

The Glorious 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

Foolish to the world but precious to the saints, the Cross occupies that place in time and eternity where every man must take a stand: for or against it. The issue is eternal life. The means? Death.

No man can escape it. Every man, however, has an opportunity—and a choice. Calvary, and all that it stands for, represents an even place for everyone who is drawn there.

The greatest man of God with years of wisdom and service is reduced to trembling with exceedingly grateful rejoicing when he touches the truth of what happened on a wooden cross nearly two thousand years ago.

As you read this booklet, consider the price, consider the cost, but most of all, consider the gift.

Chapter One

THE KEY TO BEING CONFORMED TO CHRIST'S IMAGE

According to the Word of God, many people have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof. The life they live seems right. It is a certain shape of Christianity that looks like the real thing. But it is only a form, and they deny the power of true godliness.

The natural mind-set of the Christian is *not* to be spiritual, but to *try* to be spiritual. Though he may experience sincerity and measures of integrity, the natural mind becomes familiar with the Word of God instead of being inspired by it.

When a believer is operating in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, every time he reads the Word or even thinks of God, he is continually filled with the sense of an eternal purpose.

But for the person who lives in a form of godliness, there is no real power. The one who is depressed does not get delivered. The one

who is lustful may be temporarily delivered but goes back to his old ways. The person who is moody and easily offended does not get delivered, though he or she loves God. Many of these individuals desire to follow God, and the majority of them are probably sincere. But theirs is a *form* of godliness.

Blind Spots

On occasion, members of my congregation will meet with me privately (usually after a convicting message) and ask me if I could help them discover anything that needs to be corrected, spiritually speaking. They may sense undefined anxiety, a lack of peace and joy that they once had. Often the problem is due to what we call “blind spots.”

A blind spot is an area in the believer’s soul where he cannot receive categorical doctrine that would set him free. It may be due to wrong decisions, rebellion, ignorance, or bad experiences. Blind spots are usually located in the subconscious* (2 Peter 1:9, 1 John 2:4,9,11). When the old sin nature refuses to be crucified, areas of the soul are darkened to conviction by the Holy Spirit, and undefined impulses start to influence the personality.

When a Christian who has blind spots makes a conscious effort to self-correct a problem in the subconscious, he will most likely end up with a form of godliness that denies the power of God. And though we have all experienced it, we shouldn't practice spiritual surgery in an attempt to restore Adam. Remember, his wound is incurable. The only solution for a sick soul is the old, rugged cross.

This is why, when the apostle Paul wrote to the rebellious church at Corinth, he said, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). Before that, he said in 1 Corinthians 1:18, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

The most noble, virtuous, loving, transforming, transcending, dynamic, powerful, forceful, energizing object in this world is the Cross. Still, there are many sincere pastors who believe in the Cross, but their teaching does not *include* the Cross. Oh, they preach *about* the Cross and they may even encourage their people to take up their cross. But no pastor—no matter how godly, how well-intentioned, or how pure he is — should ever speak a sermon unless his fellow-

ship with God is solely *through* the Cross. Meaningfully and experientially, the Cross must always be our ultimate frame of reference.

**For more about the workings of the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious mind, read Imaginations of the Heart, by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

THE KEY TO OVERCOMING THE WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL

Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God from eternity past, “Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father” (Galatians 1:4). It is the Cross! The Cross delivers me from this present, infectious, evil world. The Cross delivers me from novice traits. It was Christ on a cross in a place called Calvary that now delivers me from sliding into passivity and carelessness every day of the year.

Every believer should have an altar in his home, and every morning he should kneel there and embrace the Cross with all of his heart. Let the experience be continually new. Be constantly renewed in the spirit of your mind (Ephesians 4:23). Let His mercies that never fail become new

every single morning (Lamentations 3:22-23).

The Cross is not to be something we “know,” nor is it to be something we “believe” in. The Cross is something we *take up*. It should be in every part of every believer’s life. We ought to embrace the Cross more than any other thing in this world.

Dealing with an Undesirable Past

“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). We can’t fight the world. We cannot overcome the world. We are human beings with an old sin nature. We have genetic lines that go through our ancestors back to Adam (Romans 5:12). According to Psalm 51:5, I was formed in iniquity and conceived in sin.

I cannot overcome the temptations of the world system. I cannot overcome the power of the devil in my adamic heritage. *I cannot do it.* But the Cross delivers me from the world and the world from me as I take it up and go beyond believing in it. *The precious Cross.*

How does a man become a better husband? The Cross. How does a woman become a better wife? The Cross. How do I become a more

thoughtful, meaningful, realistic Christian—one who goes beyond sight, who measures value beyond the world’s viewpoint? By the Cross.

A man whose spirit is not enmeshed in the Cross is a man who may be a “good” man, but he has only a form of godliness. Part of his life denies the power of the Resurrection because he doesn’t understand that the Cross eliminates Adam. It eliminates negative effects of the genetic inheritance that reigns in our mortal body, which we received from our ancestors. The Cross doesn’t struggle with those effects; it simply delivers us from them. The Cross does it *all*.

