

# THE AMERICAN PULPIT

A Volume of Sermons by Twenty-five of  
the Foremost Living American Preachers,  
Chosen by a Poll of All the Protestant  
Ministers in the United States, Nearly  
Twenty-five Thousand of Whom Cast  
Their Votes

*Edited by*  
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Editor *The Christian Century*



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### ROBERT ELLIOTT SPEER

Dr. Speer was born to Christian leadership. From the day of his graduation at Princeton Theological Seminary, at the age of twenty-four, to the present time, he has been secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. In his student days at Princeton University he was the marked man in both scholarship and personal influence. His connection, as a junior secretary, with his denominational missionary organization marks the date of a new epoch both of practical expansion and missionary vision for the entire missionary enterprise in all the churches. He envisaged the missionary task in new dimensions and by his writings and addresses and policies has lifted the worldwide objective of Christianity to a higher level.

Positive in his views, and sturdy in his support of them, the quality of his spirit has made him a kind of personal common denominator of churchmen of all varieties of conviction. His nature is too broad for partisanship. He thus stands in the fellowship of American church life as an irenic and constructive force, equally loved and followed by both conservatives and liberals. When the Federal Council of Churches, emerging from the war period, faced the new day with the misgivings arising not only from the confusion naturally inherent in the situation but from the deplorable failure of the ambitious Interchurch World Movement, it was to Dr. Speer the leaders turned, in the belief that under his presidency the fragments of the grand ideal of Christian unity might be gathered up again and refashioned in the consciousness and program of the churches. His acceptance of the responsibility for the quadrennium, 1920-24, is believed to have established the Federal Council on a sure foundation. In his denomina-

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tion, too, Dr. Speer exercises this gracious ministry of conciliation, holding diverse minded partisans together between whom but for his presence irretrievable divisions would almost certainly occur.

Born in Pennsylvania in 1867, he has made the world his parish. On all the mission fields he has come into closest contact with the missionaries and the native leaders, both Christian and non-Christian. He made tours of visitation to the missions in Persia, India, China, Korea and Japan in 1896-7, to all the fields of South America in 1909, to Japan, China, the Philippines and Siam in 1915, to India, Irak and Persia in 1921-22. With Dr. John R. Mott he shared the major responsibility in preparation of the ecumenical missionary conference held in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1910. He was president of the conference on Christian work in Latin America, held in Panama in 1916. As chairman of the general war-time commission of the churches his labors were abundant and fruitful during the period of conflict.

Yale University conferred upon him the degree of A.M. in 1900, and the University of Edinburgh honored him with the degree of D.D. in 1910. This latter recognition possesses added significance in that Dr. Speer has never been ordained to the ministry but classifies himself as a layman. Books have come from his hand as follows: *The Man Christ Jesus*, *The Man Paul*, *Missions and Politics in Asia*, *Remember Jesus Christ*, *Studies in the Book of Acts*, *Christ and Life*, *The Principles of Jesus*, *Missionary Principles and Practice*, *A Memorial of Horace Tracy Pitkin*, *Missions and Modern History*, *The Marks of a Man*, *Christianity and the Nations*, *The Light of the World*, *South American Problems*, *Studies in Missionary Leadership*, *The Stuff of Manhood*, *The Gospel and the New World*, *The New Opportunity of the Church*, *Race and Race Relations*—a prodigious output, almost a book a year since 1896!

## THE CHRIST WHO LIVES IN MEN

By ROBERT E. SPEER

*"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."*—Gal. ii, 20.

Sometimes it is given to a man to say it all in just a few words. I read not long since a list of such great sayings in each one of which the man had really gathered up the whole of his life, and through which he has been long remembered. There was Lincoln's word in his Cooper Institute speech, "Let us have faith to believe that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it." There was the famous saying attributed to Mr. Cleveland, "Public office is a public trust"; and a long list of such great and characterizing words as these. It is one of these words, greater far than any that were on that list, that I speak here. It is the word which one would pick out of all the sayings of Paul as most completely gathering up the fullness of the man's life and bringing home to us the very heart of his conviction and of his message. It is the one word in which more perfectly than in anything else that he ever wrote or, as far as we know, ever said, Paul gathers up the meaning of his new and his real life.

And what a life it was! The names of the great statesmen and merchants and scholars of his time have

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almost all of them been forgotten. The few that we remember best we remember chiefly because they had some contact with the life of Paul and with the great enterprise which had been begun and to which he had consecrated his career. This was his supreme interest, how to live the deepest and most powerful life that he could; how not merely to endure his life, how not merely to accept it, but how to live it at its maximum of meaning and of content and of influence and of power. And to everyone of us in some grave and earnest hour of our lives, the question has come which Paul answers for himself and for every other man, as to what life is, where it springs from, where it is to be wrought out, what the inner secret of it is to be, how we, coming these long generations after, can perhaps be laid hold of by just such principles and powers as laid hold of him, and be enabled to do in our own time, please God, the same necessary work that he did in his.

