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## Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

April 3, 2016  
The Center of our Faith

*“He destroyed the record of the debt we owed, with its requirements that worked against us.  
He canceled it by nailing it to the cross.”*  
Colossians 2:14 (Common English Bible)

There is a primary tendency to think of the cross of Jesus Christ as something that was inflicted upon him; that Jesus was a passive character in this narrative, bowing his head in meek submission to this terrible unfolding of events. Yet, in these words from Paul to the church in Colossae, that clearly isn't the case. The cross was a demonstration of God's power. According to Paul, the cross was actually God's decisive response to our sin. God's desire was to destroy the record of sin against us. This God accomplished by *“nailing it to the cross.”* Often we see in our mind's eye that the Roman government was doing the nailing that day – the day that Jesus was crucified. Clearly Paul's words do not fit such an account. It was God doing the nailing that day.

Jesus could have escaped the cross. He spoke during the evening meal with his disciples that one of them would betray him. Following dinner, in the garden, Jesus spoke to God, in prayer, about the cross that was now imminent. The cross was no surprise to Jesus. And armed with this knowledge, Jesus could have left the city of Jerusalem entirely and escaped. But he did not do so. Jesus deliberately directs his steps to the cross. There is present in this story an atmosphere of mastery about all of the unfolding events – a sense that all of it had been carefully choreographed. Resolutely, Jesus sets his face to the cross. Jesus is in control, not those who hate him.

This profound, and often overlooked, truth offers deep insight into how we understand and live into our faith. First, it makes a considerable difference to understand the cross as God's intentional and active will dealing with us. God isn't passive. Often we think of God's power as some sort of great reservoir that is available for the asking. It is there for us to seek out, to explore and draw strength as the need arises. Our misunderstanding is that God waits our decision to be engaged in faith formation and then answers the door when we knock. Except the witness of the Bible is just the opposite. God is active, always taking the first step toward us. The cross demonstrates God's movement toward us, involving us in a most personal relationship as God grabs hold of our sin, *“nailing it to the cross.”*

The second thing is this: the cross of Christ is not simply God's activity toward us, but also God's activity through us for the sake of the world. It is insufficient to understand the cross as God's salvation for individual men and women. Both the Old and New Testament gives witness to a God movement to reclaim the world. And that movement is accomplished through individuals gathered together in a faith community. Those God calls and separates apart from the world eventually become the bearers of God's universal activity of salvation for all the nations. At the center of our faith is the conviction that followers of Christ do not simply find themselves passive bystanders to what the mission of God accomplishes. Our sins are nailed to the cross; our relationship to God is restored, all for the larger purpose of making us partners in God's redemption of the world.

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