



The Cross of Christ (part seven)

By Jim Fowler, contributing writer

The Message of the Cross -- The Gospel

In exposing the unbiblical mystic applications of the cross, we must not overreact by failing to proclaim the eternal efficacy of Christ's death on the cross and all the implications thereof. The death of Jesus on the cross is indeed a central factor in the whole redemptive and restorative action of God's grace. By His death, Jesus took our deserved death, in order that we might have His life. He did not take our death that we might have His death, as the inner-crucifixionists indicate.

The message of the cross is the message of the completed, finished work of God in Christ. The message of the cross is the message of an empty cross, whereupon all crucifixion activity has ceased, for Jesus Christ has risen from the dead and come to live within the Christian. The message of the cross is the message of liberating freedom to be all that God intends us to be by His grace in the out-living of His character.

Such a message is the only "good news" available to mankind -- the grace of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Paul refers to "preaching the gospel" in 1 Cor. 1:17; and then in the next verse, refers to the content of that gospel as *"the word of the cross,"* which he continues to explain is *"to us who are being saved it is the power of God"* (1 Cor. 1:18). The "good news" of the gospel is not the "power of the cross," but the *"power of God,"* as Paul also wrote in Romans 1:16.

Anything, other than recognition of God's power of grace in the "finished work" of Jesus Christ, will inevitably be some kind of self-effort that makes void the cross of Christ (1 Cor. 1:17). Paul continues in his correspondence with the Corinthians to declare that *"we preach Christ crucified"* (1 Cor. 1:23), and are *"determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified"* (1 Cor. 2:2). Later, to the Galatians, he explains that he will boast in nothing *"except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Gal. 6:14, NKJV). Eschewing all boasting in personal performance, Paul would boast and proclaim only that Jesus Christ had performed everything necessary for our redemption on the cross and continues to perform everything necessary in the Christian life by His grace. Whenever we read of the "cross" or "Christ crucified" in the Pauline epistles, we should always think of the "finished work" of Christ, the completion of which He exclaimed during that historical event on that material cross. Therein is the "good news" of the cross, which would otherwise be "bad news" indeed.

The proclamation of the "finished work" of God in Christ, whereby God has done and is doing everything necessary for man's salvation, including sanctification, will always be regarded as scandalous by natural man. It is contrary to all the conventional wisdom of the world, which believes that we must be the cause of our own effects and that which is worth having should be worked for. Proclaiming the "finished work" of God in Christ deals a "deathblow" to the human

pride of personal performance. That "deathblow" was dealt when Jesus died on the cross and exclaimed just prior to His imminent death, "*It is finished!*" (John 19:30).

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