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Crucified to the Religious World

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Extract from "Spiritual Maturity" - Chapter 8.*

"But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world".

It is interesting to notice the particular way in which the apostle speaks of the world here. That term is a very comprehensive term, and includes a very great deal. Here Paul gets right down to the spirit of the thing. You notice the context. It is well for us to take account of it. "For not even they who receive circumcision do themselves keep the law; but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh" (verse 13).

What does the apostle mean? They want to say, See how many proselytes we are making! See how many followers and disciples we are getting! See how successful our movement is! See what a power we are becoming in the world! See all the marks of divine blessing resting upon us! The apostle says, That is worldliness in principle and spirit; that is the world. He sets over against this his own clear spiritual position. Do I seek glory of men? Do I seek to be well-pleasing to men? No! The world is crucified to me and I to the world. All that sort of thing does not weigh with me. What weighs with me is not whether my movement is successful, whether I am getting a lot of followers, whether there are all the manifestations outwardly of success; what weighs with me is the measure of Christ in those with whom I have to do. It is wonderful how this at the end of the letter comes right back upon these Galatians, and the whole object of the letter. We recall the words in which that object is summed up. "My little children, for whom I am again in travail, until Christ be formed in you".

Christ formed in you, that is my concern, he says, that is what weighs with me, not extensiveness, not bigness, not popularity, not keeping in with the world so that it is said that this is a successful

ministry, and a successful movement. That is worldliness. I am dead to all that. I am crucified with Christ to all that. The thing that matters is Christ, the measure of Christ in you.

You see how the world can creep in, and how worldly we can become almost imperceptibly by taking account of things outwardly; of how men will think and talk, what they will say, the attitude they will take, of the measure of our popularity, the talk of our success. That is all the world, says the apostle, the spirit of the world, that is how the world talks. Those are values in the eyes of the world, but not in the eyes of the risen Christ. In the new creation, on the resurrection side of the cross, one thing alone determines value, and that is, the measure of Christ in everything. Nothing else is of value at all, however big the thing may be, however popular it may be, however men may talk favourably of it; on the resurrection side that does not count a little bit. What counts is how much of Christ there is.

You and I in the cross of the Lord Jesus must come to the place where we are crucified to all those other elements. Ah, you may be unpopular, and the work be very small; there may be no applause, and the world may despise, but in it all there may be something which is of Christ, and that is the thing upon which our hearts must be set. The Lord give us grace for that crucifixion. There are few things more difficult to bear than being despised; but He was despised and rejected of men. What a thing is in God's sight must be our standard. That is a resurrection standard. Now that is the victory of the cross. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...".