

**"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)**

## **The Offence of The Cross**

by Ray Prinzing

"And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offence of the cross ceased." (Galatians 5:11)

It is with the sincere desire that the Spirit of God, our Illuminator, shall open this great truth to every heart and mind; that these things shall not be as the presentation of one individual, but rather that every one reading this shall feel the anointing of the same Spirit of Truth guiding them into an understanding of these timely and precious truths. Thus we begin writing on this subject, may God bless it to every heart.

Circumcision was a part of the LAW, or the first covenant; it was one of those symbolic ordinances Israel received as a "figure for the time then present - that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and CARNAL ORDINANCES, imposed on them until the time of reformation (a making thoroughly right)." (Hebrews 9:9,10).

Circumcision was a symbolic ordinance, it was a sign in the flesh under the first covenant, but it contained a deeper meaning which was to be fulfilled in that Second Covenant which was to follow in due time. But before we can get unto the second covenant, the "NEW" covenant which Jesus Christ opened up when He came to begin the TIMES OF REFORMATION, beginning the work of making everything THOROUGHLY RIGHT, we find that this all BEGINS WITH THE CROSS. The cross is the gateway into the New Covenant, and THE WAY OF THE CROSS is a period of transition from the old into the new, from the fleshly into the spiritual. And since many cannot conceive or comprehend what the life in the Spirit is in its realities, therefore they are repulsed by this medium of transition, not knowing of the joy "that is set before them," and so the cross is an offence unto them. But the cross is the converging point for both the OLD and the NEW, and when Jesus came He opened up a new and living way into the glory of the spiritual. There's a distinct difference between the first covenant and the second one, the first being written upon tables of stone and the second one is to be inscribed upon the tables of the heart and the mind. One was a fleshly allegory, the other a spiritual reality. Now the scripture goes on to say that Christ "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (Hebrews 9:14).

Now as we pursue this subject we are going to find an amazing truth- we have been far too much involved in A SYSTEM OF DEAD WORKS that could not make us perfect as pertaining to the conscience. Many outward ceremonies and rituals, and the churches are still filled with them today, outward fleshly ordinances IMPOSED.

## **Glorying In the Flesh**

Now, Paul wrote on to the Galatians, (6:12-14), that, "as many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh- they constrain you to be circumcised; ONLY LEST THEY SHOULD SUFFER PERSECUTION FOR THE CROSS OF CHRIST. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised that they may GLORY IN YOUR FLESH. 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."

They constrain you to be circumcised. Speaking symbolically, they do their best to make you keep intact every ritual, every ordinance outwardly. Why? Because they want a beautiful display in the flesh, with much pomp and fanfare, looking so religious and spiritual, and everything that goes with such standards of men. Only, listen, only lest they should suffer persecution for the CROSS OF CHRIST. They do not like the offence of the cross and therefore want to keep everything on a material level and beautified by the flesh, as they overlay their cross with gold, decorated with roses.

Perhaps we could put it this way- throughout the Old Testament services things were very exterior with the sacrifices, outward washings, etc. And then when we come into the early church of the New Testament times we find that they didn't remove themselves too far away from such, they only spiritualized them a little. They changed the ceremony a little and tried to give a more spiritual setting for it. And yet to be honest in our hearts we have to admit that all of the things practiced yet today are still only symbolic and so we still haven't relinquished our hold on "fleshly" services, and all that which pertains unto them.

I know it is horrifying to a lot of people to have the truth come and expose some of these things, for they are so afraid they are going to lose something which has quite an appearance of godliness or spirituality. Especially if you tread on anything so supposedly as sacred as "water baptism" or "communion" and so forth. But consider: The communion service is only a carry-over in type and the "passover Lamb", only now we're to use bread and wine as SYMBOLS of the blood and body of Christ WHO FULFILLED the old passover Lamb, and so we have changed symbols, but still are operating on that level of types and shadows. Likewise we have changed from a "laver" and its washing ceremonies for setting apart, or sanctification, and now we have what we all call "water baptism." But what does it stand for? A type of the greater setting apart when we are fully baptized into the likeness of His death, thus forever separated and freed from all sin and its various kin.

