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'Always Being Given Up to Death'

STEPHEN MOTYER

This article sets out to explore St Paul's understanding of death. I like to think of his theology as rather similar to one of those plastic models used by scientists to picture molecules, with many plastic balls all interconnected. Each atom in the molecule is ultimately connected to all the others—and so with Paul: you cannot touch his theology at any point without being rapidly forced to consider his whole mind. We shall find it with this subject: the great themes of sin and salvation, of man and Christ and the church, will come quickly into view. But this is not a disadvantage, for concentrating our attention on this one atom will give us a new perspective on the whole molecule. We shall see some of the interconnections which perhaps had not struck us before, while we were looking at the molecule from a different (and perhaps more traditional) angle. This, at any rate, is my justification for the fact that the article which follows suggests that traditional evangelical formulations have to some extent missed the fullness of Paul's mind. Even in areas where we have long felt that we understand him—such as the substitutionary atonement—we still need to question our own molecular model, and ask ourselves whether it really does match that of Paul himself. But is that not what it means to sit under the word of God?

Death as a feature of this world

The verse from which the title of this article is taken (2 Cor. 4:11) points us to the fact that, for Paul, death is not just the end-point of life in this world, but a constant feature of it. Of course he is speaking in this verse about his own apostolic ministry, which makes his experience to some extent unique. But in 'dying daily' (cp. Rom. 8:36) he is not experiencing something uniquely apostolic, but the common lot of humanity. We must notice that he has just said the same thing about a very different group of people. In 2 Corinthians 4:3 he has spoken of the veiling of the gospel 'to those who are perishing' (cp. 2 Cor. 2:15), using a present tense to indicate that the death of these people is not just expected but also developing here and now, in some strange way; just as, in some similar way, his own life is a living death. I believe that this strange parallelism is not just a surface

coincidence, but, as we shall see, points us to something deep-seated in Paul's thinking about the world, about man, and about Christ. In the meantime, we must ask what he means when he makes death a present reality, and what lies behind his thought.

For Paul, the world is peopled not just with human beings but also with spiritual beings, whose fate is tied up with ours. He refers to these quite frequently in his epistles, and a study of them is fascinating in its own right. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 he makes 'the god of this world' responsible for the blindness of 'those who are perishing', and we discover in other places that this 'god' is associated with other 'thrones', 'dominions', 'principalities' and 'authorities' in exercising rule over this world which opposes that of God in Christ (cp. Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 15:24; Gal. 4:3,9; Eph. 1:21 etc.). Paul never defines precisely what he means by these creatures (for that is what they are, see Colossians 1:16), but he plainly looked forward to their ultimate defeat (1 Cor. 15:24). However, he could also speak of them as having been already defeated (Col. 2:15), and it is not surprising therefore to find in 1 Corinthians 2:6 that 'the rulers of this age' are already 'passing away'. The combination of past and ultimate defeat leads naturally to the thought of a process of dying, whereby what is already true is gradually put into effect. (Note that the RSV translation of 1 Corinthians 2:6 is misleading: the Greek contains no equivalent to 'doomed to'.) The crunch-point is of course the cross, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:8. The 'rulers of this world', acting through their human agents, thought that they had achieved a supreme triumph when they engineered the crucifixion; but actually it was the moment of their own defeat.

So also with 'the perishing'. For men, too, under the power of these 'rulers' who are passing away, the cross is the church. When it is a stumbling-block to Jews and folly to Gentiles (1 Cor. 1:23), the message of the cross is acting as 'the aroma of Christ to God... among those who are perishing... a fragrance from death to death' (2 Cor. 2:15-16). In other words, as the blessed scent of the gospel is regarded by men as a stench, so those men are caught up ever more firmly under the sway of the 'rulers' who first rejected the Son of God, and death gets an ever tighter grip on the title-deeds of their lives. They enjoy a living death. The process which Paul implies here, in the phrase 'from death to death', is not of course experienced as such, or measurable. It is a process viewed entirely from God's side: as he smells the blessed aroma that arises from the preaching of the gospel, the death of those who reject it becomes all the more certain—just as does the destruction of the 'rulers', whose destruction the gospel announced. Death, then, is woven into the fabric of our world, seen and unseen.

What is it and where does it come from?

