

## Significant Lives — Chapter 5

By Jim Golden — On A Hill Far Away!

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The Cross is the universal symbol of our Christian faith. We can see it fashioned in gold and hanging around the necks of true Christians and unbelievers alike. It adorns ears and altars and may even be found in the cheeks and nostrils of some of our more *radical* children. It has been the inspiration of Christian hymnody throughout the ages. Yet for most of us the Cross is simply old and rugged and on a hill far away.

In Peter's day the cross was an insignia of terror and quite often lined the roads of the occupied nations of the Roman Empire. It was an ancient form of fatal torture improved upon by Rome and usually reserved for the most heinous offenders. Originally offenders were actually crucified to a tree. However, some ingenious fellow adapted the principle making it portable. Now one could be hung on a tree in a place where trees were rare and in any location the executioner deemed most effective.

Used successfully to quell rebellions, you would never see its likeness dangling from a chain around someone's neck. Women coming home from visiting a relative in a neighboring village would walk the cross lined roads in dread. Shielding their eyes from the nakedness of these grim reaper's victims, they would look at their faces silently praying that they would not recognize anyone.

Scripture even declared that death on a cross (or tree as it was often called-Duet. 21:23) was a sign of God's curse upon the one who died in such a manner. Is it any wonder that against such a backdrop Jesus might have been misunderstood? In his call for people to follow him he spoke of the cross. Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Luke 9:23 (NIV) My guess is that this particular sentence cut his following by at least 50%. Or many simply rationalized the literalness of his statement away.

God takes what is wretched and vial and turns it into something beautiful and cherished. None of us have a problem embracing the symbolism of the cross but actually embracing it

literally seems a near impossibility. Paul declared that he was crucified with Christ yet we all know that he wasn't actually one of the two men crucified with Jesus. To a 20th century believer, Paul's statement opens the door to some astounding possibilities.

I would like to follow a path of departure from the orthodox interpretations of this verse. Tradition interprets this as the surrendering of our will to do God's will. But the cross is far more than simply a place of "death-to-self." The Cross is a place of revelation, creation and finality. Jesus said that a prerequisite to the cross was denying ourselves. All through our lives self is continually spewing forth the impressions of being alive. But God says that we are totally separated from the giver of life. From the first breath we take only one thing is certain, we will take a last breath also. Self is a creature that stands on its own, quite unaware of its need for God.

At the cross we are forced to admit that we have no life within us-we are dead. At the cross we are forced to bury our old dead spirit with its depraved human nature. At the cross God dissolves the chasm between us and reconciles us to Himself. He does this by literally removing our old heart of stone and putting into us a brand new heart. In this new heart of flesh, which is the seat of our nature, He weaves the thread of His own divine nature until only one fabric can be recognized. This weaving of His divine nature with the thread of our nature transforms our entire being as He renews our minds.

Understanding one basic principle is imperative to us who believe. Heaven does not deal in commodities. In heaven the first order of business is a person. He is central and supreme. Everything begins and ends in Him. Jesus alone is the gross national product of heaven. Jesus alone is heaven's only export. The resurrection isn't a day it's heaven's champion. Revival isn't a time or season it's the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. When God speaks of writing his laws upon our hearts He is actually speaking of His immutable choice to become one with His redeemed children.

From His vantage point on the cross Jesus could see quite clearly. His plea for His Father to forgive us was a revelation in itself. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Luke 23:34a (NIV) For such a long time I was content to accept orthodoxy's interpretation of this verse until I began to see through His eyes. Jesus came to die on the

cross. The method of his death was predetermined by himself. The people that would accomplish this had been released by God to do it. Granted they didn't understand all the implications of crucifying God's Son but I don't believe Jesus was speaking merely of the act of crucifixion.

Jesus was gazing down on a race of beings he had created with his own hands for a much higher purpose. They were created to be the dwelling place of the great God Jehovah. A living temple that should have been in continual fellowship and harmony with God had turned into a blind and empty house of stone. But from his vantage point on the cross he also knew that a new age was getting ready to dawn. He was becoming the prototype of a new race. He was becoming the doorway into the awesome manifest presence of God. He was becoming the progenitor of a new species of beings, fashioned in heaven by the will of God and breathed from the nostrils of the Almighty

Everything about this new race from heaven would be pleasing to God. Soon all of creation would witness the birth of a people conceived in the mind of God before the beginning of time, a people truly for His own possession. They, like Jesus, would long to do the will of Him that sent them. Created and born out of heaven they would only be passing through. Heaven was their home and down here they would be ambassadors of another world. Their only mission would be a ministry of reconciliation. They, like Jesus, would go about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. They would literally turn the world *right side up*.

If you are like me you're probably wondering what went wrong? I feel that the Lord gave me the answer. In the first century the devil was caught unaware. He didn't know what happened. It took him awhile to recover and weave an appropriate web of deception. He had to come up with a plan that would give him access to the inaccessible community of heaven. The community of the redeemed could only be entered through the "old-man." The "old-man" or dead spirit was the product of Adam's decision to follow Satan in the garden. Jesus told the unregenerated Jews that their father was the devil (John 8:44). But God had so thoroughly severed this relationship that only time and deception could give Satan place again.

Satan's chief weapon is deception. His modus-operandi was to imitate the old-man. Speaking to these new children of God

persistently in the first person he eventually filled them with sufficient unbelief. They began to doubt themselves and God's salvation. Satan had found the landing strip he needed to launch his assault against the Bride of Christ. As God's children began to believe that Satan's thoughts and desires were their own a veil began to form once again in the temple. Much of our theology today only adds layers to this veil increasing its opacity. Much of what we call speaking the truth in love is anything but the truth.

Let's take up the true cross of Calvary on which Jesus ended Adam's race. Each day, let us come to the place where Jesus birthed heaven's children. I urge you to begin to agree with the words and work of God daily. If anyone be in Christ he is a new creation. Whenever I meditate on God's salvation tears come to my eyes. The mouth of the Accuser of the Brethren is silenced and a voice within me begins to cry out, "I really do love God and want to serve Him."

The revelation that those vile lusts and evil desires might be coming from a source other than myself releases the delivering hand of God in my life and sets me free from the power of the enemy. I want to declare to you that the new creation or child of God is just like Jesus. And once we can silence the Accuser's voice we will actually begin to see ourselves as God sees us. Allow Jesus to wash your feet right now and ask Him to reveal more of His salvation to you.

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Cor 3:18 (NIV)  
Ask Jesus to destroy this veil of self-doubt and doubt in God's salvation and help us to fix our eyes on Him once again. Don't leave the cross on a hill far away, make it a place you come to each day!