### I

What we have here first of all is his explanation of where his life came from, the spring and the source of it. "I am crucified with Christ." His life began in death, in death and life with Christ. I suppose all living must begin in some such place as that. "The vine from every living limb," wrote Garibaldi's friend, Ugo Bassi—

The vine from every living limb bleeds wine.  
Is it the poorer for that spirit shed?  
The drunken and the wanton drink thereof.  
Are they the richer for that gift's excess?

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Measure thy life by loss instead of gain,  
Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth;  
For life's strength standeth in love's sacrifice,  
And whoso suffers most hath most to give.

Christianity began there. It had to die before it ever lived. It came out of the black shadows, out of a grave where Christ's faith was laid away with his body. Christianity came forth out of death into life and power. "Thou fool," writes Paul in another of his letters, "that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." And what is he doing but catching up our Lord's own great word, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone"? The life of man has to begin in shadow, the life of power and strength in Christ's death. And we do not need to flinch from the deepest and the most mystical interpretation of all that is contained in that idea of Paul's. Elsewhere he unfolds it. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that

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we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

And this is not to be thought of as a curiosity of exceptional religious experience, as a category of antiquated ideas in which a man who belonged to a different race and a different time cast a religious experience which is to be depersonalized and to be made simply moral for us. This is the real fact about a life of fullness and power and reality to the end of time. It begins in death with Christ to sin, that it may live with him unto righteousness.

And yet this does not mean that one is not prepared to cast the meaning of Paul's words also in real social and ethical terms for our own life now. Being crucified with Christ and taking up out of that death a new life with him must mean for us, if we put it in those terms, that we accept his attitude toward life and fix duty as the highest of all our moral values; that we take up his spirit of mind with regard to our enemies and make forgiveness a fundamental principle of our own hearts; that we hold fast to his faith in the sure triumph of innocence even over wrong and fear; that we cherish his undying hope of the possibility of a better world even against the background of murder and of crime. When Paul says that he died with Christ and came out through that deep experience to the living of a new and powerful life, he meant things like these as realities in his daily relationships with

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men. The cross was the mark of the beginning of that new and real life.

There is a story of a company of men who had been gathered in the earliest days of our participation in the war. The whole group could not be sent over to the other side at once, and every man was eager to go; at last they decided that they would put a lot of papers in a hat, one for every man, and they would put crosses on as many papers as there were men who might be sent, and every man who drew a paper with a cross on it was to be allowed to go. When it was all over one lad who belonged to the group wrote home to his father, "Father, if I ever prayed in my life, I prayed today that I might draw a cross." He wanted the life that bore that symbol and mark and all that it opened up in the possibility of service and of sacrifice. Do we want to find our way into a life that can do in our time what Paul's life did in his, that can leave its deathless scar on the soul of humanity as Paul's life left his, his healing scar? Well, here is the beginning and the foundation of it all for us as for him: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live."

### II

Paul goes on next to tell us where this life of his was to be lived, the area and sphere in which the great battle was to be waged and the great work was to be done. Not in any quiet islands of the blest elsewhere than here, not in some far-distant heavenly age with another environment from that in which men actually live in our real world. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me . . . the life which I now live *in the flesh*."

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We have been asking ourselves these last few years over and over again whether, after all, Christianity is a practical thing; I mean, the original idea of Christianity, or whether it has not to be vacated in some way, some of its old ideals toned down, some of its old demands reduced, some of its old ideals bedimmed. Can Christianity be lived, we ask, here and now in this meat of our body, in the midst of all this maelstrom of evil that whirls us around by day and by night? Can Christianity be lived?

That is exactly Paul's ideal about his life. "The life which I now live in the flesh." It is the glory of the human body and it is the glory of Christianity that Christianity can be lived inside a man's flesh, that there are no passions here that are right that cannot be purified and consecrated, and that anything that cannot be so transformed does not belong in the man. Paul lived his life, this great life of his, full and complete, deficient in nothing, not truncated, not constricted, but abounding, Paul lived this life in the flesh.

