

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

April 2017

Dear Friends,

Easter is already in the rearview mirror, but I thought it might be good to give a little more reflection to all that Jesus won for us through the Cross. Good Friday comes and goes so quickly, we don't have the opportunity to reflect on all the Cross provides for us each new day.

We can understand someone dying for a person worth dying for, and we can understand how someone good and noble could inspire us to selfless sacrifice. But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him. Now that we are set right with God by means of this sacrificial death, the consummate blood sacrifice, there is no longer a question of being at odds with God in any way. (Romans 5:7-11, *The Message*)

As the church has understood for more than 2,000 years, the Cross was not merely Jesus "entering into our suffering." It was a *sacrifice* of incredible proportion, made necessary because of our sin. This is so important for us to name, because in our age the concept of sin has almost completely disappeared and what has replaced it are words like "brokenness" and "woundedness." Just the other day a good man, a true disciple, was telling me a story of some egregious evil committed against him. In the next moment, he said, "They were just acting out of their brokenness." This is the common spin, and it is partly true. But what is missing is the forthright naming of sin. If brokenness is all that we needed help with, Jesus certainly wouldn't have had to go to the Cross.

Now—you know we spend a good bit of time healing human brokenness here at Ransomed Heart. All the more reason for us to give some reflection to the fact that Jesus went to the Cross for our *sins*, or we will lose our gratitude for it. And there is so much more.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." (Galatians 3:13)

Here again we have the clear view of Atonement—Jesus is judged so we wouldn't be. But another dynamic is being described here. The Cross breaks the power of *all* curses. This too is so important to name at this time when so much envy, hatred judgment and cursing is taking place in social arenas. When someone judges you, when they pronounce words of hatred or judgment against you, those words have real effect. Both Testaments take blessing and cursing very seriously. "Life and death are in the power of the tongue" (Prov 18:21). So it is a great relief to bring the power of the Cross against those words and judgments spoken against us. Witchcraft is also on the rise in this pagan culture; many curses are being pronounced on Christians from the dark side. How wonderful that our God has provided the solution: we are able to bring the Cross of Christ against all curses and cancel them in Jesus name.

Can you feel your appreciation of the Cross deepening as we name these things?

Paul explains later in Galatians, through the Cross of Christ we are crucified to the world and the world to us:

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (6:14)

The Greek word used here for “world” includes the entire human family. The Cross of Christ changes every human relationship. In a world where so many relationships are unhealthy, where people try and control us or exert unholy authority over us, where people often attach their needs and longings to us, the Cross is our rescue. It is so helpful to pray the Cross of Christ into every relationship so that only what is holy and good can pass between us.

And of course the Cross is what sets us free not only from the penalty of sin but from the very power of it:

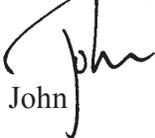
We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?...In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 5:2-3,11)

Anyone trying to live a whole and holy life knows the grief that comes—regularly—when we cannot seem to live beyond our sin and addictions. You must understand: the unholy trinity Scripture names as the world, our flesh, and the evil one conspire to undermine your character. In that swirling mess, it can *feel* like you want to (fill in the blank...yell at your kids, look at porn, envy your friend's success, indulge bitterness, etc.) but what we must, *must* cling to is that we have died with Christ in the Cross; sin no longer has to rule over us. We have a choice!

Which brings us to my last observation: the Cross was not only then, it is now. Every day. We do have a choice to make, and the essential choice we face every day is whether we will let the “self” life reign in us, or will Christ reign in us? By the “self” life I simply mean that part of us that wants to reign as lord of our lives. The first issue is never sin; it is what we do with our internal, natural inclination to play lord of our life. All the hatred and envy you see in social media—that is the “offended self” lashing out. When Jesus invites us to take up our Cross daily, he is not saying we have to crucify our every hope and desire. He is saying we must choose not to let “self” reign—neither in our internal nor external world. Christ is Lord of both.

Alas—there is so much more to say but we are out of space. For more on the power of the Cross let me recommend: my book *Free to Live*, the “Daily Prayer,” the “Prayer for Breaking Curses,” and our audio resource on Soul Ties. You can find them on our app or website.

Much love,


John