

# BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

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## THE CROSS - RELIC OR REALITY - 2 Scriptural background

### TITUS 2:11-15

If there is ever age in which the cross of Christ should be proclaimed with conviction and clarity in the church, it is this age. The Easter season calls for a renewed consecration to its message, a fresh and full surrender to its claims, as well a complete commitment to spread its redeeming message across the world. This call is all the more urgent, because in some segments of the church there is a trend to minimize the visibility of the cross and to modify the strong message it heralds. It is felt that the message of the cross is too demanding and that it interferes with our self centered life style. It tends to offend people. It is easy for preachers to fall into the trap to preach around the cross, and highlight its benefits and blessings without

specifically and deliberately uplifting the claims of the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. The central thrust of its challenge to men and women is to deny self and take up the cross to follow Jesus. In this age radical note is not acceptable because it is countercultural. It is at cross purposes with the self centered pleasure loving pop culture. Jesus died on the cross "that those who live should no longer live for themselves, BUT for Him who died for them and was raised again." 2 Corinthians 5: 15. The challenge of the cross is for the self to be so completely crucified with Christ, that it is committed to living for Him and Him alone. This expectation is too much for our society known as the "me generation."

There are others who are offended by the nature of Christ's death on the cross. There is too much ugliness, horror and pain at Calvary for our modern sensibilities. All of the ugliness and repulsive violence revealed at the cross gives a glimpse into what your sin and my sin did to the Lord Jesus Christ. **"Is this why it is so offensive??"**

When the film the Passion of Christ," with Mel Gibson as the director, came out, some said it was too graphic. There were too many wounds and too much blood shed. Some of the film clips portrayed Jesus besmirched with blood and gaping wounds. His

face twisted in agony and his body racked with pain. It was not a pretty picture. This is heavy stuff for our modern superficial thinking to absorb and accept. Many prefer that preachers lighten up on this thing called sin and what it did to Jesus, so they plan detours around it, or dismiss as an event for another age which is out of step with modern needs. After all, it is said, we live in the technological and scientific age and we have made progress in our society. What is needed is a progressive thinking that keeps in step with the times. It occurs to me that the root of truth is not discovered in so called progressive thinking, which Paul says has been blinded by the darkness of depravity; But it is embodied in the dynamic living word of God inspired by His Spirit. Furthermore what is meant by progress is open to debate, for a cursory look around our society will bring anyone to the conclusion that it is in utter chaos. Society is in a free fall heading to utter destruction and there is uncertainty what to do about it all. Lawlessness is rampant. Wickedness is out of control. Godlessness is a growing malignancy. It is becoming more and more evident that at the root of it all is sinful selfishness and self will. Regardless of the brilliance of man revealed in the latest technology, he still has not found the answer to the sinful self centeredness of the human heart. The

current world situation is a commentary on the failure of technology to solve the most complex moral and spiritual difficulties that plague us. The truth is that we are in a mess. The more we try to help ourselves the bigger the mess becomes. The political correctness of the secular world has infected parts of the contemporary church. It has blinded our discernment to state clearly what is right and wrong. So often we have discarded absolute values in the interest of being political correct. Many have retreated from the commitment the full counsel of God, and are groping in the fog of relative principles. There is an inherent fear among some of offending some one as though offending a person is the unpardonable sin. This is not to suggest that there should be carelessness about not offending someone; what needs to be emphasized is that to sacrifice the truth in order to be politically correct is immoral. To soften, even ignore or be ashamed to declare the truth so as not to offend, is wicked.

The road to the Cross was not a picnic. It was the pathway of ignominy, shame and humiliation. Its hallmark was agony and pain of indescribable proportions. In the scriptures we are given a glimpse into the horrific nature of sin, and what it did to the Lord Jesus Christ. There was agony that went beyond the physical to something more infinitely more profound, intense and

unexplainable. There is no doubt that our sin was involved in it. The scripture says "He became sin for us" For a moment let us step back to recognize that we are on mysterious and even holy ground at this point. For the one who was so perfectly flawless and without blame, and who knew no sin, to bear our sin in His Body, is beyond understanding. Wesley was touched by this truth when he wrote 'Tis mystery all the immortal dies, who can explore this strange design.'" Indeed who can explore this strange design? Crucifixion is a violent act Tozer rightly said that **"No one ever enjoyed the cross just as no one ever enjoyed the gallows."** **The prophet Isaiah hundreds of years before had written of this horror. This is what he writes, "He had no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men...Like one from whom men hide their faces He was despised and we esteemed Him not."** **Isaiah 53:2-3.**

