

ROAD TO REVIVAL

By

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and
The Secret of Christian Joy"

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WHERE ARE THE MARKS OF THE CROSS?

"But he [Thomas] said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25).

"I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Galatians 6:17).

"As he is, so are we in this world" (I John 4:17).

IT is to be expected that the preaching of the cross should be foolishness to them that perish. GOD said it (I Corinthians 1:18), and the Calvary message of blood-bought redemption, of living through One Who died, of being justified by One Who was condemned, of being blessed by One Who was made a curse, of being saved by One Who could not save Himself - such a message has always been and will be distasteful to the natural man.

But we have come to the day when the preaching of the cross is foolishness not only to the world but to the professing church as well. It has become foolishness in much of modern preaching where a "slaughterhouse theology" is held up to ridicule and modern lepers are told that Abana and Pharpar are as good as Jordan and that Naaman today need not dip in the fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins.

Not only in preaching but in practise does this hold true today in churches where thousands expect to reach Heaven on the merit of their own good works, which, if it could be done, would, of course, mean that our Lord need not have died. They sing about the cross and pay it the tribute of their lips, but so far as their hope of salvation is concerned, it is just as surely foolishness to them as to the millions outside the church.

But we go even deeper to say that among Christians who truly are resting upon the finished work of Calvary for their souls' salvation there is a sense in which the preaching of the cross is still foolishness to them. For there are two aspects of our Lord's work in His atoning death, and some

know the one but are painfully ignorant of the other. Our Lord bore our sins once for all in His own body on the tree, but not only were our sins nailed with Him there: our very selves, our old man, our old nature, all this was so identified with Him that we can truly say, "**I am crucified with Christ**" (Galatians 2:20) and "**our old man is crucified with him**" (Romans 6:6) and "**I [am crucified] unto the world**" (Galatians 6:14), "**dead with Christ**" (Colossians 2:20).

The sinner is dead IN sin, the Saviour died FOR sin, and the saint is dead TO sin with his Lord, a glorious fact which he is to make real in actual daily experience as he reckons himself dead indeed unto sin but alive unto GOD through JESUS CHRIST our Lord (Romans 6:11). Our Saviour did not die that we might dodge the cross but that we might die with Him there, and it is possible to rest upon His cross work for salvation from sin's penalty without experiencing the work of the cross for salvation from sin's power, so that this part of the preaching of the cross is still foolishness.

Thomas demanded to see the marks of the cross in the resurrection CHRIST before he would believe. Today an unbelieving world is looking for the marks of the cross in those who claim to have died to sin with their Saviour and who profess to live His resurrection life. But few there are who, like Paul, bear the marks of the Lord JESUS, the evidence of death to sin and life unto GOD. Yet as our Lord is, so are we in this world and nothing will so convince men of our identification with Him as the marks of His cross. Alas, we strive to impress them almost every other way. They hear oratory and see cleverness and efficiency and even earnestness; the old Adam parades under the guise of the Gospel, and preaching becomes another profession and church work merely another interest, along with club and community concerns. The carnal man labors overtime "working FOR JESUS," but the Lord Himself is not seen.

One thinks of those weary disciples trudging toward Emmaus who recited to the unrecognized CHRIST, their companion, the crucifixion story. Then they told Him some of the reports that He had risen and added, "**And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: BUT HIM THEY SAW NOT**" (Luke 24:24). There is the tragedy of today: men are looking for the resurrection CHRIST, the living CHRIST, and they see us, but Him they see not. They see Him not in our church services, they see Him not in our sermons, they see Him not in our lives. We get in His way and use His name to advertise ourselves, and men see us and turn away sick and disgusted. They are not looking for us but for Him, and a lot of our feverish haranguing about Him only hides Him from view.

It is so easy to be orthodox in one's beliefs about Him and even earnest in one's labors for Him and yet not really make Him known. Sometimes in advertised places and with much-advertised persons one has expected to see the Lord and has looked in vain for marks of Calvary. Ability, enthusiasm, action, statistics, all these have appeared but flesh uncrucified has spoiled it all. For, no matter how well we know it theoretically, we are ever in danger of forgetting that the way of the cross cuts across every plan and purpose and principle of natural will and wisdom, that success with Him means failure with us, and life with Him death to us. There are many medals but few scars, and seeking our own crowns we miss His.

What are the marks of the cross? Not self-inflicted austerities, asceticism, the rigors of the Middle Ages brought up to date, neglecting of the body to satisfy the flesh. Let all who get off on that crazy track get back to Colossians and learn the way of the Lord more perfectly. Those

who labor to produce such stigmata to attract attention to their saintliness are worse than worldlings. It is not our deadness but His life that we want to make known, and His risen life is not a gloomy thing. We die but He lives, and CHRIST in us is an experience of joy unspeakable and full of glory. These hypocrites of a sad countenance who appear unto men to fast have their reward.

The marks of the cross are simply the marks of our identification with our Lord, death to our own plans and purpose, death to our own right to our lives, that He might have His way with us and ours. It does involve self-denial, and although the battle may sometimes rage around a specific matter, the real issue is not giving up this particular thing and that but renouncing our claim to ourselves that we may truly say, "**Not I but Christ.**" It has been said that the cross is simply "I" crossed out and so it is. That does mean conflicts and agonies and throes and struggles, but only because we hate to give up living our own lives. The minute we resign and He takes over, His life becomes ours.

There will be marks of this cross experience, but they are glorified by His Presence within. As we grow older in His life, we recognize the cross marks when we see them. Often they are written on the countenance.

Here is one who abandoned a self-chosen career for a God-chosen call.

There is one who started out earnestly but with a severity and harshness that had to be burned out in the furnace of affliction.

Yonder is another who mistook his own fervency of spirit for the filling of the SPIRIT and learned the difference in no easy fashion.

Over there is one who spoke with tongues of men and angels and understood mysteries but had not love - until he found the more excellent way.

Think you that such souls learned their lesson under a shade tree in a rocking chair? No, they carry the marks but they also carry Him, and He glorifies the marks of death with the touch of His life.

So do not play up the negative and hide the positive - We are dead to sin but that we may be alive unto GOD; crucified that we may live. We magnify our burdens instead of our blessings, our fears instead of faith, and forget that beyond the cross lies the crown. We should yet be in our sins if the CHRIST of the cross had not also come out of the grave, and we shall be dead in experience if we only die to self and live not in Him.

Thomas knew that our Lord had died. He needed no evidence of that. He wanted to see the cross marks to be sure that He was alive. Thomas today demand to see in us the marks of the cross but not for the sake of the marks; what they are after is to see that He lives in us. Going around with heavy countenance, letting everybody know that you do not play cards, dance or attend the theatre is not going to convince Thomas. But if he sees in you a living CHRIST Who so meets your need that the world has lost its charm, he will be constrained to acknowledge Him as Lord and GOD.

How is it done? Paul lived this crucified, risen life by the faith of the Son of GOD (Galatians 2:20). Peter gave up nets and boats, but it took him three years to give himself. There must be not merely the renouncing of things but also of self and then an off-looking unto Him to live His life where we have failed. GOD reckons us dead with CHRIST, and we are to reckon as He reckons and make it real by daily making to die the doings of the body. But we also live with Him and by the SPIRIT we daily take His life for ours, we walk in the SPIRIT and do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

You are His witness before a world of doubt: Where are the marks of the Lord JESUS?

Do men see in you the evidence that you have gone with Him the way of Calvary and the open grave and that He has taken the place of you? They are not looking for the marks of your convictions, your cleverness, your character, but for the marks of the cross and the CHRIST. GOD help you not to fail them.

~ end of chapter 5 ~
