

## “The Cross Centered Religion”

When I asked teen Christians why they are Christians the answers included, “I believe God, because God loves me, I want to be saved, I want to have true happiness, and because it is the truth.” These are all good answers.

Then I asked the same teens, “What answer would you give a young person from another part of the world who had no knowledge of God or the Bible?” I could see this was harder for them. Yet I encouraged them, in a simple expression, “The Cross,” we have the most profound, the most thought provoking, and ultimately the most powerful reason for Christianity.

**First, “The Cross” is a shock factor. It converts a symbol of death and defeat to our banner of victory.** At face value it is baffling. When most in the world would seek success on the basis of health, wealth, and winning politics, God chose to launch his gospel with the death of his Son upon a cross.

It wasn’t just any death, it was crucifixion, which painted the best that ever walked on the earth as the worse criminal ever punished. It begs the question, “Why?” This story is without precedent, it is unparalleled.

“For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God.” (2nd Cor. 13:4).

Yes, through “The Cross” God introduces his love story (John 3:16). “The Cross” is the most dramatic starting point in our salvation.

**Second, “The Cross” gives us a sacrifice which God accepts (John 1:29).** “The Cross” addresses and solves the matter of my sins. God planned a sacrifice, his own son, so I could be redeemed. Our sins hang over us indefinitely, leaving no reconciliation with self, others, or God. This matter is irresolvable outside of “The Cross.”

**Third, “The Cross” extinguishes our pride in the matter of our salvation.** When world religions are competing with edifices,

intellectual sophistication, and even military dominance, God’s people are standing beneath the cross.

We are not forwarding a better lifestyle as a reason for being a Christian. We are not selling our choice in religion on the basis of what it does for us materially or socially. Many sell Christianity in this “impressive” fashion, but God wants us to identify with a slain Lamb. If we cannot identify with a slain Lamb, we are not in God’s grace.

We stand without pride with God at “The Cross.” This is where no one stood with Jesus at the time because of the reproach and shame. But we now know God used infamy as his means of saving us. For us to stand at “The Cross” is for us to admit Jesus died there because of our reproach, and our sins (1st Pet. 2:24). It is our shame that Jesus bore at “The Cross.”

We will never have the right to be “up-ity.” The apostle Paul wrote, “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” (1st Cor. 2:2). The glory is not established by saved sinners, it is established by “The Cross,” and to the Lord we give the glory for our salvation and eternal walk.

**Finally, “The Cross” gives us hope against all foes.** Even though God’s Son died on the cross, he did not stay dead. He rose on the third day, and a few days later ascended to Heaven, where he ever lives and he rules on God’s throne. (1st Cor. 15:1-4)

In a world of rampant evil, physical death, and humanistic vanities, we have hope. This is because Jesus Christ has already overcome these foes.

Jesus is the trail blazer for us in life and eternity. God demonstrated this power with “The Cross.”

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