These are of course the next questions that arise. It is very difficult concisely to define what Paul abstractly understood by 'death'. 'Separation from God' is quite a useful definition, for it rightly (I believe) points to the fact that, for Paul, death can only be defined by its opposite. At the heart of it there is always a negation, denial, or refusal of the life which comes from God. But this is not a sufficient definition, for death itself does not do any denying or refusing: death (and separation) is the ultimate state of the *man* who does these things. So perhaps we cannot do better ultimately than adapt Augustine's definition of evil and say that death is simply *absence of life*. In its essence, it is just the lack of something else. But this definition has its problems, as we shall see.

What about the origin of death? 'Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned' (Rom. 5:12). This verse gives us Paul's only expression on this subject. It is much controverted, and we must leave on one side the question of 'original sin' which is raised here, but we can see some things clearly: the close connection between death and sin, the entry of both into the world through the sin of Adam, and the way in which Paul thinks of them as exercising sway over their newly-conquered territory. This last point comes out more clearly in subsequent verses: 'Death reigned from Adam to Moses . . . Because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man . . . Sin reigned in death' (Rom. 5:14,17,21). They are, as Sanday and Headlam put it in their commentary at this point, 'grim tyrants' over the world. Adam's sin was like opening Pandora's box, into the world forces which could by no means be reconfined.

This thought, that the world is under alien rule, we have already met in considering the 'rulers' of 1 Corinthians 2:6. Would Paul have counted sin and death among these 'rulers'? He lists 'death' among them in Romans 8:38 and associates it with them in 1 Corinthians 15:24-26, but the list in Romans 8:38-39 contains several non-personal elements, and it seems best to see Paul in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 as 'personifying' death: that is, speaking of it as if it were a person, but not intending us to take this literally. He speaks dramatically and figuratively. But whether or not this is so, it is hard to square the 'reigning' of death with our definition of it above, for how can a mere absence of something exercise sway? Yet this difficulty is not too great. We can summarize Paul's certainties in the following statements: an anti-God rule over the world is exercised; this rule entered the created order at the point of Adam's sin, his rejection of the rule of God; and its real nature, destiny and effect is nothing but death. It is a Black Hole, engulfing all that approaches it, and offering nothing but a denial of all that is wholesome and true.

Physical and spiritual

We are therefore born into a world under alien occupation. For Paul this has great consequences for his present self-understanding. Because his body is of the stuff of this world, then, Christian though he be, he is under the same rule. In Romans 7 we find him bewailing precisely this fact: he is still 'carnal [i.e. fleshly], sold under sin' (Rom. 7:14). Simply because he is one of the inhabitants of this world, this is inevitably so. Romans 7 is of course much disputed, and the argument over whether Paul speaks in the first person as a Christian, or puts himself into the shoes of a non-Christian, will never be settled to everyone's satisfaction. But to my mind the argument definitely favours the former point of view, and approaching the question from this cosmic angle adds greater weight to it. One cannot really understand what he means by 'flesh' unless one bears in mind his great sweeping statements about sin and death. His body is, of course, 'fleshly' simply by virtue of its physical composition; but 'flesh' rarely if ever has a no-more-than-physical significance. It usually connotes also the invasion of his body by the same forces which have invaded the cosmos. 'If I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me' (Rom. 7:20). This leads to the agonized cry, 'Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?' (Rom. 7:24), and to the joyful expectation of our 'adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies' (Rom. 8:23).

A look at 1 Corinthians will help us to take the argument further. The Corinthians were inclined to be super-spiritual, feeling that they had already shed the shackles of mortality (see, for instance, 1 Cor. 4:8). To them Paul emphasizes very strongly in 1 Corinthians 15 that, Christians or not, they cannot avoid their situation under the power of sin and death. And, he says, this is not just a regrettable fact, but part of God's divine ordering of the world. The physical body is yet to be redeemed. Like a seed, it must be thrown into the ground and die, in order to give birth to a new organism, the resurrection body (1 Cor. 15:35ff.). Part of Paul's argument is contained in these remarkable words:

[The body] is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual (1 Cor. 15:43-46, RSV).