Now, today, those who would make a fair show in their flesh, lest they should suffer persecution, refuse to go on INTO THE SPIRIT REALM. For neither they themselves keep, or attain unto the reality of this thing they have in symbol, they don't fulfill them, and yet they want to see you practice over and over again all their ceremonies that they might GLORY IN YOUR FLESH. Do not be mistaken, we do not despise the symbol, the type and shadow of that which is to come, it serves a special purpose for its level and the economy of that day for which it was given, to prepare the way for the greater realities ahead. But, beloved, THE TIME MUST COME WHEN WE GO ON INTO THE FULL REALM OF THE SPIRIT. And Paul came on the scene declaring that the way into this SPIRIT REALM is THE WAY OF THE CROSS, and so it offended many. They preferred to keep their types and shadows, their circumcision in the flesh, rather than to experience that greater circumcision... IN THEIR HEART, which meant the cutting off of all the desires and ways of the self-life, crucifixion in full in all of its greater spiritual meaning.

## **The Approach via the Cross**

"And they that are of The Christ have crucified the flesh with the affections (feelings, passion) and lusts. If we live by spirit, let us also walk by the spirit". (Galatians 5:24-25).

When we come to Christ and begin our new life in Him, we live by Spirit; the Eternal Spirit quickens us and the life of the "new man" in spirit. Now if we are to live by spirit, if the inner-man is a spiritual being, then we need to also go on and walk by spirit; and by that we mean-that our actions and activity be on the spiritual plane, not on such a natural, carnal level. Isn't it strange that in the past in trying to escape the offence of the cross how we would try to confess a life in the spirit, yet try to walk it in the flesh? And yet, we have been trying to walk in the spirit by carrying out symbolic ordinances - and hope to have a spiritual life. But, beloved, you cannot

progress very far into the realm of spirit and still continue on in symbolic things. It takes the Spirit to sustain our spiritual life, and nothing else will do.

And so Paul goes on saying, If we be of the Christ we will CRUCIFY our own feelings and our over-desires so that we might begin TO WALK BY SPIRIT. Now even when some people can receive a vision of the rest, peace, and joy in the realm of spirit, still the APPROACH VIA THE CROSS into that realm is an offence unto them.

Many folk like the first part of the verse that says, "That I may know HIM, and the power of His resurrection," but they don't care for the last part where it reads, "and the fellowship of His sufferings, being MADE CONFORMABLE UNTO HIS DEATH." (Philippians 3:10). But beloved, there is no grand leap into all the glories, the joys, set before us, for to share those things it necessitates our also partaking first of the various phases of His life, walk, will, and way - even of the way of the cross by which He went in order to obtain.

In type we have the record of Exodus 12, while Israel was kept in their houses during that midnight hour as the death angel passed through the land, and they all were partaking of the lamb whose blood had been used as a symbolic covering. And note something, they had to eat THE WHOLE LAMB, the bitter with the sweet. So had Moses commanded them saying, "Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with FIRE; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof." (Exodus 12:9). There has to be a partaking of all of it and not just those choice parts desired. This word we have here, "purtenance" is "qereb" in the Hebrew, and it means, bowels, inwards, etc. There must be all of it consumed if we would have His life to replace ALL of ours in all of its various aspects.

So the process of eating, i.e. coming into His "life" isn't altogether pleasant to the flesh, rather it has some phases that deal out some death-blows to the old self-life. Perhaps it is distasteful to the nature senses, repulsive to the egotistical pride of carnal self, but by God's grace we shall drink the bitterest cup, and taking the way of the cross press onward to obtain the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus.

