

The Cross and the Crucifixion of the World

by G.W. North

The cross is a means of personal transformation, spiritual growth, and separation from the world, and it is a means of judgment and redemption for those who trust in God.

Scripture: John 12:31-32, Romans 6:6, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 6:14, Ephesians 2:1-3, Philippians 3:8-10, Colossians 2:14, 1 John 2:15-17

Topics: "The Power of the Cross", "Spiritual Crucifixion"

Description

G.W. North emphasizes that the troubles of humanity stem from a failure to obey God's original truth, as exemplified by the Galatians who lost their blessings by not embracing the full power of the cross. He explains that true understanding of the cross requires personal crucifixion, which many fail to grasp, leading to a disconnect from the spiritual life that Christ offers. North highlights Paul's complete detachment from the world, illustrating that true salvation necessitates both the crucifixion of the flesh and the world. He asserts that the cross serves as God's ultimate instrument for the destruction of sin and the flesh, allowing believers to live in the new creation. Ultimately, North calls for a life that fully embraces the cross, as it is the foundation for true peace and spiritual reality.

Transcript

The whole of man's trouble is the result of failure to obey the original truth presented to him -- because the Galatians did not do so they did not retain their original blessing. The full power of the cross as presented by the apostle and exemplified in his life was lost on them; they did not enter into it, therefore they did not understand it. The need for the cross beyond its initial blessings and the need for personal crucifixion is always a mystery to those who are uncrucified. The objective cross is seen to be beneficial and is accepted, but we all must know the subjectivity of it. Paul did and finalized his letter with these words, 'God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world'. It just had to be like that with this man -- with him there could be no half measures. The world was finished for Paul; all it held for him was opportunity to preach the gospel and suffering and death; he was crucified to the world -- it held no attraction to him and he held no attraction for the world; it was mutual. That was how Christ wanted it for him and it is how He wants it for us. Beside revealing the disposition and temperament of Paul, this is also an indication of the man's love and loyalty. It is also an insight into the wisdom and logic of the Lord; salvation could not work out in man's experience in any other way. It would be of no use insisting that the flesh must be crucified if the world is not crucified at the same time. The flesh exists in the world; likewise the world was created by the flesh and for the flesh.

The world as spoken of by Paul here is not to be mistaken for the earth, nor is it to be thought of as the original cosmos God created in the beginning. Sin has entered the world and by it man has created his own conditions of life contrary to God's will within God's creation. It is to this the scripture refers when speaking of the world as Paul is doing here. He is referring to the order or condition or state in which man exists on the earth; it is variously called by him culture or civilization or some other relevant name; according to his spiritual state a man's soul may delight or conversely hate to live in it. Paul saw right from the beginning that in Christ Jesus there lay a whole new world, a spiritual structure and condition of life created for him; he also knew that he had been created into it by the conjoining of God and man in Christ. He also knew that the former creature he had been was slain and that the old creation into which his parents had given him birth was in a state of death. None of the things which had been gain and valuable to him, in which he had formerly lived so completely and successfully, meant anything much to him any more. What he had counted to be the true life was now death to him. It was a dual operation. He had cast them off and was dead to them, and they and the world in which they existed were dead to him. So powerful was Christ's crucifixion and so effective that it works in every realm of man's existence in this world -- it had to or else it could not have served God's purposes. The cross was God's method of the ultimate destruction of the sinner and his sin, of the flesh in which he expressed it, of the self who wanted it and of the world in which he practised it. The cross is almighty, it is the infallible, chosen instrument of the Almighty.

Sympathizers with Jesus Christ after the flesh mourn and shudder when they think of what the cross did to Him, but terrible though it was for Him, they need not try to feel for Him there. He once told the daughters of Jerusalem to weep for themselves and not for Him. It was not that He did not appreciate their concern, He simply did not want them to live in fleshly sentiment. Everyone should weep because one so pure and good as He should have to suffer for their sins. Paul had it right when he said he wanted to know Him and the fellowship of His sufferings by being made conformable unto His death. It is what He accomplished by the cross through His suffering, despite His pains, which is the far more important thing.

Paul gloried in the cross and for this reason: Christ's crucifixion was an abuse of the cross by men, but the glory of the gospel is that while men were putting it to its most dreadful abuse, God was simultaneously putting it to its greatest possible use. God's good news to men is that He overruled the wickedness of men and used the cross for purposes other than men intended, and not only so, He also thereby made it His, not man's and the devil's. He who was being crucified was the Son of man and He who was doing the crucifying was His Father and God. As He said, when He was lifted up from the earth the judgement of the world was taking place, and the prince of the world was cast out also; that was another of the real miracles of the cross. Incredible as it may seem it is true; He engineered the cross, overruling all men's and devils' schemings, using them for His own purposes and making all things work together for men's good and His own glory.

This dual power of the cross is one of the most wonderful of its many features. Behold the wisdom of God as it is revealed in this particular instance: it is plain common sense that if a man is dead and the world is dead there can be no possible collusion between them. O the wonder of truth! In spiritual reality the old world is dead and so is the old man who lived in it. To men of faith the new creation is here, the old spiritual power of the flesh is crucified and so is the person who lived in it; Old things have passed away by the death and resurrection of Christ, the end of the ages has come upon us; Paul says these things in other places. In the physical universe we await its happening, but in the spiritual realm it is already done -- all that remains for every man to do is to enter in and live in God's completed spiritual work to the best of

his advantage. This unredeemed and un-redeemable world is slowly degenerating into corruption before final extinction as predicted. The revelation Paul is declaring is that by the cross all redeemed men can live clear of the world and shall finally be brought into the future new creation -- the death and resurrection of Christ is so complete.

On the other hand, if a man is alive being un-crucified, though the world be dead the man will still cling to it. Even though the world could not cling to the man he would cling to it; he would not be able to let it go. It would be the same also if the positions were reversed. If the world was alive and the man was dead the world would not let the man go, but if both be dead neither can cling to the other -- it would be impossible. God forbid then that I should glory save in this cross of Christ; by God's gracious laws it has become established as the basic rule of all life and justice and judgement in the affairs of God and men. We must walk by it and live by it, or we can never know the true peace of God.

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