It must be admitted that Paul is sailing very close to the wind here. So much does he wish to emphasize our continuing submission to the power of death, that he *almost* says that our physical natures *in and of themselves*, apart from any external compulsion, commit us to this submission. We need to be familiar with his Greek in order to catch

the full force of his language. The world translated 'physical' here is *psychikos*, which at 1 Corinthians 2:14 the RSV translates 'unspiritual' in the verse, 'The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.' It is questionable whether the RSV is justified in using two such different words, because it destroys a most remarkable link in Paul's mind. In our present *psychikos* nature, we simply cannot hope to be fully *pneumatikos* ('spiritual'), because the spiritual only comes *after* the physical. The things of God will always to some extent be a closed book to us, simply because of our physical natures. Of course it is possible to be both *pneumatikos* and *psychikos*, as Paul implies by admitting the existence of 'the spiritual man' in 1 Corinthians 2:15. How this is so, we shall consider later. For the moment, let us notice how Paul supports his argument from Scripture in v.45 above: 'The first man Adam became a *psychē zōsa*', he says, using the noun from which the adjective *psychikos* is derived. The view that our physical natures *alone* and *of themselves* distance us from God was a pagan one which the church, being true to the biblical doctrine of creation, always rightly rejected. But Paul here points out that a bland acceptance of the body as 'good', because 'created', needs to be qualified. Adam became a *psychē zōsa* before the Fall (the verse he quotes is Genesis 2:7). Even in his 'original innocence' (whatever that might mean) the seeds of distance from God, of an unspiritual incapacity to receive the things of the Spirit, were there. We need, in order to be saved, not an Adam in a state of 'original innocence', but an Adam who is a 'life-giving spirit', delivering us not only from the alien powers which invaded the world at the Fall, but also from all in our own natures which distances us from God and tends to death. Paul always steers clear of theoretical questions like, 'Would Adam have lived for ever if he had not fallen?'. But I think his answer to this would have been 'No'. C. S. Lewis is, I think, right in his science-fiction trilogy to picture the presence of death in worlds enjoying such a state of innocence.

The death of Christ

We now come to the heart of our paper, in which we try to assess how Paul's overall view of death affects his understanding of the most important death about which he writes—that of Christ. His emphasis on the cross, and its importance within his theology, does not need to be proved. One example will suffice: the unique paragraph, Romans 3:21-26, which in some respects stands at the heart of the whole epistle to the Romans (how many are the passages of which this can be said!) hinges around the cross as the supreme point at which God's righteousness is manifested. This paragraph has in fact been

most important for the evangelical doctrine of the atonement, which has seen it very much in terms of the Old Testament sacrificial categories which Paul here employs. The cross, like the sacrifices of the Old Testament, is seen as the way by which God reconciles the demands of his justice with those of his love, by providing a propitiatory sacrifice through which his wrath is turned aside, and man is 'justified' before him. On this passage, perhaps more than on any other, evangelical theologians have founded their doctrine of the atonement, understood as penal substitution; and have viewed with surprise and suspicion the reluctance of other theologians to agree, either that this was an acceptable theology to have, or that this was indeed what Paul taught.

The rights and wrongs of this debate must not detain us here. What is important for our purposes is to see that approaching the death of Christ from the starting-point which we have adopted gives Paul's theology of the atonement a whole new dimension, which evangelical theology must surely be prepared to embrace alongside (not instead of) its insistence on penal substitution. For Paul feels no inconsistency in moving from Romans 3:21-26 to a rather different view of the atonement in Romans 5-8. What follows is a brief survey-study of the these chapters, designed to expound Paul's view of the atonement here in the light of our discussion so far about death. It is suggested so that others may try it out on their exegetical pallets!

In Romans 5-8 we meet what might be termed the 'kinship' model of the atonement. It also draws upon the Old Testament, but this time upon the so-called *Go'el* redeemer traditions which look back ultimately to the Exodus, but are especially familiar to us from Ruth and Isaiah 40-55. Into a world already invaded by sin and death (Rom. 5:12), comes Christ. An earlier deliverer has preceded him—the law. But the law, 'which promised life' (Rom. 7:10), was weak (Rom. 8:3) and unable to effect the deliverance, and was itself enslaved under the tyrant that held us captive too (Rom. 7:11). He first associates himself closely with us (as Boaz with Ruth), being born 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' (Rom. 8:3), challenging Adam for the position of closest kinsman. (A similar thought lies behind Romans 9:5, where Paul is considering particularly the deliverance of Israel.) Then he pays the redemption price demanded by our old master, which is nothing less than his own death. There could be no other price, if he was fully to associate himself with us in our position under the sway of sin and death. The 'rulers of this age' (1 Cor. 2:6) then thought that they had won. But no: such a *Go'el* could not be held by them. He rose from death, bringing with him those with whom he had associated himself. We were 'buried with him...united with him... crucified with him' (Rom. 6:4,5,6), and so we will also be 'alive to God in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 6:11). God's object in all this is expressed in Romans 8:29): 'Those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be

conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren.' A new family has been created by the intervention of our great kinsman-redeemer. We have been adopted into God's family (Rom. 8:15), and so we are 'children of God... and fellow-heirs with Christ' (Rom. 8:16,17). Or, alternatively, we can be described as married to Christ, having been freed from bondage to an earlier husband (Rom. 7:3-4). Either way, the notion of 'kinship' predominates. The redemption is of course not yet complete: 'Who will deliver me from this body of death?' (Rom. 7:24) is a cry for the *Go'el* to finish his work (the Greek word here translated 'deliver' is often used to translate the *Go'el*—root in the Septuagint of Isaiah). But we are already in the family of the *Go'el*, united to him, and so we can be sure that 'he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal [i.e. dying, tending to death] bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you' (Rom. 8:11).

So Christ dies the death which everyone born into this world must die. He submits to its tyrants. But because he is who he is, that submission is their defeat and our deliverance. The cosmic order is reversed, and 'the rulers of this age are passing away'.

This understanding of the death of Christ is not in tension with that which more expressly uses sacrificial categories from the Old Testament. It is simply another way of describing the same saving event. Debate will of course continue about the way in which Paul uses Old Testament ideas of every sort to understand the death of Christ, but it is greatly to be hoped that evangelical theology will move away from a position in which one particular understanding of the atonement is made a touchstone of orthodoxy. The two atonement 'models' mentioned here—the 'sacrificial' and the 'kinship'—may be supplemented by others, such as the '*Christus Victor*' model associated with the name of Gustav Aulen. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses, and supplements the others. The 'kinship' view has the advantage over the 'sacrificial' view of placing the necessity for Christ's death not in an apparently arbitrary decree of God (there must be a death for sin), but in the nature of the task itself (association with humanity inevitably entails death). On the other hand, the 'sacrificial' has the advantage in that it much more clearly shows the atonement to be the cooperative work of the Father and the Son. Each model is valuable but not exhaustive.

Divine contrasts: life in death

Paul finds in the death of Christ a pattern which informs his whole understanding of the Christian life and ministry. One could call it the 'life in death' pattern, and the rest of this paper is devoted to exploring some of the ways in which it affected his thinking. He was deeply impressed by the paradox of the cross which we have already

met: that the moment of defeat was actually the moment of victory. This meant that God had turned upside-down the scale of the world's values, and established an entirely different one by which his servants were to measure their lives. Death was not avoidable, but it was transformed, and therefore in some vital respects was to be actively sought and embraced.

The true basis of it all for Paul is *union with Christ*, which means that the death-resurrection pattern, following Christ, becomes the leading feature of all the Christian's experience. The experience of death comes to the Christian in several different ways, of which physical death is but one. Suffering is another form of death very important for Paul, as we shall see, and so is the renunciation of 'the wisdom of the world', paralleled by the embracing of 'the foolishness of God'. Self-mortification is a further form. For Paul, the Christian now lives in a constant tension: in the world but not of it, redeemed but not yet fully so, *psychikos* but striving to be *pneumatikos*, rejected by men yet claiming acceptance by God, weak and poor in the eyes of the world yet enjoying divine power and wealth—in a word, both dead and alive with Christ.

