

(Cross of Christ) 5. ENEMIES OF THE CROSS

A.B. Simpson:

"They are the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18).

â€œThey crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh" (Heb. 6:6)

Once more we stand facing the cross of Jesus Christ, that wondrous cross which is at once the measure of the love of heaven and the sin of man. For as the cross represents the supreme act and evidence of the love of God, even so our attitude toward it represents for us the greatest blessing or the greatest sin. It is still true, as of old, "on either side one, and Jesus in the midst." That central cross divides the world into the saved and the lost, the heirs of glory and the children of wrath.

Something like this must have been in the mind of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews when he penned that dismal sentence, "They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." All that he meant by that awful word of warning may be difficult to define, yet it is wise to trace those steps that may lead some day to that dreadful place where the very cross that was meant to save, can only become "the savor of death unto death."

It is possible to be among the enemies of the cross of Christ long before we have reached that final state and "crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame."

We may take the wrong side of the cross of Christ by ignoring or depreciating the doctrine of the cross. The very foundation of Christianity is the Gospel of the cross. Take that away and we have nothing left but a scheme of philosophy and morals. But alas, in the craze for novelty, religious leaders are growing weary of the old story and they invent a new doctrine of the cross. They tell us that Jesus Christ died not to atone for the sins of men or to bear our guilt and stand beneath the judgment of God as our Substitute and Sacrifice for sin, but simply that He might inspire other men to live a similar life of sacrifice for their fellows. The atonement, according to these wild weavers of the spider's webs of the New Theology, is simply learning to imitate the self sacrifice of the Lord Jesus and, like Him, give our lives for our fellowmen. Is it to much to say that such a caricature of Calvary and Christianity "crucifies the Son of God afresh, and puts him to an open shame"?

We may also take the wrong side of the cross by believing false doctrine respecting the cross and the precious blood. The Roman Catholic sacrifice of the Mass is a fearful misrepresentation of the cross of Christ. In that man-made ceremonial the Lord Jesus is represented as really offered again in actual sacrifice every time the worshipper receives the sacrament. It is literally crucifying Him afresh. In distinction from this, how emphatic is the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that "once in the end of the world," or better, "once for all hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:6).

We may be enemies of the cross by neglecting to give due emphasis and importance to the doctrine of the cross and the blood of Christ. This charge holds against much of the preaching today. As the expression goes, all roads lead to Rome, so all truths point to Calvary and there is probably no Gospel message in which the cross of Christ should not find some place. And yet, in answer to a challenge from a brother minister, the writer once searched through volume after volume of published sermons of one of the greatest preachers of modern times in a vain endeavor to find one single mention of the atoning blood.

We may also be enemies of the cross by accepting the Gospel and yet doubting the efficacy of the blood of Christ for our salvation and our sins. After you have laid your sins upon that cross with you crucified Savior, you have no business ever to touch them again. You honor the blood of Christ by simply and fully believing that the Lamb of God taketh away the sins of the world and your sins also. When you go back and dig up your buried bones, you are really crucifying Christ afresh and it is no wonder that your soul is poisoned and your spiritual health destroyed by the resurrection of you buried sins. You are really crucifying Christ afresh when you put back on Him the sins which have once been confessed and cleansed by His precious blood. Therefore, doubting is a dangerous and almost fatal sin. We are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end (Heb.3:14).

We may be on the wrong side of the cross by failing to claim and receive the full purchase of His blood and the full meaning and value of the cross. That blood was too sacred and costly for us to waste, and we have no right to let one drop of it be shed in vain. Not only did He die that our sins might be forgiven, but that our souls might be cleansed and sanctified. "By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). If, therefore, we fail to enter into our

full inheritance of Grace and holiness, we are dishonoring the cross and suffering Him to die in vain.

That cross embraces our healing, also. "Surely he hath borne our griefs (sicknesses), and carried our sorrows ... and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:4,5). When we fail to claim our physical redemption through Christ's atonement, we dishonor His cross to that extent; and when we take our full redemption for soul and body in His name and through the purchase of His blood, we honor the Son of God and exalt the glory of the cross before both earth and heaven. And by that precious blood and that mighty cross, He has purchased for us all our redemption rights and all our inheritance of spiritual blessing. By virtue of it we have access to God in prayer and may ask according to the full measure of the value of the precious blood. Are we entering into this full inheritance, or are we coming short of anything which He died to purchase for us?

We may also be enemies by cherishing an unforgiving spirit toward those whom God has forgiven and for whom Christ died. Do you realize that when you harbor a spirit of resentment against your brother and dwell bitterly upon his faults and sins, that those very sins have already been borne by his Redeemer and yours upon the cross, and that God is saying to you, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ who died" (Rom. 8:33,34). You are really crucifying Christ afresh by taking your brother's sins off that cross and putting them back on Him again. How dare you thus dishonor and insult the blood to which you owe your own salvation?

