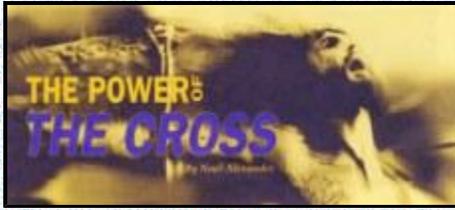


# THE POWER OF THE CROSS

By Noel Alexander



**There is not a more liberating, redeeming, costly, significant, or glorious work in all of human history than the cross of Jesus Christ.**

The sum total of that richness, and all God accomplished and made available to us in that act of grace, is known as the "power of the cross." That ongoing power is life-transforming and is working every second of every day.

Unfortunately, many Christians live in frustration and even defeat. To them the cross means their sins are forgiven and that's all. But what too few realize is that while making a way to forgive our sins, Jesus also dealt a death blow to our sinful natures by giving us the power to live a life of victory each day by His Spirit.

Sadly, many Christians haven't applied the finished work of the cross to their lives. *"One died for all, therefore all died.. .wherefore if any man is in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are...new."* (2 Cor. 2:15-17 KJV)

What can we do to live in the daily blessings and power of the things Jesus already won for us? How should we live in order to reap joy, happiness, and peace, now and through all eternity?

The answer is not a secret waiting to be discovered. It is found in Galatians 6:14. Paul states, *"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."*

Never has the Church been more in need of the message of the cross than today. Right in the midst of this massive technological age, with its scientific and communication breakthroughs, I believe those who have *true* wisdom are the Christians who, in simplicity, sow to the Spirit by glorying in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a tremendous scripture in 1 Corinthians. It says, *"For the story and message of the cross is sheer absurdity and folly to those who are perishing and on their way to perdition, but to us who are being saved it is the manifestation of the power of God."* (1:18 AMP)

If you want to see God in all His power, take a look at Jesus Christ dying on a cross. It's at the cross that God in Christ conquered death, hell, and sin. And it's there that He purchased for us all the glory, life, and freedom we could ever contain, and more! It's already been done.

Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins so we don't have to. He died on a cross and rose again to defeat the power of sin and death in the life of every person who believes.

God is serious about the cross. We need to be serious, too.

## What Is Most Important?

The Apostle Paul said, *"For what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."* (1 Cor. 15:3 NIV) Here Paul elevates the death of Jesus on the cross to the very highest place. It is the most important event in all time and eternity. Dying on the cross was indeed the foremost goal of Jesus, for He said, *"I came to minister and to give my life as a ransom for many."* (Mark 10:45 KJV)

Even John the Baptist, who was sent to bear witness to the Christ, exclaimed to his disciples upon seeing Jesus, *"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."* (John 1:29 NAS) John knew that Jesus was the incarnate Word of God, the Author of life, and the greatest miracle-worker of all time. He could have commented on any of these aspects. Yet *the most important thing* John wanted his disciples to know was that Jesus would pay the price necessary to open the way to God - through the cross.

And later in Jesus' ministry He asked His own disciples, *"Who do you say I am?"* Peter answered, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* (Matthew 16:15,16 NIV)

Peter not only knew Jesus was God's Son, he knew His role as the Christ, or Redeemer. Peter didn't realize *how* this redemption would happen, but Jesus wasted no time getting specific.

*"From that time on Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."* (Matthew 16:21 NIV)

Jesus was basically saying, "It's gonna take the cross to redeem mankind."

Peter was so stunned that he began to reprove Jesus. *"God forbid it, Lord! This*

*shall never happen to you."* But Jesus turned and said, *"Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."* (Matthew 16:22,23 NAS)

The harshness of Jesus' rebuke to Peter stems from His fierce realism about His primary purpose of coming to earth, which was to die. Peter did not realize the centrality of what would be accomplished by the cross - that it was of first importance.

To a large degree, this is the state of the Church today. We don't fully understand Jesus' mission to die on a cross or how to glory in it. Therefore, we can't fully enter into the victory that the completion of that mission won for us.

## The Wisdom Of the Cross

Many people, even Christians, are embarrassed to embrace the simplicity of the cross as the door of entry into life with God.

Paul said, *"We preach Christ (the Messiah) crucified, [preaching which] to the Jews is a scandal and an offensive stumbling block and to Gentiles it is absurd and utterly unphilosophical nonsense."* (1 Cor. 1:23 AMP)

Today the world still calls the central theme of Christianity foolishness. However, man's inability to grasp the largeness of God's truths makes them no less powerful.