Many think that the cross and death speak of negative things, and they would rather talk about life and the crown of glory - but that is because as yet they have not received a God-given revelation of what the cross really means in the life of God's children. For this emblem of suffering and shame has been appropriated by God to be the means of bringing us into conformity with His very image, and as we learn obedience, as we learn yieldedness to Him, we find the cross has thus become OUR POSITIVE APPROACH INTO A NEW SPIRIT LIFE.

## **The Scandal of the Cross**

The word "offence" as used in this message comes from our Greek word "skandalon" from which we get our word scandal. Webster gives some very interesting explanations for this word, as (1) the distressing effect on others of unseemly conduct. Surely taking the way of the cross appears as very unseemly to many and it has a distressing effect upon them.

(2) That which offends established moral conceptions. And again it is easily seen that the way of the cross will offend many established moral conceptions. There are some present teachings of how the christian walk is to be so wonderful, "Take Jesus, and your trouble are all over, it's a glory road all the way, you will have prosperity and blessing." But that is contrary to that which Jesus taught, when He told of how foxes have holes, birds have their nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head. Yes, it offends many of the current ideas of the Christian way of life.

(3) That which disgraces all who are associated or involved. The disgrace of the cross, "cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Galatians 3:13) To be identified with the cross of Christ, associated with death and its route is not pleasant in the eyes of men, and they heap reproach upon those who are walking beneath the cross, where self is subdued and brought low.

And the Greek meaning for offence is STUMBLING BLOCK, something that proves to be a source of distress, or discomfort. Since the cross stands between the old and the new, it has indeed become a "stumbling block" unto many. But one cannot pass from DEAD WORKS, from rituals and ceremonies, to serve the Living God in spirit without the work of the cross, because it's by the cross that we are crucified to the world, and the world to us. The cross stands for judgment and death, that is, thinking of judgment in the light of a judicial sentence that is passed, and the cross being the place where that sentence is carried out. Thus as we speak of "THE WAY OF THE CROSS" we are speaking of a way of judgment upon self, of crucifixion, and a way of conformity to His death, thus making possible that appropriating of His life.

## **Love Is Associated With the Cross**

Strange to say, in the minds of most christians, love is rarely associated with the judgments of God or our personal cross. Yet the scripture plainly says that god so loved the world that He gave His Son to die on a cross for us. Love was there on that eventful hour, beloved, for it was love (not nails) that actually hold Him to that cross. There was made manifest the great expression of the love of God towards us, in that even while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

But let us go even a little farther, for, even when a cross is understood as having a loving purpose within the life of the "believer", it is always thought as having another kind of purpose towards "unbelievers". So many think that whereas judgment in the life of a believer might release the Christ-life, once iniquity has been purged away, yet in the unbeliever many take it only as wrath, vengeance and punishment, and stop right there. As if God could have two purposes, that He could change His nature, toward one manifest love, and toward the other manifest hate. But that is not so, for the cross will be tasted, experienced by every man to ultimately work out the same purpose of bring him into subjection to the will of God.

Every judgment of God, and the need of a cross to execute that judgment, is the fruit and the natural consequence of self-will, rebellion and sin. Since Jesus had no sin of His own, for "He knew no sin," He came and assumed the load of our sin, and thus came under the sentence of death, and He tasted death for every man. "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Beloved, God would never have permitted such self will with its dire consequences unless He could make it to work ultimate good, and He shall do so even though it requires the way of the cross and its present travail and bitterness. We shall behold the hand of God make all things redound to His praise and glory. And thus the consequence lasts only as long as there is a need for its warning and judging lesson, then to cease.

There is no escape from this process, for to travel on any other road but what HE trod, to try and enter any other way, is to be a thief and a robber. Jesus said to His disciples, "I am the door" (John 10:9), and we all must enter in via HIM and the WAY which HE marked out for us in procuring our redemption. God therefore is no respecter of "persons" and all must travel this same route eventually. Furthermore, this work is not limited to this present age, for the ultimate goal is for God to be ALL IN ALL - and o'er coming ages have fulfilled their purpose, this will be wrought out. O, glorious truth, for then everyone will have DIED COMPLETELY TO THEIR OWN SELF-WILL AND CONTRARY NATURE so as to be renewed into the image of Him who is our altogether lovely One. Praise His wonderful name.

