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Christ's Incredible Cross

By David Servant

Introduction

Recently a friend of mine innocently asked the pastor of a growing church if he ever preached about the cross of Christ. The pastor replied that he *never* preached about the cross; to him the subject seemed “too negative.”

His remark stunned my friend. Especially when he considered that this man was not pastoring an “enlightened” liberal congregation nor a dead church embalmed in the rotting wraps of orthodoxy. This man was pastoring a young church that prided itself on being evangelical and charismatic. His church was full of born-again Christians, or at least he thought it was.

How could this be? I wondered. How could someone preach from the Bible and yet miss the central theme of Scripture?

How could a trained minister preach from the Old Testament and overlook the fact that so much of its law, history, and prophecy all point to an event that would take place on the cross of Calvary?

How could a pastor preach from the four Gospels and miss their most obvious theme—the subject that dominates more chapters than any other? How could he fail to notice that Jesus viewed His death as the most important event of His ministry, in fact, the reason for His incarnation?

How could a minister of the gospel preach from the Pauline epistles and overlook statements such as, “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified,” and “may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 2:2; Gal. 6:14a)?

How could a Christian leader think the subject of the cross is too negative a topic to mention in his church, when it was on the cross that salvation was purchased and Satan’s power was broken (see Heb. 2:14)?

I sincerely hope that particular pastor is one of a kind. Yet I’m concerned that he is an immoderate representative of many contemporary Christians, preachers and lay people alike, who fails to understand that Jesus’ cross is central to all Christian faith and practice. Too often the contemporary gospel message is either proclaimed from the pulpit or shared with a neighbor without mention of the cross. Our audience is simply invited to “accept Jesus,” the One who will give them peace of mind and a more fulfilling life.

But that is not the gospel of the Bible. If we haven’t spoken of the cross, we haven’t communicated the gospel. Without the cross there is no gospel. Paul, in fact, stated that the gospel is “the word of the cross” (1 Cor. 1:17-18).

We can, of course, only expect biblical results if we proclaim a biblical gospel—a gospel in which the cross of Christ is central. Without a true gospel, there will be no true revivals or great awakenings. As long as the “word of the cross” is neglected, the church is akin to a hamster running on its wheel—very busy but making no real progress.

The Authentic Gospel

As Paul declared in his letter to the Romans, the authentic gospel is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16). The primary reason for a powerless church is due to the fact that the true gospel, “the power of God,” is not being proclaimed as it should. When people are being “born again” by means of a message that does not mention the cross of Christ, is it any wonder that those kind of converts are indistinguishable from the unregenerate?

The only remedy, then, is a re-examination of the necessity, significance, and centrality of the cross of Christ. When the cross once more regains its rightful place at the center of the gospel and our teaching, then the power of God will be manifested in life-transforming salvation.

In the pages that follow, we will survey an event preordained before the foundation of the world and predicted for centuries before it occurred: the culminating focus of all human history, the wondrous episode that revealed God’s righteousness and His love as nothing before or after, the moment when our redemption was accomplished, and the time when Satan’s power was crushed. Together we’ll probe the preeminent theme of Scripture, the hope of the entire world, the gospel of God—*the incredible cross of Jesus Christ*.

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