Paul was determined not to let the cross be overshadowed by any other theme. *"For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel - not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power."* (1 Cor. 1:17 NIV)

May we resist anything that would allow the cross to be "emptied of its power" in our lives!

## The Stability Of the Cross

Spiritual power and stability come from really knowing what Christ accomplished for us on the cross. That's where the tossing to and fro by every wind of doctrine is pushed away. The cross spells death to all things of lesser importance.

I've been a preacher for ten years and know the types of messages that get positive responses. I know for a fact that the teaching of the cross is not popular, even with Christians, because so much other stuff has been injected into the Body of Christ.

There are so many other messages and programs capturing our attention. But

novelties will come and go. So will this or that emphasis. Christian leaders with their great visions will wax and wane. Yes, movements and men will rise and fall, but the cross will stand forever.

Are you looking for the newest emphasis? I'll tell you what it is. It happened 2000 years ago. It was Christ dying on the cross. The most glorious move of God on the face of the earth was when God openly and publicly displayed His Son as the sin offering for the world - and made a way for us to walk in His resurrection power.

The one message that is most important for you today, even as you're reading this right now, is the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. All other things pale in the light of the face of the Crucified.

## Separation From the World

What we need today is a clear separation from the world - separation from all of those things that drain away our life. The only thing that can make a *new creation* is the power of the cross.

The cross cuts off the umbilical cord that comes from the world to me and from me to the world. That umbilical cord (my attachment to the world and the world's attachment to me) is cut off, knotted, and dried up at the cross.

The cross was used by the Romans as a horrible and shameful instrument of death. Death on a cross was the greatest symbol of disgrace and was normally used only to execute slaves and the lower levels of society. Some of us might think that the only people who ever died on a cross were Jesus and the two thieves. However, there was a time when the Romans crucified men all the way from one city to the next, on either side of the road.

Thousands were crucified for the name of the Lord.

Although the Romans used the cross daily at times, they themselves said, "Perish the thought that *any* Roman die on a cross."

We need to let the timeless power of Christ's cross work its death in us that we might live to God. May it be a permanent barrier between us and the world.

## Keeping the Cross In View

I believe that the Church is in some serious trouble today. Great movements are in trouble. Great men whom the body of Christ has looked to for many years are in trouble, having suddenly fallen into sin. For many of these men, I believe

somewhere along the way the cross became obscured. Their prayer life began to fall by the wayside. Other things became more important and occupied their time. The light of the cross slowly dimmed and somehow that umbilical cord to the world attached itself again. And when they finally noticed, they cried out, "What on earth happened?"

As one great minister said, "It's easy to get consumed with the work of the Lord, and forget about the Lord of the work."

Being a zealous man myself, I have often pressed for the future. In the past I often yearned and hungered for the important things that were *to come*. But I know a lot more today. I found out that it all happened 2000 years ago.

My preacher father, who is 97 years old, fostered a love in my heart for the hymns. One of my favorites is "When I Survey The Wondrous Cross" by Isaac Watts.

*When I survey the wondrous cross,  
On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.  
Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ, my God...*

We need to survey the wondrous cross. By that I mean we must view it and consider it comprehensively.

I believe the Lord wants us to see the cross afresh by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. All that you and I need is there. That's where the wisdom and the glory of God are. God wants us to grasp the reality of what He won for us at the cross, so we can enter into the splendor of that inheritance - not tomorrow, but today!

I encourage you to wait, to kneel, and to ask God for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Ask Him for a deeper understanding of Jesus Christ bleeding and dying on the cross. We need to see the cross in open display before us and meditate on it, glorying in all the facts of it.

## **What Jesus Accomplished For Us On the Cross**

I believe the cross of Jesus Christ has become obscured to the Church today. We need to comprehend the truth of what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross, and receive all that is ours through it.

For a moment, just imagine that a loving relative left you a million dollars - and sent you a letter to let you know it was in your bank account. All you needed to do was

begin writing checks. But because it seemed so unbelievable, you continued to go through life unable to provide for yourself and those you loved - even though you were a millionaire.

