

The Blessings of the Cross

Text: Romans 5:6-11

Intro

On top of "le Mont-Royal" in Montreal stands a gigantic illuminated cross which is visible for kilometers. The blackness of the night neither lessens or dissipates the brightness of that cross. In fact, the greater the darkness, the greater that cross seems to shine.

It is the same way with the cross of Christ: in spite of all the scientific, philosophical, ideological or spiritual forces that have been unleashed against it for close to 2,000 years, the cross continues to stand.

In spite of the deep darkness and problems of our times - whether these be international tensions, terrorist threats, national social dilemmas or personal crises, the cross remains an unchangeable beacon sending forth its powerful light.

The deeper the darkness, the more the cross shines with splendor and intensity. Its light is the only sure guide in the midst of the confusion of our times. Only the light that the cross emanates is able to bring healing, hope and peace to the hearts of individuals.

Our planet has known many great historic events, many of which have influenced the lives of millions. No historical event has so influenced or changed the history of humanity and its destiny than the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ - because the repercussions of the cross have far-reaching consequences and blessings!.

Not only does the power of the cross transform men and women here and now, in this life, but it also has an eternal scope, an eternal dimension.

The Symbol of the Cross

The cross is the most widespread religious symbol today. People wear crosses of gold or silver or precious stone around their necks. Some wear a cross to demonstrate their faith, others for purely aesthetic reasons.

We tend to forget today, however, that the cross was a horrible instrument of torture and death. In fact the ancient mind would be scandalized at the sight of little crosses dangling from our necks.

The Roman poet Cicero wrote:

"Let the very mention of the cross be far removed not only from a Roman citizen's body, but from his mind, his eyes and ears."

To die by crucifixion was to die a most horrible, degrading, slow death a human being could ever face. To the Jewish mind it was synonymous with being cursed by God. In the Scriptures we read:

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." (Gal. 3:13).

But there is something powerful about the cross of Jesus Christ. Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:18 says, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." How is it the power of God? Let me share with you at least six areas in which it is the power of God.

1. Propitiation - Turn God's Wrath Away

- Propitiation means: "to turn away wrath"; To turn away God's anger and judgment.
- This truth brings us directly to the heart of the gospel: Jesus' death turned away God's wrath. God was appeased through Christ's death.

1 John 2:22

"And he himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:2 KJV).

- No one is excluded from the scope of God's mercy.

2. Justification - Declared Innocent, Made Right

- Justification is a legal term signifying a verdict of acquittal.
- One who is justified is declared innocent or righteous.
- Being justified implies more than just being forgiven. When a person is justified in court, it means he is declared innocent of all charges against him. The charges are removed completely.

Romans 8:30b-34a

...and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns?

3. Reconciliation: Enemies become friends

- When we were lost we were at enmity with God and He was at enmity with us.
- Some wonder how God could love us and yet at the same time be our enemy. Simply, God loves His enemies.
- We are no longer enemies- but friends- because Jesus bore the penalty of the law that condemned us.

Romans 5:9-11

"Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." (Romans 5:9-11 NIV)

4. Atonement

- Root meaning in English, "*at-one-ment*".
- It's bringing together of two who have been enemies into a relationship of peace and friendship.

1 John 4:10

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atonement sacrifice for our sins.” (1 John 4:10 NIV)

-The word primary belongs to the Old Testament.

-The cross brings alienated humanity into a relationship of peace and harmony.

5. Redemption - Purchased from Slavery

- The Biblical meaning of the word redeem is “to deliver from slavery or from captivity of an enemy by payment of a ransom.” Jesus paid the ransom with His very life. He paid for the “wages of sin” (Rom. 6:23).

- The Bible states that because of our disobedience, we became slaves of sin, death and Satan.

1 Peter 1:18-19

“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” (1 Peter 1:18-19 NIV)

6. Salvation - Deliverance from sin and sickness

- The word salvation is an all-inclusive word that combines the ideas of propitiation, justification, reconciliation, redemption, as well as other New Testament expressions.

-Word simply means “deliverance, implying that we have been taken from an undesirable situation to a desirable one.

We have been delivered from

-God’s wrath

-God’s condemnation

-Sin and the curse of the Law

Hebrews 2:3

“How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.”(Hebrews 2:3)

Conclusion

On the south coast of China, on a hill overlooking the port of Macau, Portuguese settlers built a cathedral. The massive building was destroyed by a typhoon, all except for the front wall. High on top of that wall, resisting the elements down through the years, stood a great bronze cross. In 1825, Sir John Bowring was shipwrecked near that harbor. As he clung to the wreckage of his ship, he caught sight of the great cross. The cross showed him where he could find safety. His dramatic rescue inspired him to write the hymn: "In the Cross of Christ I Glory."

*In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime*

*When the woes of life o'er take me,
Hopes deceive and fears annoy
Never shall the cross forsake me
Lo! it glows with peace and joy.*

Galatians 6:14, *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

The cross is God’s dramatic rescue plan of humanity...