

Discover Your Cross

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

The following statements are not my own. They are the expressions of students studying in our Bible college. All of them are very good definitions and reveal an understanding concerning the dangers of worldliness and our need to take up our Cross against it.

“The world is anything that lures me away from intimacy and precision with Christ.”

“The world is any good thing—even participation in church—that is not derived from the Spirit of God. Satan is over the world, and anything in it belongs to him.”

“The world is a system of thinking that is independent of God as the source of everything. It seeks to be independent of God because of its inherent insecurity and seeks to heap praise upon itself for what it does, even using the logistical grace of God. It is a God-hating, God-rejecting attitude that people have; and that, frankly, is why I believe John said, ‘The whole world lies in wickedness.’”

“The world is anything that seeks its own apart from God. It is anything that does not participate in what God says, in obedience.”

“The world is any sort of deception that would or could draw you away from God’s perfect plan for your life. It is Satan’s playground for a short time where he tries to deceive us into walking by sight instead of by faith.”

“The world is anything that’s eating from the Tree of [Knowledge of] Good and Evil rather than the Tree of Life. If you lift up the real thing, then the counterfeit becomes very apparent. When we lift up Christ and the Word of God and its doctrines, everything else becomes very apparent when it is a counterfeit.”

“I believe the world is anything that blinds our eyes from our total depravity apart from Jesus Christ and gives a false security in anything apart from the Cross.”

“The simplest definition of the world is life as we know it, without the Cross.”

“The world is anything that runs contrary to the character and nature of God.”

“The world is anything that sends you down the wrong path, ending in something that is not of God—anything that is not truth but lies.”

We can only overcome the world’s system

through the Cross. This booklet shows that at first, we see it as Christ's Cross—His suffering for our sins. Then as we grow in our understanding, we see the doctrine of the Cross—God's plan from the foundation of the world both to satisfy His justice and to give us a way to have eternal life. Finally, we take it up as our Cross—a personal application of the doctrine so that others might find what we have received freely, all because of Christ's Cross.

Chapter One

LOVE NOT THE WORLD

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

“And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

“But ye have an unction from the Holy One,

and ye know all things" (I John 2:15-20).

One of the most vital things we can do for ourselves is to make sure we have a good attitude in the morning. Then throughout the day, we need to make sure we don't slip into a bad attitude. It is the difference between godliness and worldliness. Bad attitudes come from the negative transference of energy in the air and can easily stir up an otherwise peaceful atmosphere. We need to discover the Cross.

In the passage above, John starts out with a simple command: "Stop right now loving the world, neither anything in the world." We are not to love anything in the world. Sadly, many Christians know what the Bible says about worldliness, but they do not obey the Word.

This is a problem illustrated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

This verse contains the Greek word *ginosko* for "know," meaning that you know something but only generally speaking. "Known" is *epiginosko*, which speaks of fully knowing and experiencing what you know.

"The world" is *kosmos diabolicus*, the system of government operated by the prince and the

power of the air, Satan. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" is another iterative present active phrase. Theantric action (God's nature controlling a meek believer through the government of the indwelling Word and the power of the Holy Spirit) cannot operate in one who loves the world, because a love for the world system and the love of God the Father cannot co-exist in a person.

The World Lies in Wickedness

"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

"And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:16-17).

"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19).

If the whole world lies in satanic infections, then the world is a system and an organization whereby Satan is the god of its productions, purposes, and promotions. The world's social life, the world's entertainment, the world's domestic values belong to Satan, the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4).

As Christians, we are to go into the world to

preach the Gospel, but we are not to become a part of the world. Are you of the opinion that certain things in the world are okay? "Love not the world, neither any thing in the world."

Chapter Two

ESTABLISHING THE RIGHT POINT OF REFERENCE

“We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

“And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:18-19). Ponder on this passage for a moment.

Every single thing in the kosmos, the world system, is wicked. I am not speaking of asceticism, legalism, or taboos. I am speaking of the world. It should be easy to see why we must rightly divide the Word of truth.

“Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.

“For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here

a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:9-10).

Whom shall He teach knowledge? And who will understand doctrine? Those who are weaned from the milk and go on a steady diet of the Word of God. We must have knowledge and understanding of doctrine and be weaned from the milk of self-reliance. This requires having the Cross as a point of reference in our hearts. Then we must have a frame of reference—categories of doctrine from the Word of God—with explanations and vocabulary that precisely order our hearts and minds.