Now the scandal, the offence of the cross is apparent before us today, for while many may be quick to agree that Christ died on the cross for us, and in a limited sense they "glory in the cross of Christ." just so long as it is "HIS" cross and they aren't nailed upon it. When you begin to identify the cross of Christ with our personal lives, then it immediately becomes an offence unto them.

Paul preached much on the cross, using it as a medium or emblem of crucifixion, a token of death, the leaving of the old life to come, into the new life and the ministration of the Spirit. In fact Paul's writings abound with teachings on leaving the old law with its self-works, and coming into the liberty of the Spirit of Christ by which the New Covenant is established.

## **Take Up thy Cross**

Now when we refer constantly to "THE CROSS" we aren't referring to the old wooden cross, that again is only symbolic - being a material manifestation of some far greater work to be done in the invisible realm of our soul. The wooden cross upon which Jesus was crucified typified the closing out of the ordinances of the law which was to replace it might come into effect. When we speak of A CROSS therefore, we are speaking of any process brought to bear upon us by God for the purpose of purging out of the self-life.

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Reading such scriptures, as we have in Matthew 10:38, "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me," or, Luke 14:27, "whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple," such verses are a scandal, an offence unto many, they have a distressing effect upon them. When you only preach that Christ has carried the cross for us, that is fine, but to begin to point out these few staggering verses which declare that there is a cross for us to carry, that is an offence. And it also has with it a reproach which they do not care to be close to, or identified with, or subjected unto.

Consider a little more closely the verses given in the above paragraph: He that taketh, this word TAKETH is from the Greek word "lambano" meaning RECEIVE. This is quite a thing, there is a cross for you to bear IF YOU WILL RECEIVE IT, but many do not want to "accept" as from the hand of God many of their circumstances and allow such situations to help crucify the fleshly things yet remaining within them. And then, we go on with this word BEAR which means to carry. For along with the receiving of the cross, we also SHOULDERS THE CROSS and bear it toward our Calvary. He didn't say to accept your cross then place it in some corner and decorate it with roses and garlands, and say, See my cross! Oh, no! You pick it up and carry it For Jesus said if you do not bear your cross you can't be His disciple. A disciple is a term implying A TAUGHT ONE, or a trained one; one who has been disciplined. And we are disciplined, how? by the cross which we're given to carry. But if we do not accept that which is given to discipline us, how can we be HIS disciplined one? The token that we are now under HIS TRAINING or administration is the cross that we bear. Your cross becomes a mark of identification that you are walking the road that the Master has marked out before you.

## **The Preaching Of The Cross**

1 Corinthians 1:17-18 "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach (announce) the gospel: not with wisdom of words lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

Paul declared he wasn't sent to propagate ordinances, to further fleshly ceremonies, to baptize - instead he maintained that "God is my witness, WHOM I SERVE WITH MY SPIRIT in the gospel of His Son..." (Romans 1:9). For he realized that to be circumscribed by any realm of natural ritual and ordinances, you cannot freely, readily be led by the Spirit. Paul refused bondages to any former standard esteemed so holy by man, which also included the sabbath. Sabbath means REST, and he that hath ceased from his own works has entered into rest. And if there is one ordinance for the flesh to keep then you haven't ceased from your own works. If that is too strong for you right now - lay it up before the Lord until He quickens it to you. For these natural things, type and shadow, are only symbolic of better things in the spirit. Not until we cease from our own works are we fully keeping the sabbath, even if we observe all the days on the calendar so piously.

Isn't it foolish the ideas which men have promoted in their natural understanding? And the cross then must be an offence to them because they would have to nail all of their carnal, silly ideas to the cross before the Spirit could take over and give them eyes to see, and ears to hear the greater truth. O, to be so full of the anointing of God that we might drop off all of the chaff of earthly works that we might move only be the direction of the Spirit of the Lord.