This all comes to clear expression in the eucharist. 'You proclaim the Lord's death until he comes', says Paul (1 Cor. 11:26), neatly expressing the way in which dramatic representation of a violent death is also a fore-taste of the heavenly banquet table. Those who join in this feast must live an appropriate life-style: they must give up the self-interest which the Corinthians were showing at the eucharist, staying in their factions and using the occasion as an excuse for gluttony and drunkenness (1 Cor. 11:18,21). Such a meal 'is not the Lord's supper' (1 Cor. 11:20), because it is not based upon 'discerning the body' (1 Cor. 11:29), a marvellously ambiguous expression which means (I think) a) fully recognizing what the elements portray (the dying of Christ) and consciously expressing, through participation, dependence on that dying; b) discerning the presence of that same body in the divided company of believers, all so very different from each other; and c) having a proper attitude towards the physical body, which must not be indulged in the Corinthian manner but disciplined and used for others. Failure so to 'discern the body' had led God to take special steps to remind the Corinthians of their present mortality, or even to deliver them from it by the only means left open—death (1 Cor. 11:30).

The Christian's personal moral endeavour is summed up by Paul in Romans 8:13: 'If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live'. In one sense the body has already been done to death: 'Our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed' (Rom. 6:6). But, as is frequently the case, Paul here describes, as already brought into being, a state of affairs which we must in fact strive to attain. The crucifixion of 'our old self' with Christ is

an eternal reality; but eternal realities are experienced in the age to come, and only partially in this. So we must strive to match our state now to that which is 'already' the case in eternity. Only certain forms of self-death are open to us, however. Paul never allows that we might put to death *the body*; only its *deeds*. The former is God's prerogative, the latter our responsibility; but in the long run both are steps on the road to the same goal, described in Romans 6:6.

In this endeavour the Christian is torn. 'If Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness' (Rom. 8:10). He is a mixture of life and death, and is summoned constantly to foster the one and fight the other. From the standpoint of modern psychology this probably makes him a pitiable creature, un-self-accepting and riddled with 'phobias' and 'hang-ups'. But here speaks the world according to its scale of values. The Christian knows that 'the works of the flesh' are so called because a tendency to evil lies deep-seated in his own physical nature; and he must therefore strive to 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires' (Rom. 13:14). The early monks of Egypt thought they knew what this meant: they mistreated and battered their bodies, in the hope of beating the evil out, like huntsmen after a stag. But they had missed the Pauline balance. Discipline is not disrespect. The same Paul can write: 'Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving' (1 Tim. 4:4). It is part of the tension with which the Christian must live, that he must accept himself as created and intended, and yet strive against himself as fallen and unredeemed. He is both dead and alive.

Wisdom and folly

Relevant to our theme is a brief consideration of the same pattern in the area of epistemology. The cross is the supreme example of something which is not what it appears. Even the spiritual forces over the world were mistaken about it. From now on, all worldly wisdom stands condemned, and this affects the way in which the gospel is to be proclaimed. Paul rejected 'eloquent wisdom' (1 Cor. 1:17) as inconsistent with the proper preaching of the cross of Christ, meaning not that sermon preparation was to be shunned by the faithful minister, but that the spreading of the gospel was to run on entirely different lines from ordinary secular Greek 'wisdom'. In the Greek philosophical schools, great store was set by rhetorical skills, and great adulation given to popular teachers who guaranteed knowledge of the truth (sometimes on payment of an appropriate fee!). But Paul rejected this self-confident and superficial 'wisdom'. 'The wisdom of this world is folly with God', he declared (1 Cor. 3:19), and adopted a

method of proclamation matching the cross of which he spoke:

I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:3-5).

Such an experience of God's power will lead the Corinthians into wholly different perceptions of truth, completely inaccessible by 'normal' channels. Paul has received God's 'wisdom' by revelation, which as far as the world is concerned is 'secret and hidden' (1 Cor. 2:7), because it regards the cross as 'folly' (1 Cor. 1:23). Only the 'spiritual' man is able to receive this wisdom, not because all traces of the world have been removed from him, but simply because the Spirit of God indwells him and instructs him (1 Cor. 2:12-13).

Paul's life-style as an apostolic revealer matched his self-effacing proclamation. One of his later problems at Corinth was the arrival there of certain 'super-apostles', as he calls them (e.g. 2 Cor. 11:5), men who regarded themselves as exalted servants of Christ, their ministry attested by striking signs and visions. The Corinthians were far more prepared to believe in the apostolic status and message of these charismatic figures than of the lowly figure of Paul. Paul was forced to defend himself, but he refused to 'boast' like his opponents, 'except of my weaknesses' (2 Cor. 12:5). As with the cross itself, he feels that the true apostolic revelation must be wrapped in entirely 'inappropriate' packaging: in an unimpressive (2 Cor. 10:10) and self-effacing (2 Cor. 12:6) man, a 'treasure in earthen vessels' (2 Cor. 4:7), because anything else is inconsistent with the revelation itself. We must now look at this life-style more closely.

