

The Cross

By Leon King

And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there; -- Matthew 27:31-36.

The cross - the wooden stake is, in itself, a despicable thing; but when adorned with the sinless body of the beloved Son of God, it becomes the central place of endearment to God's people. Look as they mocked him - as they smote him - as they buffeted him - as they blasphemed His holy name, yet he opened not his mouth. Marvel, as he turned away the stupefying drink to bear the pains of our sins in His precious, sinless body. Behold, as they strip his garments, leaving him exposed as a spectacle of shame for our sake - watch as they nail his hands and his feet to the stake. Look at his bleeding back and the streams of blood that ooze from the wounds of the blasphemous crown of thorns. Why was he there? He loved us so much that he left the portals of glory - forsook the fellowship of His father - took on himself the form of a servant - showed himself to be the poorest of the poor, without a place to lay his head - was altogether righteous and holy, meek and lowly, a friend of sinners, but separate from sinners - here dying

the just for the unjust - the holy for the unholy - the righteous for the unrighteous - the good for the evil - the only begotten Son of God in whom the Father is well pleased. Now the Father looks on the scene and sees the travail of His soul and is satisfied. Here is the propitiation. Here is the mercy seat. Here is the place where man is reconciled to God. The Heavenly Father looks upon the scene and is satisfied. The Father is justified in taking vengeance on His son and the elect are justified by His declaration.

1. The cross is the wisdom and power of God to those who are saved.

We do not worship a Christ who still hangs on a cross. No, he has passed from thence through the borrowed tomb to the resurrection and on to the ascension to the right hand of the Father. He sits there now as our great high priest ever living to make intercession for us. But as we backtrack, we come back to the cross where our Lord began His high priestly role; for a priest must have somewhat to offer. There, on that cross, the beloved Son of the living God offered himself once for all.

*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. -- 1 Corinthians 1:18-24.

"Unto us who are saved it is the power of God." What is the power of God? None other than the preaching of the cross is said to be the power of God. Not the stake itself, but the one who hung there to save His people from their sins. Blessed cross; for on it the only begotten of the Father paid for **all of our sins** once for all.

*And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save **Jesus Christ, and him crucified.** And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. -- 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.*

Paul's message at Corinth was a message of the cross. His goal was to present Christ crucified and was, of necessity, a message of Christ on the cross.

2. Preaching of the cross is an offense that spawns tribulation.

Preaching the cross is an offense to the unbelieving world. It is obnoxious to them. God's men who insist on preaching the cross can expect that such preaching will bring trouble from the world.

*And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? **then is the offence of the cross ceased.** I would they were even cut off which trouble you. -- Galatians 5:11,12.*

As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. -- Galatians 6:12-14.

Identification with the Christ's cross is taking one's cross. It is a denial of self and confessed association with the Lord Jesus Christ as one of his disciples. Some apparently believe that symbols and trinkets a person wears on a chain, bracelet, or ring to be "taking the cross." Identification with the cross of Christ in believing Him, loving what He loves, and hating what He hates is taking the cross. The following passages from Matthew clearly state this principle. Identification with the cross brings tribulation.

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. -- Matthew 10:37-39.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. 26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? -- Matthew 16:24-26.

When the rich young ruler came to the Lord with his question, Jesus' answer including taking up the cross.

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the

*commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, **take up the cross, and follow me.*** -- Mark 10:17-21.

3. The cross promotes minding of heavenly things.

The minds of the enemies of the cross are filled with earthly things. Thus is the mind of the unbelieving world. Conversely, setting one's mind on things above is connected to being a friend of the cross. We are identified with it as God's children; consequently, that identification promotes heavenly mindedness.

*Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the **enemies of the cross** of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)* -- Philippians 3:17-19.

The cross is where I died with Christ. I can reckon it so because it is indeed a truth. My contemplation of that death brings assurance that my sins were, and still are, expiated. It brings assurance that the old man died there and that I have been raised to live in a spiritual life. It promotes an anticipation of heaven and the eternal fellowship with the Father and with the Son. Blessed thoughts! That is why Paul penned these words to the churches of Galatia.

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. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. -- Galatians 2:20-21.

4. The cross is our place of glorying and the ground of our expectation.

The captain of our salvation, the author and finisher of our faith, has gone on before us leaving us to run our race. We have a remarkable example to follow. He endured the cross, despising the shame, because of the joy that was set before Him. This speaks to us in clear, understandable terms. There is great, unending joy set before the children of God - joy unspeakable and full of glory. Only the Spirit of God reveals foretastes of that eternal joy, which is the lot of God's redeemed.

Oh, that we could endure our cross because of the joy that is set before us. Undoubtedly, many of our fathers have passed through the martyr's waters while looking at the joy set before them. What other thing could cause them to rejoice and lift their voices in praise at the time of their departure as their flesh was put to the flames or given to the wild beasts?

*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him **endured the cross,** despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. -- Hebrews 12:1-3.*

Eager anticipation for that day comes as we contemplate the cross. The cross is the ground of our glorying. We have no other things of which to boast. It is Christ crucified for us - where the love of God was manifested for His elect. It was on this stake that the blessed Son of God saved His people from their sins!

*For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. **But 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 6:13-14.*