

What Is the Gospel?

Installment #4 — The Work Of The Cross!

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 1 Corinthians 1:18. It is verses like these that are seldom spoke of except around the time we celebrate the historic sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The cross was a road that Jesus declared he was destined to walk. He said in the garden of Gethsemane that for this purpose, his work on the cross, he came. Scripture also declares that Jesus was crucified before the foundations of the world, but revealed at just the right time. The cross was the place of ultimate triumph and victory, though for human eyes and demon eyes it looked quite the contrary. The utter despair that gripped his followers and his mother must have been devastating and overwhelming. His disciples had pinned all their hopes of Israel's deliverance on this "Messiah" who now hung dieing on a tree. It was the kind of death that brought with it a curse and great dishonor, for it is written cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.

But what the human eye couldn't discern and the demonic world comprehend was that in his suffering and death he was gathering into himself every life that had ever lived, was living and would live into that place of the skull and in him he was making a show openly of the powers and principalities, taking the handwriting of ordinances that was against us and nailing them to his cross. All of mankind died in him that day and as a result was set free from the judgment of the law by his righteous and holy blood. The Scripture declares that it was his own blood that brought him back from the dead. To the intellectual mind this bloody religion is not only foolish, but absolutely barbaric, yet we seldom diminish the blood that was shed by our troops in all the wars we fought in to gain our independence and to keep the United States a free democratic republic. How can the work that Jesus performed on the cross for the entire human race deserve any less respect, honor and praise? We need only put our trust in him.

One of the aspects I want to look at concerning the work of the cross and how it changed my life was the role of personalization. It is not enough for us to admit that Jesus died on the cross as an historical fact. While that is true we must come to the realization that he died on that cross for us, each one of us personally. Then we must take a step further and somehow we must enter into a complete and absolute identification with him. I believe that one reason the Scripture records the story of the others that died with Jesus on a cross to his right and left was to give us a picture of the choice that was set before us. We cannot just come to Jesus with an intellectual acknowledgement of what he did. This type of belief won't do it. The Scripture says that we believe in one God and we do well, the demons believe also and tremble. A very sobering fact. Jesus actually made it very difficult to follow him.

Saying things like if any man would follow me he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. I can guarantee that he wasn't on his way to a fine dinner, but to a horrific death.

While we may never suffer the same brutal vilifying death that he did he never the less is asking us to come to an end of our lives as we know it to be his witnesses. Narrow is the gate that leads to life and few they are that find it. God is patient, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, but he will not always strive with mankind. I am not trying to scare anyone into being a "better" Christian or to put more money into the offering plate, but to help us to realize that if we want what Jesus wants and came to give us then we too must let the cross have its perfect work in our lives.

Nothing should be more important than learning to hear his voice and obey him instantly. To obey is better than sacrifice. I have often wondered exactly what that means. Over three decades as a "Christian" I have begun to open my eyes a little. The obedience part comes when we realize that Jesus came to do more than just forgive us. He has a plan to actually transform us into a species of being that never before existed until his death and resurrection and our acknowledgment and pursuit of this can be the obedient goal of our lives. He commanded them to wait in Jerusalem until they received the Promise of the Father, will we obey the same command and wait until we receive the Promise.

The sacrifice comes when we stop short of this full Gospel and wallow in the pool of forgiveness only believing ourselves to be hopeless sinners destined to fail over and over again until one day the chariot of God will come for us and we will go to a far better place. Yes, I believe that we will all one day dwell in a new heaven and earth wherein righteousness dwells, but I also believe that we can and should on a daily basis experience days of heaven on earth. John said that he saw the Holy city, the new Jerusalem descending out of Heaven as a Bride adorned for her husband. I do not think he was speaking only of some future point in time, but of those truly born from above in every generation here and now.

One of the curses of the prophetic gift is to continually put things into the future, but the true prophetic anointing has within it not only the ability to foretell events, but to pronounce the present reality of the prophetic and written word of God being fulfilled in our midst.

I am not altogether certain how we can crucify ourselves with Christ. It is impossible to nail our own hands to a cross, but with God all things are possible and I want to be more than metaphorically crucified with my Jesus Christ, that I may also be raised with him in newness of life not just in the age to come, but in the here and now!