Through the cross God has made available this glorious inheritance to us:

† A New Nature. We who were "slaves to sin" (Rom. 6:6) are now "partakers of the divine nature." (2 Pet. 1:3,4) *"The law of the Spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin and death."* (Rom. 8:2 NAS)

† A New Home - The Kingdom of God. *"God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus."* (Eph. 2:6 NAS)

† A New Ruler and Lord - Jesus Christ. No longer do we need to be ruled by the flesh and the devil. *"He who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son."* (Col. 1:13 KJV)

† A New Mind. *"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* (2 Cor. 5:17 KJV)

† A New Friend and High Priest. *"I have called you friends,"* Jesus said. (John 15:15) And we are told that as our high priest He *"...always lives to make intercession for (us)."* (Heb. 7:25 NAS)

† A New, Deep, Loving Relationship with Our Heavenly Father. *"I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."* (2 Cor. 6:18 KJV)

† A Comforter and Teacher. *"The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, he shall teach you all things."* (John 14:26 KJV)

† Victory over Satan. *"[God] disarmed the principalities and powers that were ranged against us and made a bold display and public example of them, in triumphing over them...in it [the cross]."* (Col. 2:15 AMP)

† Victory over Death. *"...our Savior Christ Jesus, who annulled death and made it of no effect and brought life and immortality [immunity from eternal death] to light through the gospel."* (2 Tim. 1:10 AMP)

† Continual Washing from Sin. *"If we walk in the light...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."* (1 John 1:7 NAS)

And so, so much more!

## Personal Transformation

I've personally gone through a true reformation over the past year. You know what happened? The Lord allowed me to begin surveying the cross. And as I have

focused my attention there - power, glory, satisfaction, rest, wisdom, understanding, insight, ability, and great grace have poured out of that instrument of death into my life.

By God's grace, I am in the midst of an explosive reformation of my thinking. Suddenly Jesus Christ in all of His glory hanging on the center cross has become emblazoned in my understanding. The result is liberating. My chains are gone! In a new dimension I understand the truth and what is true of me. You talk about the tree of life? This is it! Everything flows out of the cross. I glory in it. I've been drawing from that artesian well called the cross, and you can too.

Jesus said, *"You will know the truth and the truth will set you free."* The truth is that Christ died, was buried, was raised, and is alive today. And what is true of Jesus is true of me. I died with Him, but I'm also fully alive with Him.

I've entered into a new stage of my life. I'm enjoying the journey. I'm enjoying righteousness. I'm enjoying peace. I'm enjoying the joy of the Holy Spirit each day. I'm no longer waiting to gain enough "maturity" to enter in.

This glorious, transforming inheritance is available to the newest Christian. Simple, childlike believing, the realization that "it already happened," is the door of entry into all that's ours through the cross.

## Believing Is the Door

The most powerful word in the scriptures is "believe." John 20:31 says, *"But these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in His name."* (NIV)

Just as only those who definitely receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior are saved, only those who reckon Christ's death as their own death actually experience crucifixion power over their old nature.

*"For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Rom. 6:10,11 KJV)

The term "reckon" means literally "to take into account." As Christians we must take into account the fact that we are dead to the power of sin in our life. We are under new management. The presence of sin is not removed, but it is rendered powerless, except by a deliberate act of choosing what we know is wrong. The enemy will resist our "reckoning," but in Christ we have the victory.

Through what God did in Christ on the cross, through the substitutionary, sacrificial,

atoning death of Jesus Christ upon the cross, the world is crucified to me and I am crucified to the world.

The last words of Jesus on the cross were, "IT IS FINISHED!"

The Lord is asking us to take our position with Him in His death and resurrection *now*. "*Now we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.*" (Rom. 6:8 NAS)

It is a spiritual principle that we are transformed positively or negatively by what we focus on. It's time for the Church to focus on the cross. May we be transformed by focusing on, surveying, and glorying in the cross.

## A Ransom For All

Isaiah 42 paints a graphic picture of the lost. They're like people who are incarcerated in spiritual jails all over the world - kidnapped by the devil with no one to say, "*Give them back!*"

But we have a message for the lost. It's called the Good News! There was Someone who fought for their cause. He was the only perfectly sinless man who could do it. His name is Jesus Christ. Their prison doors have swung open by the power of the cross. The lost must hear, "Come out! Your pardon was purchased once and for all!"

I want to fully understand the wrath God poured out on His Son. Jesus paid the price so I don't have to! I thank God for the cross and the glorious blood of Jesus Christ. I want to understand the glory of my elder brother and Lord becoming my substitute and dying in my place.

What is our part in all of this? Simply believe. Because of the finished work of the cross, Jesus has empowered me to live in righteousness. Through His blood, His death, and by the power of His resurrection I'm justified. Glory to God! That's where the praise begins and leads to worship!

The more I understand the power of the cross, the more I live day to day in the staggering, sanctifying reality of it.

Glory in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ! This is the way we sow to the Spirit and reap an eternal harvest in heaven and in this life. We have eternity before us. Look, believe, and live in His resurrection life!

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