The Word that we receive beyond mere knowledge goes into our human spirit and is then transferred into the memory center. The memory center is in the soul, which includes categorical storage of Bible doctrine and other compartments of the heart and the streams of consciousness.*

Communicating the Cross

The point of reference for everything is the Cross. We cannot have a proper frame of reference without the right point of reference. The Cross is the point of reference for the new heart and the human spirit. Jesus Christ gives us a commandment to take up our Cross and follow

Him (Matthew 16:24). In Matthew 10:38, Jesus says, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." The Greek tenses in this passage indicate a requirement of commitment that is personal to the Cross just as commitment is personal to salvation.

Taking up the Cross is first a commandment (Matthew 16:24, Luke 9:23). After fulfilling the commandment, a Christian must make a personal commitment to the Cross (Matthew 10:38). First, it is called His Cross. Next, it is called the Cross and then finally it is called your Cross.

"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

"For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

"Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God

by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

“For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

“But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Corinthians 1:17-25).

In the first part of this passage, it is made clear that our communication must be through the spirit of the Cross. So, we have a commandment of the Cross, a commitment to the Cross, and communication based on the Cross.

Contention between the Cross and the World

“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Galatians 6:14).

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes

ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

In this verse, "bare," from the Greek word *anaphero*, infers that every single sin that we have ever committed had to be individually placed upon Him. Jesus Christ bore our sins, died, was buried, came forth from the grave, and ascended to heaven. That was His Cross—dying for us and taking every one of our sins upon His body.

The Cross brings reconciliation (Ephesians 2:16), and the Blood shed on that Cross brings forgiveness and peace in that reconciliation (Colossians 1:20).

What is the problem between the Cross and the world? They are at odds. Notice the attitude of every non-Christian and of every carnal Christian (who is saved but backslidden) toward the Cross: They hate it. Consider just how much the world hates what the Cross stands for. They don't understand that Jesus Christ's love is unconditional and immutable and that His love is for everyone. The message of the Cross is a grace message with a mercy reference and a love motivation.

If I take up my Cross, the world is dead to me, and I am dead to the world. This goes far beyond the overt sins that you normally think

of. It has to do with attitudes, living in a godly attitude and living with a satisfied heart.

I wake up extra early some mornings to make sure I have plenty of time for my attitude to be showered, spiritually speaking. It is better for me to have my attitude in focus than to be tired and exhausted. I need to be focused on being occupied with Jesus Christ.

The point of reference is Christ's Cross, which was the Cross. Now, our frame of reference brings in the plan of God where it becomes our Cross. Our Cross is derived from the Cross, which was His Cross for us, and now we are taking His Cross to be our Cross for others.

*Read *The Hearing Heart*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.

Chapter Threë

DEATH THAT WORKS LIFE IN OTHERS

How would you define your Cross? According to 2 Corinthians 4:10-12, it is this: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you."

That is your Cross. In order to experience your Cross, it takes having a storage of categorical doctrine and the power of the Holy Spirit. This is very practical, and separate from "denying yourself daily." Yes, the world will hate it; the carnal Christian who has not grown in the Lord will hate it, too. They do not want conviction, so they will give you their opinion, and their opinions affect many people.

Motivated toward the Cross

At the Bema Seat, where Christ will evaluate the work of the Christian, Christ will reward us according to what we have done. If we have discovered our Cross, we will always bear in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus. We are not able to take up a daily personal Cross unless we make a commitment with a positive attitude toward it.

Without the love of God motivating us, we cannot take up our daily Cross (2 Corinthians 5:14-17). Therefore, our communication must be through the Cross. When we are motivated by divine love, we communicate the wisdom of God that has gone through death, burial, resurrection, and ascension because of the Cross.

Overcoming through Resurrection Life

There are many kinds of depression today: clinical depression, domestic depression, financial depression, manic depression, marital depression, and so on. Those who live in depression allow their emotions to receive negative vibrations instead of the mind of Christ. In this condition, a person can only communicate the world's interpretation of the Cross, which is not Calvary. The carnal Christian's interpretation of

the Cross is “Get saved, be a good person.” That is all; nothing more—no growth, no Word of God, no filling of the Spirit.

When people enter into a mental attitude reaction like depression, the first thing they retreat from is the Cross. Then they enter into mental attitude rebellion and then mental attitude retrogression. They do not experience life from God, so they are very weary. They become weary with studying and weary with working in the Christian environment. They are weary with their schedules because they do not have the resurrection life of Christ and have not been delivered unto His death with their Cross. Christ’s life is not being manifested in their mortal bodies, so their mortal bodies cannot enjoy a renewed mind (Romans 12:1-2).