Power in weakness

We come to our last section, which leads back to the point at which we began. Death is a constant feature of life in this world, for Christian and non-Christian alike. But for the Christian the difference is that he dies his death in union with Christ, so that it is now the gate of life. It is the same death, but it now leads to a different destination. This is the thought which underlies Paul's strange words to the Corinthians about the sickness and death which had come to them because of their abuses of the Lord's Supper: 'When we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened so that we may not be condemned along with the world' (1 Cor. 11:32). A Christian experiences sickness and death just as his unbelieving neighbour does, but in his case it is intended by God ultimately to deliver him from death, and to save him from the condemnation which, for the non-Christian, is expressed in part or in whole through sickness and death.

The Christian therefore embraces suffering, not with relish, but

with the certainty that in it he experiences yet further association with his Lord in death, which will lead in time to life. So at any rate for Paul, who threw away all earthly security 'that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead' (Phil. 3:10-11). 'If possible' here expresses no doubt about the outcome. Paul thought of himself as 'always carrying in the body the death [literally, dying] of Jesus' (2 Cor. 4:10), and pictured himself with a most moving series of paradoxes:

We are treated as imposters, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything (2 Cor. 6:8-10).

The appearance of 'as dying, and behold we live' in this list, shows the connections with which death was associated in Paul's mind. Only such a life could match that of his Lord, who 'was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God' (2 Cor. 13:4). To some extent Paul thought of himself as suffering on behalf of others, so it is not as easy as at first appears to take his words as applying to all Christians. 'So death is at work in us, but life in you', he assures the Corinthians (2 Cor. 4:12). It was part of his apostolic office to suffer on behalf of the church (see, for instance, the very mysterious Col. 1:24), and he even seems to have conceived his office to some extent in terms of the Isaianic Suffering Servant of the Lord. Of course he identified Jesus with this figure, but he nonetheless applies Isaiah 52:15 to his own ministry in Romans 15:21, and Isaiah 49:6 to himself in Acts 13:47. He could not in any way extend or improve the saving efficacy of Christ's death, and of this he was well aware (see 1 Tim. 2:5-6); but he could so fully identify himself with his Lord's ministry that he could be caught up into the periphery of Christ's suffering, and, as one of his apostles, bear more than his own share. Some such train of thought seems to have been present in his mind; but it is a special qualification in his own case of a general principle which he applies to all Christians: suffering is death with Christ (cp. Rom. 8:17).

Paul, of course, expected the power of the Lord to be manifested in his *present* experience, and not just in the future resurrection. He challenges the Corinthians, '[Christ] is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful in you. For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we shall live with him by the power of God' (2 Cor. 13:3-4). In a similar vein he had earlier cried, 'Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph!' (2 Cor. 2:14). But this needs to be carefully interpreted, for Paul's 'triumphant' progress across Asia Minor was not joined by thousands of converts flocking to his side. As far as numbers were concerned, he was not a notable success; indeed, his

words in 2 Corinthians 1:8 hardly look like the description of a triumph: 'We do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself.' The fact is that he never expected the power of the Lord to neutralize, efface, or in any way remove his own weakness. His weakness was vital, because it was the death through which life would come. The power of the Lord, then, could sometimes be tangibly experienced (as it had been among the Corinthians [1 Cor. 2:4, 2 Cor. 12:12]), but usually it had to be theologically perceived, 'reckoned', just as the individual Christian has to 'reckon' himself alive in Christ (Rom. 6:11) as the sure consequence of his death with him, even though sin still seems to 'cling so closely' (to borrow a phrase from Heb. 12:1). Paul thus lived by faith, 'always being given up to death'.

We have seen some of the connections between the atom labelled 'death' and the surrounding atoms in the molecular structure of Paul's theology. Doubtless there are many others which could be explored with profit. However, this limited study is offered in the hope that it may possibly convey some new insight into his mind; but at any rate that it will encourage us all the more wholeheartedly to die with Christ, that we may also live with him!

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