



The Cross and the Christian

By Keith Greer

The cross of Jesus Christ is of great importance to the child of God (for that matter, to the whole world). Yet, I wonder how many of us truly understand the special relationship to Christ we sustain because of that blood-stained cross. What does Christ mean to us? What did His death do for us? What role does the cruel cross of Calvary play now -- more than 2000 years later? In this article, I hope to help you have a greater appreciation for the cross and how it relates to our fellowship with God and Christ.

His death on Calvary gives me identity. To the world, the cross is nothing but mere foolishness. "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." {1 Corinthians 1:18} But the message of that cross is the power that helps us to be saved. How?

The blood shed on the cross bought us. "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." {1 Corinthians 6:18}

That same blood purchased the church, of which we are members. "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." {Acts 20:28}

It gave us the right of adoption -- to become God's children. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs -- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." {Romans 8:14-17}

It transported us out of the world and into His kingdom. "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." {Colossians 1:13,14}

It washes away our sins. When we are baptized for the remission of our sins, we contact the blood that washes away our sin. "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." {Romans 6:3,4} This makes us Christians -- God's children -- and gives us spiritual identity.

His death on Calvary is my destiny. Why am I here? What is my purpose? God prepares me to walk in good works. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." {Ephesians 2:10}

We are to increase our knowledge of Him. "That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." {Colossians 1:10}

We must continue to mature in His grace and knowledge. "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" {2 Peter 3:18}

We are to do good works. "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." {Galatians 6:9,10}

What is the sum total of man's duty to God? "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments; this is man's all." {Ecclesiastes 12:13} Our Lord sacrificed His life to give us opportunity to glorify the Father and Son by doing His will. When a faithful child of God influences, and sets a godly example

before, an ungodly world, he holds God up for all to see. We may not be able to open a Bible in another's presence, but we can demonstrate our destinies by the way we live our lives (Matthew 5:13-16).

His death on Calvary is my eternity. Where am I headed after my sojourning here? So many have no direction, drifting aimlessly through life, without thought of what happens after death. The cross of Christ provides assurance of an eternal abiding place.

I know Jesus will return. "Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." {Acts 1:9-11} Every eye will see Him. "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen." {Revelation 1:7}

He is preparing a place for me. "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know." {John 14:1-4}

There is a place of rest for the faithful children of God. "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His." {Hebrews 4:9,10} This life is full of trouble, heartache, toil, and difficulty. But I know that in eternity, the things that hinder me here will not affect me. This life has much that I love and enjoy, but it also has many things I despise and struggle against daily. God has something far better in store. "For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." {Hebrews 11:10}

Affliction and setbacks are temporary. "Therefore, we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing; yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." {2 Corinthians 4:16-18} My sights are set on a higher plane. "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." {2 Timothy 4:6-8} Paul had it right!

What did the atonement on the cross do for me? It did more than could be said by the words I write, and more than any amount of humble obedience can ever repay. But, not only did God's Son go to that cruel cross for me, He did it for the whole world. A wonderful aspect of the cross is its universality. Anyone can reap spiritual benefit from the Lord's death. "How," you may ask. It's simple. Obey the gospel, and live faithfully during the rest of your time on earth. God's children should never forget the cross and its painful beauty. It is the greatest manifestation of God's love for us and of His intense hatred for sin. I hope every Christian understands what he has because of Christ's death on that tree so long ago. Do you ever wonder why the only memorial the Lord left for us to remember Him concerns His death? Don't. Understand that all you or I can ever be spiritually, as well as any hope of heaven we may have, is because of one event -- the crucifixion. Thank you, Lord, for loving us that much.