

The Symbol of Christianity: THE CROSS

Hebrews 12:1-4

²Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

My brothers and sisters as we enter into the season of the Cross and the Blood of the Lamb of God, we should enter in the Spirit of Thanksgiving, because our Lord and Savior not only finished the work that the Father laid out for him. He finished it through the ultimate sacrifice on the Cross, which also was the work of our salvation, and serves as a daily reminder of true strength and grace under stress and tremendous pressure.

My brothers and sisters we know that the Cross means many things to different people. But to the Romans in Jesus' day, it was a deterrent, because criminals could be crucified on crosses to communicate one message, don't mess with Rome. Therefore, Jesus' execution was a judicial death penalty carried out by the Romans, who occupied Israel at that time.

So, over time the Cross found itself in a class all by it's self, because it became both a symbol of torture and of relief, it became both a symbol of intimidation and a symbol of hope, the cross can also be looked upon as both good and evil, and ultimately it became a symbol of Christianity.

But my brothers and sisters we can learn a lot about dealing with the pressures, burdens, and crosses in our own lives by examining what scripture reveals of Jesus Christ's words and behavior while he was upon the cross: I hear him saying "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do". (Luke 23:34)

Talk about grace! Here we find Jesus Christ showing a Great response to a pressure filled situation, avoiding the blame game and asking for his enemies to be forgiven, after they had beaten him, spit on him and otherwise made a mockery of him.

That is why my brothers and sisters we should not be looking for or playing the blame game when we encounter the problems that confront us, we should immediately ask God to come into the situation and handle the pressure at hand for us.

When things trouble us we should make the same plea that Jesus made to the Father, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

We all know Jesus' words that we are to take up the cross and follow him, (Luke 9:23) "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me," these words bring a radical call to discipleship that requires us to endure hardships that come our way.

But, my brothers and sisters on the other hand what about when we are required to take up Jesus' cross? What about the man who was passing by and ran into the mob crowd and was required to carry Jesus' cross? Do you know the story?

My brothers and sisters here was a man, named Simon, who was minding his own business, we are not sure why he was coming into town on that fateful day. Maybe he was among the many making the trip for the Passover.

However there is one thing that I'm sure of and that is he was not thinking about carrying a cross, for anyone, not even someone accused of being a criminal like Jesus was, that never crossed his mind, had he heard the Lord's instruction to go two steps if forced to walk one? "If you take one step, I will take two, said the Lord."

We are not sure, But we certainly know one thing, he was forced to carry Jesus' cross. He had no choice, but let us not trivialize his willingness to do so; it was in God's plan, because the day that Simon encountered Jesus' cross changed his life forever.

My brothers and sisters, Simon's name means listening, and on that day he was really listening as he was called to carry Jesus' cross up Calvary's hill. He was listening to the call of God to be a disciple of his Son Jesus Christ and Simon' life would never be the same again.

The Cross has that kind of affect upon a person being called upon to carry the cross of Jesus. Besides by carrying the cross some of the Holy blood had to get on him.

Think about it my brothers and sisters the Holiness of the blood worked to create a new man because of its Holiness, just like the woman with the issue of blood whose life was changed, when she touched Jesus' garment and was made whole, was transformed.

My brothers and sisters the cross has that kind of power to transform, because in that moment people realize the selfless nature of the work of the cross, and they see who Jesus really is, The Son Of The Living God, Who is Spirit and must be worshipped that way..

My brothers and sisters as we now turn to the crucifixion, "we hear Jesus saying as he looks down from the cross, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani", meaning "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME"? (Matt.27:46)

It is always good to let the Father know what we are going through, during our time of trouble. God is not afraid of our emotions, our doubts or our questions, so when Jesus asked His Father this question, he already knew the answer: God had not forsaken him, and his ultimate victory was only a few days away.

Even as you ask God why me, you must know that He has your back, that you have the victory and that salvation through Jesus Christ is assured.

Jesus next says, "I AM THIRSTY" (John 19:28)
When Jesus let those around him know that he was thirsty, although death was imminent, he was still acknowledging the needs of his temple body. We as humans must always also take care of our temple body, for it belongs to God.

Finally we hear Jesus call out in a loud voice, "Father into your hands I commit my Spirit" (Luke 23:46).
My brothers and sisters, without a doubt we must accept God's will for our lives and we must put our lives into God's hands just as Jesus did, with total faith and trust, believing that his will for our lives will prevail, no matter how difficult our present trails are for us.

We must remember that God is still in control as we enter the season of the cross. That it is still important to let God know through our prayer and thanksgiving. We must remember that we are glad he is the focus in every moment of our lives. While looking to the cross to find

strength and grace during our trails and pressure we must remember that his grace is truly amazing and will see us through. I will cherish the Old Rugged Cross and someday exchange it for a crown.

The cross is the bridge we must build in order to transform our lives and transform the lives of others.

My brothers and sisters, I challenge you to share your story with someone else, about how the cross and the blood of the Lamb changed your life. Because when you took up your cross, you were not to forget the cross of Jesus. His cross is the symbol of Christianity which you carry.

I will cherish the Old Rugged Cross and exchange it someday for a crown, because the cross is the symbol of Christianity.

PRAISE JESUS! PRAISE GOD FOR USING IT TO RAISE JESUS CHRIST UP. JESUS SAID, "IF I BE LIFTED UP, I WILL DRAW ALL MEN UNTO ME," AMEN AND THANK GOD.