It was to make the divine life possible in the flesh that Christ himself was incarnate, to demonstrate to men the possibility that the godlike character might be realized in bone and blood and sinew and gristle and flesh, and that today it is possible for men to live this life, the high, complete, full life in their flesh. And of course this means more than the mere flesh and blood, meat and bone interpretation of it. It means the whole range of our human relationships; that inside the family, in all our actual living relationships from which we cannot escape, Christ must be supreme, and the life of Christ be lived; that Christ is to be our life in the flesh of all human experience

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and all human need and all human activity. And not in these narrower ranges only; but across the width of all the life of man.

Professor Lang, of the University of Alabama, tells of an experience that he counted one of the most singular in his life, which happened when he was a graduate student in the University of Edinburgh some years ago. He had gone to McEwen Hall to hear Mr. Balfour deliver an address on the moral values which unite the nations. It was a wonderful address. As Professor Lang looked across at the audience to see the effect of it on those who listened, he saw opposite him in the gallery a Japanese student leaning over the gallery and drinking in every word. And when Mr. Balfour had ended naming the moral values which he conceived bound the nations together, or were at last to accomplish the unity of man, there was an instant of appreciative silence over all that great hall, and in that moment of silence the Japanese student stood up and leaning over the balcony said, "But, Mr. Balfour, what about Jesus Christ?" He had spoken of the moral values that unite the nations and left out the only value that can unite them; the only undying, valid bond, the only power by which at last the whole life of the world is to be made harmonious and complete.

"The life which I now live," says Paul—and he is embodying in himself the whole collective Christian experience; for this that he went through was only the thing that all Christian men and women to the end of time were to go through—"the life which we . . . live *in the flesh* we live by the faith of the Son of God." We live it not elsewhere, not far away, not

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in some other stage of social progress to which some day we may come. We may live it in the flesh, the only flesh we know, the life that is here, that is today.

### III

But men ask themselves, "How can we live this life, accepting Paul's account of where it comes from and of where it is to be experienced? We know enough from our own lives, of the difficulty of realizing any such great achievements as these on the battle ground of our experience. Can it be?" Men say that for them it cannot be. They know it cannot, for they have tried, and again and again have been beaten down on this very field. Well, Paul goes on to tell us the secret and the power of this absolutely unlimited and invincible life: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

One great weakness of our Christian life today in our colleges and outside of our colleges is that we have thinned it out; we have crowded out the miracle and the mystery and the supernatural of it. We have made it just a veneer, a moral purpose or an admiration; and we have lost those great dynamic energies by which alone the thing can ever really be. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

I do not mean to say that the thing can be explained. Life cannot be explained. It runs far deeper than our understanding of it. But there are some things about it that Paul intimates here which make the mystery after all not so dark and impenetrable. How was it that Christ could do this in him? For one thing, by the obvious and experienced principle of our multiple

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personalities. Paul does not balk at it at all. We think that ideas like the subliminal self are modern discoveries. But Paul knew long ago of these layers of a man that make up the man, of the conflict between these different levels of his life and the secret that one possessed of coming down through the upper levels to deep buried potentialities. How many I's and me's are there here? "I am crucified with Christ"; what "I" is that? "Nevertheless I live"; is that the same "I" that was crucified? "Yet not I"; what "I" is that? "But Christ liveth in me"; what "me" is that? "And the life which I now live"; is that the old "I" before the crucifixion or the new "I" after rising again, the "I" in his own energies and ambitions, or the "I" permeated with the indwelling Christ? "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me"—what "me" is that?—"and gave himself for me."

Paul knows perfectly well what we know, that every man of us is half a dozen men, this man and that man and the other. And the wonder of Christ's insight into personality has always been that he does not confuse, as we do even in our self-judgment, these multiple men, but can make his way among them until he finds the last and the least soiled of them all, the man in whom there is most of the undeveloped power, the man who has lost least of that great birthright of kinship with him in whose image we were first of all made; and Christ uncovers that and washes it in his own blood and breathes confidence into it and strips away all the shackles of the sins that so easily beset it, and sets that inner best man free.

And not by the principle of the multiple personality only does Christ work, but by the principle of the real

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and the ever repeated resurrection as well. We remember what Donald Hankey said in those last hours which he had with his men just before the great hour came, as he walked up and down the trenches while they waited and spoke to them one by one and in little groups: "Boys, we are going over the top tomorrow. Remember if you are wounded, it's blighty; if you are killed, it's the resurrection." Through Christ it was a legitimate inspiration to work with in that black hour. But the resurrection is not a principle that comes in the last and ultimate moment alone; the resurrection is a principle of life every hour of every day. It is the power available in men that knows no moral limits whatsoever, the power that God put forth when he raised Jesus Christ from the dead, the power by which in conquering death our Lord showed that there was not anything that he could not conquer.

