
The Victory of the Cross of Christ

By David Wilkerson

July 6, 2009 It was the night before the crucifixion of Christ. Jesus had gathered his disciples in an upper room to prepare them for his departure from the earth. After they shared a meal together, the Lord took a towel and proceeded to wash the men's feet.

That evening, Jesus told these devoted followers he was going to be "lifted up" (meaning crucified) by the hands of wicked men. When he told them this, he was forewarning them about what was to come.

Jesus ended his message to them by saying, "I came forth from the Father: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father" (John 16:28).

To this, the disciples responded, "Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things...by this we believe that thou camest forth from God" (16:29-30).

The disciples were letting Jesus know that they understood clearly what he had told them. Yet, more importantly, take note of their words in the last verse: "Now we are sure...we believe..."

It appeared that a great faith had gripped their souls. These men were declaring to Jesus, "Now we see, Jesus. Now we know. Now we believe!"

This all seems to suggest that the disciples were prepared for the dreadful, bloody days ahead.

Jesus answered his disciples with a question: "Do you now believe?" (John 16:31). When Christ posed this question, he was asking the disciples, in other words:

"Do you now understand what lies ahead? Are you able to drink from the cup that I'm going to drink? Are you ready to believe, when tomorrow you'll see me hanging as if helpless on the cross?"

"Will you still believe when it appears I have no power over men or devils? Will your faith hold when you see that my Father has left me in the hands of enemies for a season? Will your belief remain unshaken then?"

"Will your faith endure when you see my visage marred beyond recognition? What will happen to your belief in that hour, when your Savior appears to have no power to save even himself?"

"Tell me, do you believe now? Do you really believe?"

"Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone" (John 16:32).

The hour of testing had come. This hour of testing followed immediately on the heels of many sweet hours of loving communion. Think about it: Just hours before, Jesus had tenderly washed his disciples' feet. It was only a few hours earlier that he had warned them about the suffering and pain that lay ahead with his crucifixion.

Yet during the hour of testing, it quickly became clear that the disciples did not comprehend all that Jesus had taught them. What glee there must have been in hell when that hour passed. In such a

short amount of time, Peter went from boasting of his faith to denying Christ and cursing. All of the disciples forsook Jesus, just as he had predicted, “every man to his own” (John 16:32), fleeing for shelter.

Before we judge these men, however, let us imagine we also had been near the cross that day. What if you had heard Jesus cry, “Father, why have you forsaken me?” What thoughts would have passed through your mind? I suspect you would have had the same thoughts that the disciples did. Like them, you also might have wondered:

“Where is God’s hand in all of this pain and suffering? Where is the Father right now? Why would he allow such an awful thing to happen, after everything Jesus promised about his kingdom?”

It was these kinds of thoughts that brought the disciples straight into a pit of despair. They must have trembled, thinking, “We thought he was our hope.” Now they saw their hope being shattered before them.

It is in this very hour of apparent loss of hope that we gain a glimpse of the victory of the cross. Satan probably gloated in that hour. He might have thought he was seeing a pattern among God’s people, one that was to his advantage. I imagine him thinking, “This is a picture of what is to come. Christ’s followers are going to fold as they endure pain and suffering. They’ll fall away as soon as trouble strikes. Once they pick up their own cross, they’ll cast off their faith.”

Indeed, the scene at Calvary did not look like a victory. But something was at work on that day that Satan didn’t know about. It was something the devil will never understand about our blessed Savior. I’m talking about the *unfathomable mercy of God in Christ!*

Something incredible happens once a person receives Jesus as Lord. Once they forsake the world and follow him, they are forever bound to the Lord with unbreakable cords of love. Consider Paul’s description of this unfathomable mercy:

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?... Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35, 38–39).

Despite the disciples’ shameful failure, God’s mercy was fully at work in them through the Holy Spirit. And that mercy determined the victory after the dark day of the cross. A seed of faith had been implanted in Jesus’ followers, and their houses had been built on a rock. Their houses were shaken, of course, as satanic storms beat upon the walls and powerful waves pounded the foundations. But when the storm passed, those houses stood.

The seed of faith was not dead. It was fully alive! The prayers of Jesus had prevailed. The faith of his followers did not fail.