So, Paul says, I didn't come to baptize, I don't have a lot of outward ceremony, but I come as an announcer, to herald some good news, not with the wisdom of words or skill of speech, LEST THE CROSS OF CHRIST BE MADE OF NONE EFFECT. He never tried to glamorize the old cross one bit - there is no glamour to it. There is nothing glamorous about death. To be effective this cross must be a reality in our lives, not some fancy, not some mythical glamorized nothing.

For the PREACHING - this word "preaching" is LOGOS in the Greek, and it means the WORD, yet not only of the word that is spoken, but the whole mind, thought, intent, will and purpose behind that which is spoken. For the WORD OF THE CROSS, the will and purpose which stand behind the cross, the thought behind the cross, is foolishness unto them which perish, but to us that are being saved IT IS THE POWER OF GOD, for it is the means by which the power of God is released, as we die out to the old life and become alive to the new. We are in the process of being conformed to His image by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18). Never from on glory to another because we go through a certain kind of number of ordinances, at best they can only sanctify to the purifying of the flesh (Hebrews 9:13), but if we would be set apart unto God from dead works to now serve the living God, we must come by the Spirit.

To those who are out of tune with what God is working out in this hour, the cross is foolishness, a scandal to them; they don't want anything to do with it. But to those who believe, it's a necessary walk with God.

## **The Purpose of The Cross**

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." (2 Corinthians 4:10). Here is what we might term, THE POWER SIDE of the process, for through the active working of His death in us, there is also THE ACTIVE WORKING OF HIS RESURRECTION LIFE. "For we which live are always delivered into death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." (Verse

11). Notice these words, FOR WE WHICH LIVE are always delivered into death. The work of His own death on the cross for us brought an end to that which caused an estrangement between us and God, for we "were reconciled by the death of His Son," and thus it became possible for us to partake of the salvation "BY HIS LIFE", as we read in Roman 5:10. HIS DEATH MEANT THERE WOULD BE LIFE FOR US. And the first thing we receive in coming to Christ is a portion of that life. Now, WE WHICH LIVE are then delivered unto death, to become personal partakers of the cross, that life also might flow out of us for others, even as Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:12, "SO THEN DEATH WORKETH IN US, BUT LIFE IN YOU."

Year after year people pray on, Lord, send a revival, bring forth new life in the hearts of men. Yet they consistently shun the very means by which He hath ordained that His life, which is in us, should be freely released and expanded unto others.

There is no life in the cross, but it is used by God in the process to RELEASE LIFE, for assuredly the very ending of the outflow of our own self-life means that now there can be a release of the CHRIST-LIFE, which prior to the cross has been hindered from reaching to others. Or at best, if some of HIS life did flow out of us, it was so often mixed with our own carnal life that the mixture often caused as much sickness as it gave help. GOD IS BRINGING AN END TO ALL MIXTURE OF FLESH AND SPIRIT, the cross is used to cancel out all the flesh, self-life, and then HE alone flows out to bring help and life to others. Amen.

## **The Climax of the Cross**

By Ray Prinzing

The cross we bore down through the years  
Was washed quite often with our tears,  
As we trudged on amid the jeers  
And fleshing scorn of sword and spears.

The way was often rough and steep,  
And followed by the valleys deep,  
While often we were made to weep,  
As t'ward the goal we tried to creep.

For Calv'ry drew us t'wards its clime,  
With every passing sweep of time,  
And though it seemed life lost its rhyme,  
With stedfast heart we faced the climb.

For God had placed within our soul  
A vision of our coming goal,  
When we would bow 'neath His control,  
His life to then become our whole.

So now the cross must reach its peak,  
Its final blow, though dark and bleak,  
Must be applied while hell doth shriek,  
Ere, It is finished, He shall speak.

The climax of the fiery test  
Must now be wrought within our breast,  
Its apex now be manifest; -  
Fulfilled shall be our cross's quest.