

This Easter, Don't Forget About the Cross

"God forbid that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14).

Why is the world offended by the cross? Why are so many disturbed when the name of Jesus is mentioned? Why is His name, above all others, often taken in vain?

The answer is simple: There is power in His name, and there is power in the cross—power that shakes the spiritual realm. Philippians 2:9-11 says that God has highly exalted Jesus and has given Him a name that is above every other name, that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

No wonder the world hates the cross and the name of Jesus—they convict. The cross, sin and repentance have never been popular terms even though they are at the heart of the Christian faith. Jesus Himself said that the cross would be offensive. Sadly, many today water down the gospel and avoid talking about the cross. They want the Bible to be more appealing and marketable. But truth is not marketable! We are to guard it, proclaim it and defend it, but never compromise it.

A.W. Tozer addressed this decades ago, "There has come in modern times a new cross into popular evangelical circles. It is like the old cross, but different; the likenesses are superficial, the differences fundamental. The old cross slew men; the new cross entertains them. The old cross condemned; the new cross amuses. The old cross destroyed confidence in the flesh; the new cross encourages it. The old cross brought tears and blood; the new cross brings laughter."

Tozer continues, "Any objection to the carrying on of our

present gold-calf [lukewarm] Christianity is met with the triumphant reply, 'But we are winning them!' And winning them to what? To true discipleship? To cross-carrying? To self-denial? To separation from the world? To crucifixion of the flesh? To holy living? To nobility of character? To a despising of the world's treasures? To hard self-discipline? To love for God? To total committal to Christ? Of course the answer to all these questions is ... No."

This pleasant, "new cross" view, often leaves people confused and deceived because they believe in a self-promoting, self-seeking Christianity that bears no resemblance to Jesus' sobering call to full surrender ... to dying to self. For this reason, it's been said that one of the greatest mission fields in the world today is the church, as a whole, in America.

In our zeal to lead people to Christ, many paint a false picture of discipleship, or water it down altogether. Jesus didn't say, "Follow me and you won't have to change anything"; He said, "Deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24). Jesus wants us to understand what's involved when we follow Him—there is a cost. The cross cost Him and it will cost us.

If current statistics hold true, many will continue to embrace a glamorized Christianity and be led astray. Life is a battleground not a playground!

If you've never sincerely repented and trusted in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, there is no better time than now. Many who are trapped in religion go through life lacking passion, direction and purpose, often living with a sense of remorse and guilt. They wonder, "Have I been good enough?" A relationship with Christ changes that.

2 Corinthians 5:17 states: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Your past is forgiven, your present

secure and your future certain.

The resurrection and the cross set us free from sin and death: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

No matter what you’ve done, you have the opportunity to believe in Jesus and be forgiven of sin. Acknowledge that you are a sinner in need of a Savior (Rom. 3:23). Acknowledge that Jesus died for your sins (John 3:16). Repent and turn from your sins (Acts 3:19). Live your life for Him (Heb. 12:1-2).

This Easter, although we rejoice in the empty tomb, don’t forget about the power of the cross. The cross cleanses, redeems, releases, crushes and triumphs. It offers hope and peace to a dying world. “There is no peace until we see the finished work of Jesus Christ—until we can look back and see the cross of Christ between our sins” (D.L. Moody).

What does the cross mean to you? You cannot live your life with a question mark here.□

Watch the short clip here.

Shane Idleman is the founder and lead pastor of Westside Christian Fellowship in Lancaster, California, just North of Los Angeles. He just released his 7th book, *Desperate for More of God*. Shane’s sermons, articles, books and radio program can all be found at , Follow him on Facebook.