Crucifixion is a violent deed, but that is what your sin and my sin did to Him. The astounding truth is that is that he did it for the human race willingly. James Stewart in a magnificent book of his sermons printed after his death, entitled "Walking with God" refers to some words by John Duncan thinking of the price that Christ had to pay. "Oh, it was terrible; it was terrible, it was damnation! And He took it lovingly!" This is an

unfathomable truth! And again Stewart writes "I think I can understand why it was that Denney, staunch rigid Protestant that he was, could declare, speaking to his students about a newer theology that was trying to construct a bloodless gospel, and the newer theologians who were forgetting the Cross, 'If I had to choose between being such a one, and being a Roman priest holding up a crucifix to the eyes of a dying man and saying God loves you,' I had rather been the priest – every time." There is nothing to offer a soul if there is no Cross. Hope fades into the darkness and mercy into oblivion, when the sacrifice of Christ is camouflaged by an arrogant pseudo intellectualism and sabotaged by religious political correctness. The message of the Cross makes clear that there is no forgiveness apart from the shedding of Christ's Blood. Those that find this repulsive are attempting to construct a "bloodless gospel." They are painting it with contemporary colors and adding modern modifications to it. Just give us a modern cross, they say, that makes us feel good and entertains us in our politically correct culture. Don't give us a Cross that is offensive. We don't want to discuss the violence that surrounded the death of Jesus. The scriptures make clear that there is nothing left of the good news without the Cross. Jesus did not die on this Cross to entertain or cater to our sensibilities or to

accommodate our sensitivities. He did not shed His precious Blood in a supreme sacrifice to make us feel good or please us. The walk up Calvary's hill was not a Sunday afternoon pleasure walk. It was an agonizing journey to redeem us from sin and its penalty. Sin is brutal and ugly, and the price paid to redeem us from it is extreme, radical and violent. The destruction of sin demanded a radical solution. Like or not, palatable or not, the Cross is God's answer to the sin problem. We may not fully understand what all this means, but what we do know, is that Jesus bore our sin that we might have life. What we are assured of is that He became sin that we might become the righteousness of God. What we are certain of is that "He breaks the power of cancelled sin and sets the prisoner free." (C.Wesley) When we consider the extent Jesus went to save us from sin, and give us life; I would suggest to you that it is the height of ingratitude to be offended at the price He paid for our salvation. Modern man wants a benign solution to a malignant problem. But the nature of the sin problem demanded a radical solution. The price that Jesus paid on a Roman cross was that solution. One has written that "a strange thing under the sun is a cross-less Christianity." But a cross-less Christianity is a powerless Christianity, which is reduced to a moral paganism.

The words of the Apostle Paul proclaim hope in the midst of despair. He wrote that **"The grace of God has appeared to all men bringing salvation." Titus 2:11. The truth of these words is the key proclamation of the ages.** It is said that there are three ways in which the cross and grace impacts the world;

**1. There is the impact of the Cross and Grace as it relates to the past... Titus 2:11**  
**"The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." This is a fact of history.**

**2. There is the impact of the Cross and Grace on the present. Titus 2:12. "Teaching us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age." This relates to living the life of holiness in this present age.**

**3. There is the impact of the Cross and Grace on the future. Titus 2:13. "We wait for the blessed hope.....the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."**  
The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. This is an allusion to the first appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul confirms this when he wrote "this Grace has been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ." 1 Timothy 1:10.

This appearing covers His birth, His life, His ministry, His death and resurrection. Furthermore these words speak of a momentous event in time. The men in the New Testament were not simply fascinated by this grace; they found themselves as one has put it, in the "grip of Grace." Grace is personified in Jesus. He not only reveals grace, and gives grace, He is grace." Just as He is love, He is grace. John in his Gospel writes (John 1:14 ff) "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH." And again in verse 16, "From His fullness of His grace we have received one blessing after another." Grace came to this planet because man needed salvation, and it is the grace of God that brought it to the human race. Salvation Officer John Allan said, "I deserved to be damned in hell, but God interfered." The grace of God revealed in the dying Lamb of God at Calvary is that interference. But it is more than interference; it is the intervention of God on our behalf. You cannot divorce Cross from the Grace of God. The Grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." Titus 2:11. It is clear that the Apostle Paul places a special significance on this grace. He writes that this is a special and significant grace for three reasons;