I want to focus on one of the many victories of the cross. No one can number all of Christ’s tender mercies and the manifold blessings of his shed blood. But I want to glory in one victory in particular: *the forgiveness of all past sins.*

“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of

Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.... If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:7, 9).

It is imperative that every follower of Jesus lay hold of this glorious truth. Appropriating it has everything to do with whether we will maintain a victorious faith in the midst of dire afflictions. Indeed, in days of uncertainty, this matter of resting in Christ’s forgiveness is crucial.

Many of us who have served Jesus faithfully over the years have grown confident that our faith can withstand any fiery furnace. Like the disciples, we testify, “Now I see, Lord. Now I believe.” We thank God that Christ has opened our eyes to his eternal purposes.

Then suddenly we are faced with an overwhelming, tremendous crisis. We realize we have entered a furnace seven times hotter than any we have ever known. We have come face to face with a battle so painful, a struggle so draining, our house begins to shake. And soon it is being swamped with burdens and fears.

Consider the testimony of a godly Puritan preacher from history. This preacher had himself experienced great sufferings in life. He spoke for multitudes of Christians when he wrote, “The first thing many ask is, ‘What have I done? God, did I fail you?’”

This is illustrated in a letter I received from a dear sister in Christ. She wrote the following of her great suffering:

“It seems the trials will not cease, not even for a season of rest. I don’t know whether this is the chastening of the Lord.

“I have wondered if my family’s trouble is due to my life before I was saved. I always wonder that. I’ve asked the Father over and over if that is the case, because I just don’t know.

“Sometimes I feel that if it is, then my punishment is more than I can bear at times. I would rather bear the punishment myself than for my family members to suffer for my previous sins.

“I love the Lord, and turning away from him is not an option for me. He is my life. But recently I’ve felt that it would have been better if I had never been born. Then my children would not be here to suffer.

“I have also felt at times that I just want to go home to be with Jesus. But that is selfish because my children need me.

“Please, if you have any comments on this that can settle my mind, I would so appreciate it.”

I say to you the same thing I would say to this woman: Hear the words of the apostle Paul. He writes: “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare *his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance [patience] of God*” (Romans 3:24–25, my italics).

Through faith in Christ’s shed blood, all past sins are covered. We are cleared in the eyes of God by his unmerited forgiveness. All guilt, fear and condemnation are lifted. All past charges are wiped away!

In short, God no longer holds those past sins against you. He has reconciled you to himself with no

alienation on his part. Amazingly, the Lord made provision for this reconciliation while you were still in sin. I ask you, how much more does this reconciliation apply now that you have trusted in the victory of the cross?

According to Paul, “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:8–10).

Finally, Paul tells us, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (8:1). Sin has lost all of its power to condemn. And it happened at the cross of Christ.

The fact remains that there are consequences to sin. Some consequences of sin may be caused by past habits. Likewise, chastenings of the Lord often accompany sin. Yet as a child of God you must settle one thing in your mind, once and for all: *God never chastens his children in anger.*

“Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” (Hebrews 12:6-7).

You are never more loved than when you are chastened or corrected by the Lord. In fact, the entire process of chastening has everything to do with God’s desire for you. It is all meant to take you into the knowledge and glory of himself.

Yet, make no mistake: The Bible calls these times grievous. They are in no way joyful. “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous” (12:11). Nevertheless, we’re told, “Afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby [being trained by it]” (same verse).

Over the years I have had to quench many of Satan’s darts and lies. Today I proclaim with assurance, “God is not mad at me. And, dear follower of Jesus, he is not mad at you. Therefore, quench all that the devil says otherwise!”

This is the victory of the cross: peace *with* God and the very peace *of* God. At the cross, mercy and peace took on a face. It was the face of a human — Jesus Christ. Throughout history, whenever a child of God has fully trusted in the cleansing, healing power of Christ’s blood, peace has been promised. It is Christ’s own peace, the very peace that rules paradise.

Paul’s words on this subject are meant for every believer to apply in his own walk:

“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful” (Colossians 3:15, my italics).

Dear saint, this is our hope in all of our battles: *Let peace rule your heart by resting in the promises of God.* “Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means” (2 Thessalonians 3:16).

May the following prayer of Paul become ours as well, in these days of uncertainty:

“The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the

power of the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:13).

Thank God for his joy and peace! Amen.

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