Fellowship with His Life through the Cross

We are not to be conformed to this world but transformed by the renewing of our minds. Then we can prove what God’s perfect will is. A person who loves the things of the world is in serious trouble. No Christian can have an effective ministry if he doesn’t take up his Cross daily. A life that begins at the Cross is totally opposite from a life that continually asks for self-

rights and self-preservation.

God allows things to happen in our lives so we can have the privilege of fellowshiping with His resurrection. When you are delivered unto things that rub you the wrong way, do you take them gladly, or do you get angry? Do they make you sad, reactionary, or rebellious? Do you withdraw or retreat? If you are taking up your Cross, those things will not affect you at all, because you are dead to yourself. A dead man is not troubled by circumstances in the world.

We can live in the convenience and the comfortableness of God's will, or we can live in the Cross of God's will. Many things that happen to all of us are the result of God asking Himself, "Now, how am I going to give you your Cross today?" To you it is just a good day or a bad day, but to God it is His perfect plan for your life. He wants you to reveal resurrection life in your mortal body and for you to be prepared to meet Christ at the Bema Seat.

Chapter Four

RESPOND TO THE CORRECTIONS OF LOVE

Some people have problems defining the world because they think of worldliness as adultery, alcoholism, lying, and cheating. But the world goes far beyond these things, which are merely “of” the world. What do worldly Christians do when you try to pin down worldly things? They defend themselves. “Don’t be so legalistic,” some will say. Yet, God makes strong statements concerning the world. We are not to have anything to do with it.

The world was declared evil by what was written by John (1 John 5:19b)—before television and before so many terrible things that are going on now. Imaging how much more evil it is today.

The Offense of the Cross

Jesus Christ became obedient even unto the death of the Cross (Philippians 2:8). The Cross

brings tremendous offense (Galatians 5:11). As an example, Paul said, “If I were to stop preaching on the issue of circumcision, then the Cross would have no offense because I would be holding back the truth about it. The truth is that you do not have to do it any more because it is the heart that needs to be circumcised.”

The Cross offends, and the person who communicates the Cross—even if he is loving, gentle, caring, and compassionate, and even if he is not legalistic—offends people very quickly.

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2).

The best way to determine whether a person is worldly is if when he is reprovved he also needs to be rebuked as a follow-up.

Responding in Meekness

As a pastor all these years, I have had to make many, many changes in my ministry—not in my doctrine but in my sermon styles. I have had to make many changes in the ways I deal with people, in the ways I handle situations, in the ways I respond to God, and in the ways I react to men. The Word of God has faithfully reprovved, exhorted, and sometimes rebuked me

right from heaven in a godly, sweet, loving way. I have taken those corrections knowing that if I obey, I will be a better pastor.

I remember that after the first few times I preached, an older gentleman came up to me and said, "I want to see you for a moment." Of course, I thought he was going to say it was a good message, or something like that.

But instead he said, "You were too hard on the people."

"I was?"

"Yes, you were; you were too hard. I understand that you want to preach the whole Word of God, but I didn't like the way you said it."

I said, "Okay, then tell me, because I want to learn."

He said, "You spoke down to the people. It is one thing to preach the Word. It is another thing to make them feel that you are much better than they are."

I never forgot that, and I instantly learned how to preach grace as a result of his rebuke. My next sermon was about unconditional love. That man's rebuke was a fantastic asset to my life.

By accepting divine correction through death, burial, and resurrection, I became a better pastor. It is so important that young pastors

continually see how they can become better pastors.

As the Scriptures teach, we have nothing to glory or boast in except the Cross of Christ, where every ounce of pride, selfishness, and lust was crucified (Galatians 6:14). We have a new identity, because we are in Him and He is in us. Now, we have the added benefit of taking on His Cross as our Cross.

CONCLUSION

Missionaries from Africa who were in their eighties have come to my house to stay. They were creative as they shared things about the church, making suggestions that were equally creative reproofs. I can honestly tell you that I implemented what they said because I could see that they were right.

It is so crucial to understand that a meek person will accept rebukes and not feel condemned. A humble person will accept reproofs providing they are expressed in love and not in arrogance. We can accept reproof, rebuke, and exhortation, taking up our Cross.

If Christians would accept reproof, rebuke, and exhortation when it is needed, think of how much that would add to our joy from now until eternity. Sadly, the average Christian does not encourage others, and this keeps many from receiving a great blessing.

Let us reprove, rebuke, and exhort one another with all longsuffering in authority and in love. Whatever we say to one another, our goal should be to make it a blessing. Reproofs can be a blessing in disguise if they make us better people. They help us to discover the Cross, which was Christ's Cross and now has become our Cross.