Tuesday's Touch

...from Pastor Ed ...March 3, 2009

Bearing the Cross

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it... Matthew 16:24-25

> I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: ... Galatians 2:20
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> > But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. Galatians 6:14

It has been fairly common among Christians throughout the centuries, even among some of the great "giants" of the faith, to refer to abiding trials or afflictions as "crosses" which must be borne. The phrase, "that's her cross to bear," is familiar to most of us, and has the implication that we must by grace "tough it out" when it comes to abiding afflictions. But I fear there is perhaps, inherent in this, a faulty perspective.

It is indeed true that Jesus calls every would-be disciple to take up the cross and follow Him. But we were never meant to <u>carry</u> it very far-- just up the hill ...to Calvary's mount ...where we are to be nailed upon it, crucified with Christ. The cross meant one thing to people when Jesus used this terminology. It was the place of death- of crucifixion. It had no "religious" significance at all. There were no cross necklaces, bracelets, or pins. And no one walked around carrying a cross unless he was on his way to die- to be put to death under the judicial judgment for crimes committed. So Jesus' point was not about bearing the ongoing difficulties of living the Christian life, at least not directly. Rather, He says, "He who saves his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it. He demands our death.

But neither was this a literal admonition for all who would come and follow. Not all believers are required to physically be put to death for the faith. What Jesus is saying to us is expressed by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:15 when he says that "He died for all, that those who live should **live no longer for themselves**, but for Him who died for them and rose again."; or 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, "you are **not your own,** ...you are bought with a price..." ; or Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet **not I**, but Christ lives in me..."

It should become evident to us that our baptism must be more than just emblematic of our positional union with Christ, as important as that is. It must also be a proclamation of intent, that not only have I been spiritually united with Christ in His death and resurrection, but I now rise to walk in newness of life, reckoning myself ***dead****... but alive unto God in Christ... (Romans 6:5-11)*

Now this brings us back to those trials and afflictions which we all face. One purpose of these is to prove our "deadness". A living Self will rise up in protest, stray from the Lord's chosen path, or even become angry at God. The crucified Self will learn to bear patiently, and even rejoice in tribulation. (Rom.5:3; James 1:2-3) This requires that we re-learn every day that ***the secret to bearing the cross is to get on it.*** *We shall never know the power of the resurrection till we are made conformable to His death. Phil.3:7-11. O that we could in passionate love for our Savior, embrace the cross.*

Precious Savior,

We can never do, and must never be deceived into trying to do, anything to add to what you have accomplished for us on the cross (Hebrews 10:14). But you would have us to be dead to this world that you might sanctify to us our deepest distress, and that we might know in some measure the boundless joy that is only found in the fellowship of your suffering (Phil.3:10). Grant us grace to "die daily" (1 Corinth. 15:31), knowing that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us (Rom.8:18), and that these very afflictions are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. (2 Corinth. 4:17).

Beneath the Blood of Your Cross...
Amen

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