**a. It is from God. "The grace of God brings salvation. Titus 2:11.**

**b. It brings salvation. Titus 2:11.**

**c. It has appeared to ALL men. Titus 2:11.**

The purpose of the appearing of God's grace is to bring salvation. The word salvation implies that there is a state other than that of being saved. Simply stated, people are lost and need to be saved if they are to escape eternal punishment. The scriptures are clear on it. Paul knew it because he wrote that the "wages of sin death" Romans 6:23. and "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23, and yet again "we are dead in trespasses and sin." Ephesians 2:1. We are also "objects of the wrath of God." Ephesians 2:3 and therefore we are "without hope in the world." Ephesians 2:12. There is no doubt Paul knew that men and women are lost and need to be saved. Above all God knew it. That is why the Grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. Titus 2:11. Paul's recognition of the reality of sin leads him to centralize the cross as God's antidote to the malignancy of sin in the human race. Simply yet baldly stated, sin is the universal problem of man, and the Cross is the Divine answer to it. In Titus 2:12-14 Paul writes "Our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ gave Himself for us. He gave Himself to REDEEM and to

purify for Himself a people that are His very own." One of the key phrases in these verses is very telling. Paul writes that "Jesus gave Himself and what is so significant in the context of Paul's discussion, is that Jesus is referred to as "Our Great God and Savior...." What greater authority is there in this sacrifice? The holiest! Highest! the Noblest! and the Mightiest of Heaven, the God of all Grace gave himself as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. He "gave that which is beyond all price." Paul latched on to the phrase, "**gave Himself**" and he alludes to it numerous times in his writings. In Galatians 1:4 he writes He "gave Himself up for our sins." In Galatians 2:20 Jesus "gave Himself for me." Writing to the church at Ephesus he says "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it." Ephesians 5:25. And again Jesus "gave Himself a ransom for all." 1 Timothy 2:6. The task of man's redemption was not given to anyone else. It was God Himself in Christ who gave up His life as a "ransom for many." It is clear that Paul was not offended by the Cross. While he said that it was an offence he also said that he gloried in it. The infinite price and the incalculable sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross, should cause us to fall on our knees in worship and praise for what he did for us... Charles Spurgeon once wrote, "Stand at the foot of the Cross, and count the purple drops by which you have been

cleansed; see the thorn-crown mark on His scourged shoulders, still gushing with encrimsoned rills... and if you do not lie prostrate on the ground before the Cross, you have never seen it." To dismiss the cross as offensive to men and women is to reveal an appalling ignorance of why Jesus suffered so intensely on our behalf. Dr. E Stanley Jones wrote that God wrapped His heart in flesh and blood and let it break on a cross. He gave "Himself for us..." no matter what the shame or cost.

Now Paul reveals the purpose of Christ's immense sacrifice. In verse 12-14 of Titus, He writes "He gave Himself **"to redeem us from wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own."** While **physical crucifixion was an event in history and the instrument by which Jesus provided a great salvation, the sacrifice itself is eternal.** He is the Lamb that was "slain before the foundation of the world," and today He is the midst of the heavenly throne. He is the "eternal Lamb of God who takes away the sine of the world." And when they see Him in heaven, He is viewed not only as the Eternal King but as the sacrificial Lamb." It is he who is still able to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own." Titus 2"12-14. Wickedness still the timeless problem in our society. The moral and

A pair of hands, one from the left and one from the right, are shown holding a globe of the Earth. The hands are positioned at the bottom and sides of the globe, with fingers wrapped around it. The globe shows the continents of North and South America. The background is a solid light blue color.

spiritual decadence in our world is a commentary on this fact. The recent avalanche of corruption in our society simply re-enforces this truth. That is why the message of the Cross is still the solution and is eternally relevant to our sinful condition.

The power and message of the Cross has not been eroded by the march of the ages. Its authority has not been neutralized by the attacks of silly men and their anemic theologies. Millions of men and women down through ages can testify to the transforming power of the Man of the Cross, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Crucified Risen Savior is still conqueror of the powers of darkness and continues to re-assure His followers that He gives them eternal life. (See John 10:27-28.) The cross still "towers over wrecks of time" with the clear saving word that Jesus died to save sinners. It still stands as the symbol of the eternal hope of salvation and the promise of eternal life. "Jesus died for me," said Charles Spurgeon, "four words I have lived by, and they are words that I am going to die by." The cross of Christ is NO relic; it is relevant to our age. Let us proclaim its message and live triumphantly in its power!!