There is that evil habit that comes when the light has gone out and you lie alone. You know its face well; and you have always said when you saw it come, "Here comes my enemy that is too strong for me." Yes, but not for the power of the resurrection, the power that is adequate to deal with any foe, the power that is strong enough to nerve a man for any sacrifice, the power that is mighty enough to lift any load and break the very bars of death.

There is many a man to whom life is just a half thing. The vast deeps have not been cut open for him. Sin seems to be a venial affair. The great moral realities have never burst on him as they burst that day in one blinding vision upon Paul on the highway. Well, the power of the resurrection is adequate in the life of every one of us today to lift us out of all this half

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living, out of all these partial visions, out of all these toned-down fellowships, out of all these abstentions from the sufficient power of God. The power of the resurrection is adequate to lift us out of all this and to tear these lives of ours open for the coming in of the energies that are in Christ.

### IV

There is one more thing that Paul tells us here: not alone about the spring and the power of this great life, not alone about the area and the sphere in which it can be lived, not alone the secret and the power of it, but he is laying bare here also the method and the process of it. "And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." We may take this legitimately in two different senses, I suppose. "I live it," says Paul, "by the faith of the Son of God"; by the same kind of faith that he had, by the principle of life and relationship with the unseen that controlled him; "I live my new life by that faith." It would mean a new world if we would begin to live our lives that way, by Jesus Christ's faith in God as his Almighty Father, in goodness at the heart of everything, at the back of the tragedies of life, at the back of the moral disciplines both of the individual and of the nation, by Jesus Christ's faith in God as the heart of love at the very center of all the life and experience of man, by his faith in humanity.

One can name men and women all over our land to whom that faith is an utterly strange thing today. They do not believe in humanity as Christ believed in it, although they have far more reason for believing

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in it than he did. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." He took on human flesh, and human flesh crucified him. The very mankind that he came to save demonstrated that it was not worth his saving, and he still believed in it. If we had Christ's faith in mankind today we would not balk at the little things that are proposed for the making of a new world—if we had his faith in possibility. "All things are possible," said he in a day of moral penury, of national insularity, when the whole world was dead in lust and evil. Even in that day all things were possible to them that believed. What ought not to be possible in a day like this to men who believe that there is nothing that ought to be that cannot be, "by the faith of the Son of God"!

Or there is the other meaning. We find it in Moffatt's translation of this passage. "The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me," by vital personal relationship with Christ, by the loving trust that sees in him grace beyond all my deserving, a patience that my sin and moral indifference might well have outworn but have not.

I thought His love would weaken  
As more and more He knew me.  
But it burneth like a beacon,  
And its light and heat go through me;  
And I ever hear Him say,  
As He comes along His way,—  
"Wand'ring soul, O do come near Me;  
My sheep should never fear Me;  
I am the Shepherd true,  
I am the Shepherd true."

His was a love strong enough to wear down our

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love of the things that he hates, and to make us willing to bring our lives in complete surrender to him, that his fulfilling and enriching hands may make us complete and like himself.

I know well how imperfectly this draws out what Paul was trying to get into words. But I know that even this imperfect way of putting it cannot hide the truth that is here, and that this is a truth that we are needing today, in order that we may experience again just what the gospel of Jesus Christ is. Christ is not simply a beautiful figure for us to admire across nineteen hundred years. The gospel is not a mere wholesome moral teaching, part of which we accept, the rest of which we reject because it is now too hard to live by. The gospel is a great deal more than that. The gospel is the living God confronting men's lives today in the record of what Jesus Christ was and did and in the reality of all of this still as a permanent and ever-continuing work inside the souls of men, and calling us in our lives to leave what is only partial or out on the skirts of spiritual reality, and to come in to share Christ's death, and then to go out to live his life.

I remember coming down on a railroad train many years ago from Eaglesmere with a crowd of railroad men who had been there for a summer Bible conference. We rode in some open freight cars on the old primitive railroad which was all there was then, and which has not been much improved since. As we sat on the boards laid across the open cars, the men were telling about their experiences. There was one man, who had drunk the cup down to the very lees of it, and they had been bitter. And then the Voice had called him, and he had risen up to a new career. He was

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an old, gnarled veteran of the civil war. He was telling us about his experience and he said: "It at last all came down to this with me. I sat down one day in the midst of my sin, with the Savior near making his offer, and I closed with it, and I rose up in his strength and power. He died my death for me that I might live his life for him." He died for us to all our sin of imagination and of desire and of deed; and he rose for us that we might live with him today the new life of cleanness and of joy and of power and of victory. Yes, and what is equally wonderful, we died in his death with him that he might live his life and our life in us. This is the gospel of reality. This is the reality of the gospel.