Victory over “Me”

Not only does the Cross separate me from Satan’s world system, but consider this: The Cross is the only thing God has ever given that can finally give me victory over *me*. That precious gift was offered to someone who has an old sin nature, whose whole head is sick, and whose heart is deceitful and desperately wicked.

“I am crucified with Christ:”—I am—“nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in [my humanity] I live by the faith of the [precious] Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not

frustrate the grace of God” (Galatians 2:20-21a).

The Cross doesn't place me in a battle to live right; instead, the Cross crucifies what is wrong. It crucifies the evil. It crucifies the old sin nature's dominion. The Cross eliminates Adam's power, his practice, his accusations, his guilt, his condemnations, his pride, his arrogance, his inflated ego. The Cross eliminates the devil's power, because it was through the Cross, the Resurrection, and the Ascension that Satan was defeated. The Cross eliminates the power of the world's system that greatly outnumbers us (by all outward appearances), and that is why it is the Cross.

It is more than a theological concept. It is more than something about which to write a three hundred page text. The Cross means to fall in love with the One who died for me when I was yet a sinner. Then, with thanksgiving and tears of the intensification of joy, I begin to recognize that I was crucified with Christ two thousand years ago.

New Every Morning

There is so much familiarity and redundancy in quoting it. But, oh, the reality and fresh experience of *knowing* this: *The old man is crucified with Christ*. I thank God that it is a past tense!

Reckon that you are dead indeed, that you have already died unto sin (Romans 6:11).

I am so grateful, and I do reckon on my death with Him today. Therefore, I yield my body to God as an instrument of righteousness unto Him, as a member in particular in His Body. I now live as one who has been spiritually raised from the dead (Romans 6:13). That is the meaning of the Cross.

Chapter Three

THE KEY TO REAL FREEDOM

The apostle Paul wrote that “the love of Christ [compels] us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that [Christ] died for all,” that we should not live unto ourselves, but unto God, who raised Jesus from the dead. Therefore, we do not know *any* man after the flesh (see 2 Corinthians 5:14-16).

We do not know anyone after the flesh because of the Cross. It is the reason we can forgive people without remembering what they did against us. We are able to love them back into victory—all because of the Cross.

Thank God, the Cross is where we find forgiveness for ourselves and one another. For a wife, for a husband, for a pastor toward his people, or for the people toward their pastor, forgiveness is in this: We know *no* man after the flesh because God raised Jesus from the dead, and we were included in His Resurrection.

The Cross is the basis for the dynamics of a ministry that has power, of the preacher with an anointing, of a ministry that manifests God. It is the reality and spiritual experience of knowing Jesus Christ in His Ascension and in His Finished Work ministry on earth but through the power of Resurrection because of the Cross.

People get offended because they know nothing about the Cross and the power of it. They may desire to be delivered, but deliverance is slow. They enter into striving and struggling because there is no Cross that wipes out “self” and puts in God.

Is it any wonder that Paul said, “I determined not to know any thing among you....”? I don’t want to know about your sins. I don’t want to know about the things you have done that you shouldn’t do. I don’t want to know anything about you except the Cross. That is all I want to know.

Whose Cross Is It?

Do you want victory? Do you want power? Do you want to go beyond a form of godliness? Then, just take up *your* cross.

We need to understand that there is no way a man can take up God’s Cross. But am I going

to leave Jesus Christ alone with that bloody death? No. I died with Christ, therefore it is *my* cross. He took me *with* Him so I could be successful and victorious in Satan's world, going forward with a resurrected, offensive life against the kingdom of darkness. Every born-again believer has this glorious privilege.

As a result of taking a stand in this victorious position, all of the fruit of the Spirit comes into my life. I have a new desire to worship God and to love people. In the morning, I go to God, and in Resurrection life, I take up my cross. He died on His Cross, and now I take up my cross, which means I am crucified with Him—past tense! That is my cross: that I would accept His Cross and my death, burial, and resurrection with Him.

The Eternal Cross

Paul was in prison, waiting for his captors to lead him to martyrdom. In 2 Timothy 4:6*b* he wrote, "The time of my departure is at hand." He knew that soon they would be coming for him, to place his head on the block and cut it off. So is it any wonder that before he went to his death, Paul wrote, "I want to know Him"?

Philippians 3:10 says, "That I may know

him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death”—which is able to be revealed in life.

The Cross was everything to Paul, who was a great man of God. And God will make every man great through the Cross. King David thanked God for making him great; he believed, without sight, in the future Finished Work of the Cross. Because he believed it with all of his heart, David could boldly say, “thy gentleness hath made me great” (Psalm 18:35*b*). He wasn’t bragging. He was giving God the glory for the Cross that was to come.

Remember, it was David—the Old Testament king—and not Paul, who said in Psalm 32:1-2, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered,...unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” He learned it because of the revelation he received of a future Cross. That Cross became the substance of the Finished Work mind of God. Now, the truth of this glorious Cross, applied in David’s heart by mercy through faith, is ours to rejoice in forever.

CONCLUSION

*“I will glory in the Cross,
lest His suffering all be in vain.
I will weep no more for the Cross that He bore,
I will glory in the Cross!”*

– Author Unknown