapon that the devil has against us is the 'handwriting of requirements' or the law because every one of us have fallen short of fulfilling it. We often bow our heads in shame and condemnation when the devil reminds us that we have fallen short of God's standards. Soon, we would live powerless Christian lives because we begin to feel that we have failed God and that God is no longer pleased with us nor will use us. The law was never given to make us righteous but to help us realize that we can never please God by the law. The only way that we can be righteous before God is to receive Jesus, who is our righteousness. Jesus fulfilled completely the righteous requirements of the law and when we have Jesus, we too have His righteousness. The law no longer has any power to condemn us because our righteousness no longer comes from fulfilling the law but in accepting it as a gift when we accept the Lord.

Rom 5:17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Christians who still try to be righteous by keeping to the requirements of the law will find that the Christian life is impossible to live. Many well meaning brothers and sisters have burnt out and many have found it easier to stop walking with the Lord. The only one who can live the righteous life that God requires is Jesus alone. Jesus has fulfilled the law on our behalf and our part today is to believe in our Savior and receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness. The Christian life is a life of rest in Christ Jesus and His finished work. It is time to rest from our own efforts because our own righteousness is a stench to God. Only the righteousness of Jesus is sufficient.

## *My Journal*

Do you think that sometimes Christians try to do things to make sure God is pleased with us? What are some things that we try to do?

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Have you received His abundant grace according to Rom. 5:17? Explain your understanding of 'God's grace' and 'gift of righteousness'.

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Prayer: Father, I come to you on the basis of Jesus' righteousness and not on my own righteousness. I am thankful that Jesus died on the cross so that I can now receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness to reign in life today. Amen.

## *Day Six – An Instrument of Blessings*

Today's Scripture: *John 10:10*

There is a wondrous exchange that took place on the cross.

Before crucifixion, the curse of sin in our lives opened us to the work of the devil that is here 'to steal, to kill and to destroy' our lives. We are powerless as he heaped diseases, poverty, strife, wars, broken relationships etc.

All over the world, many have tried every means to lift themselves from the effects of this curse. They turn to mysticism, different religions, idol worship, feng shui, voodoo, positive thinking, fortune telling etc.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the way to a life out of the curse of the enemy into a meaningful abundant life. Jesus is the answer to our search for eternal life (John 14:6).

Jesus has made us candidates of God's blessings according to His riches in glory by dying on the cross so that God's favor is upon us. The blessing is not on the land but on the man, i.e. the one who accepts what Jesus has done for him on the cross! (Rom. 5:17)

The curse that has shut the door of blessings into our lives is now removed and the door to the windows of heaven's blessings is now opened wide. We now live in God's heavenly economy.

Instead of poverty, God blesses us with financial blessing because God who owns all of universe is now our Heavenly Father who supplies all our needs according to His riches in glory. Instead of sickness, we walk in divine health because we were healed when He took our punishment on His body. Instead of strife, we now have peace because He is the Prince of peace. Instead of being tormented and in turmoil, we are now free and our souls can be at rest.

## *My Journal*

How would you describe a 'good life'? What are some areas of your life that you desire God's blessings?

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What blessings can we expect when we depend upon the finished work of the cross?

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Prayer: Lord Jesus, because of what You did on the cross, I am now the recipient of heavenly blessings. Thank you for all the benefits that were transferred to me when you took my curse upon Yourself. Amen.