

POWER OF PRAISE by: Liz Wahl Andre'

"No Christianity Without the Cross"

The cross of Jesus Christ is central to the Christian faith and to the ongoing process of sanctification. No one who claims to follow Jesus can live victoriously over sin without an understanding of the cross and what Jesus accomplished there. We live in an age of "self-help gurus" and 12 step programs, self-actualization and assertiveness training, with the key focus being "self." "Self-help" is really a misnomer because according to the Bible, mankind is so depraved and sinful, no one can really "help" or "save" himself.

In the beginning, when man chose to rebel against God, he chose darkness rather than light, and how great is that darkness! The results of the fall of man, and the consequences of his sins are evident in the corruption, crime, fear, lust, violence, death and greed we see played out on the evening news everyday. When man died spiritually in the Garden of Eden, just as God forewarned Adam would happen if he disobeyed Him, man took on the "flesh nature" leading to death and destruction. Before the breach between God and man caused by sin, Adam and Eve were alive spiritually. They were clothed in God's light and glory, and enjoyed total unity and innocence. After the fall, they took on the nature of the serpent, the accuser. The Bible lists the works or attributes of the satanic, flesh nature: "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries and the like, of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5: 19-21).

We cannot change our fallen nature by simply "turning over a new leaf," or trying to follow a rigid moral code. There is only one solution to putting down the flesh: it must be crucified. "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions

and desires” (Galatians 5: 24). “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2: 20). How can we “crucify our flesh?” We cannot. It is a work of the Holy Spirit that is done inside of us with our consent. When we yield to His will, He forms us into the likeness of Christ. We must reckon our old life, or “old man” dead so that we can be free from the power of sin and spiritually alive unto God: “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him...” (Romans 6: 5-8).

At the cross, over two thousand years ago, a supernatural exchange took place. Jesus Christ, Who knew no sin, imputed His righteousness and innocence to us. We, who are born sinners, and knew no righteousness, had the guilt of our sin transferred on to the “Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world.” Jesus became the sin offering that would take away the sin of the whole world, and make the way for lost man to be reconciled with Father, forever satisfying the wrath and justice of God. Lost humanity has to recognize its sin and need for a Savior before it can appropriate the forgiveness of sin and everlasting life that Christ has freely provided at the cross.

Until men realize their sinful, lost condition, their pride will keep them from salvation. This is the “offense of the cross.” Man will never be good enough to merit right standing with God, or eternal life and this truth is an affront to the pride of man: “As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these try to compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ” (Galatians 6: 12). Those who don’t love God and don’t want to submit to the righteousness He requires (which is faith in Christ alone) are intent on practicing futile religious exercises rather than repenting of their sins. This is the pagan

religion of “appeasement.” “God, let me live my life my way, and I’ll give you an hour a week at church.” God wants all of us: our hearts, minds, bodies, souls and strength. We can only give ourselves to God when we meet Him at the cross. Read the Bible and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the cross, and what it means to you. He will be faithful to show you the way home to the Father.

“But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6: 14).

“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, ‘I thirst’...so when He had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit” (John 19: 28, 30).