

The Word of the Cross (Part 3)

Church history is littered with the trail of those who've tried to avoid the word of the cross. There are gnostics and ascetics, legalists and the licentious - to name only a few. They may be different yet all are the same in at least two ways: 1) They sought to work from man-centered, flesh-oriented postures to repair, improve, train, educate or mortify the flesh into submission. 2) They are all "enemies of the cross" (see Phil 3:18-19). The natural man, although quite religious, abhors the word of the cross. We send our requests to God for Christ-likeness in some "cross-less" way (on retreat, in a book, etc.), then resist and refuse His word... the word of the cross.

Although not exhaustive, here are some of the ways we refuse the word of the cross:

- By Clinging to the Past: In a past untouched by the cross, our successes or our failures, our good old days or our bad old days seem to name us. All of our blame or pride, all of our self-loathing or our self-admiration must go. The word of the cross comes to sever us from bondage to our former (false) selves and render us alive to our new (true) selves in Christ. We are new creations in Christ (II Cor 5:17).

- By Clinging to the Offenses of Others: In unfair treatment untouched by the cross, those who have rejected us, abandoned us, and even abused us get the final word. Legitimate anger untouched by the cross, will harden into illegitimate hatred and resentfulness. The word of the cross comes to sever us from the root of bitterness and render us alive to the mercy of Christ. His mercy triumphs over their judgment of us (Jo 2:13).

- By Clinging to Our Fantasies: In a dream untouched by the cross, in our own private fantasies, we each would have done some things differently had we been God. We often try and escape our sorrow and pain by developing a fantasy about who we might have been in our self-created worlds. The word of the cross comes to sever us from our delusions about how life should be and plants us squarely in God's reality... what He actually sees (Ro 8:28-29).

- By Clinging to Self-Righteousness: In a righteousness untouched by the cross, we attempt to clean up ourselves in order to be "right" before God and others. Attempting to fix ourselves by trying harder, we develop a righteousness of our own which is worth nothing before God. The word of the cross comes to sever us from the foolishness of self-generated righteousness and joins us to the wisdom of freely receiving perfect righteousness through faith in Christ (Phil 3:9).

The word of the cross is death to the cross-less self... and life to the newly raised self in Christ!



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GREETINGS

"But these words (of Jesus' resurrection) appeared to them as nonsense and they would not believe them." (Lk 24:11)

The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ is something so "out of the box" that it does not fit into the usual structures of our lives. If the word of the cross is foolishness (I Cor 1:18,21,23,25; 2:14... 5 times!), then does that make us April fools? (see I Cor 4:10!)

Isn't it foolishness... nonsense... to seek to be agents of love in a world of force and manipulation? To pursue the overcoming of evil only with good? To express Christ's life in a realm still trying to snuff our the Light of life?





Perhaps it is nonsense to those who are perishing, yet it is wisdom and power to those who saved! Meaning what? That we can be fearless fools. We may live now and forever with no fear of rejection, no fear of defeat and no fear of separation from our God. We can be joyful fools. By sinking our roots deeply into the unseen and eternal supply of God, we may joyfully draw thirst satisfying water from His wells of salvation. We can be hopeful fools. Since the resurrection proves God always gets the final word, we may live with a holy passion for what is possible since God is always with us.

Just remember, only fools reign in life! (Ro 5:17; II Tim 2:11-12)

CALENDAR

APRIL	
5,12,26	CCF
10-11	Atlanta (wedding)
14	Alachua Study
17-19	Monticello, UT
28	Ocala Study
MAY	
1-3	Waymont, PA (607-239-5006)
JUNE	
3-7	Baton Rouge, LA (225-769-8844)

PRAISE and PRAYER

-  The word of the cross
-  The joy of our salvation
-  CCF pastor search
-  Conferences and retreats