By claiming salvation through the blood of Christ and yet continuing in sin, we also prove ourselves to be enemies of the cross. If Christ has borne your sins, you have no right to lay them upon Him again by continuing in the same course from which He saved you at such tremendous cost. All willful sin is a crucifying of Christ afresh and a denying of the blood that bought you. The little child expressed the true spirit of the cross when she said, "Yes, I have laid my sins on Jesus, but God helping me, I do not want to lay any more on Him." "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:1,2). Do you expect the Lamb of God to come back and be crucified again for the sins you are presumptuously allowing? There is infinite room in the mercy of God and the blood of Christ for our frailties and our shortcomings, but the soul that persistently and willfully continues in any known course of evil is insulting the name of Jesus and is running close to the tremendous warning of this solemn text.

By giving place to the devil and failing to treat him as a conquered foe, we are enemies of Christ's cross. The testimony of the Holy Ghost in the New Testament to the cross of Jesus is that by the cross Satan has been disarmed and now we may meet him as a conquered foe. "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it (his cross)" (Col. 2:15). Satan's weapons have been hung up in derision on the cross of Calvary and Satan himself has been put on exhibition there, like the brazen serpent of old, as a mere empty, fangless thing. He is as powerless to harm as that metal figure hung up in the wilderness of Sinai, as a parody and mockery of his boasted power. Beloved, are you thus treating your spiritual enemy in the light of the cross of Calvary, or are you letting the mighty victory of the Captain of your salvation go for naught?

By shunning the crosses that God permits us to share with Jesus we show that we are enemies of the cross. For His cross means our cross too, the fellowship of His sufferings and the partnership of His burdens. If we believe He bore our cross, we shall be led to share His and "rejoice, inasmuch as (we) are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, (we) may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:13). It will make an infinite difference in the trials of life if we will learn to accept them from the hands of Jesus as tokens of His confidence and love and of our fellowship with Him in His burdens. And when we rebel at our hard fortune, shun our cross and seek for a life of self-indulgence, we are really crucifying the Son of God afresh. While He has borne all that is necessary for our salvation, He has left behind some suffering for each of His disciples and if we refuse to take our share, we virtually declare that we are willing to crucify Him afresh and to make Him bear a second cross instead of us.

Finally, we are enemies of the cross when we fail to give the Gospel and lift up the cross to all our fellowmen. For there is for our blessed Lord a greater anguish than even that bitter cross; namely, the sorrow of dying in vain for some of those precious souls who have never yet heard the story of His love. His part was to bear their cross, but our part is to tell them the story of His love and bring them to share the joy of His salvation. It is thus that He shall "see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied," and if we are denying Him this satisfaction, we are laying upon His heart a far heavier burden than they laid in that tragic day eighteen hundred years ago, when they compelled Him to bear His cross and then pierced His hands and feet and brow and side with the cruel nails and thorns and spear.

Beloved, this vision was the sublime joy that gave Him strength to endure the cross and despise the shame,

even the vision that came to Him just as He was marching down that valley of the shadow of death, that vision that led Him to cry, "Now is the Son of man glorified," and "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Oh, are you and I holding back any part of that joy from the Master's heart? Are we selfishly hoarding this great salvation, and absorbed in the cares and ambitions of earth, scarcely lifting a hand or sacrificing a single indulgence to send the Gospel to those perishing millions who are like fields white to the harvest and whom God's providence has placed within our reach by the most extraordinary opportunity that any age or generation ever saw? God save us from the guilt and danger by this awful neglect, of crucifying the Son of God afresh and being found enemies of the cross of Christ.

Under and Eastern sky,
Amid a rabble cry,
A Man went forth to die
For me.

Thorn-crowned His Blessed head,
Blood-stained His weary tread,
Cross laden He was led
To me.

Pierced were His hands and feet,
Three hours upon Him beat
Fierce rays of noontide heat
For me.

Thus wert Thou made all mine;
Lord, make me wholly Thine,
Grant grace and strength divine
For me.

In thought and word and deed
Thy will to do; O lead
My soul, e'en though it bleed,
To Thee.

It goes without saying that these are the enemies of the cross of Christ who reject the Lord Jesus and permit Him, as far as they are concerned, to die in vain. The awfulness of that sin is one of the lurid messages of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "How shall we escape," the writer asks, "if we neglect so great salvation?" In another place he speaks of the sinner who, turning away from the Lord Jesus, has "trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant ..., and unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace."

We have read of a man rushing madly to suicide over the body of a loving wife who vainly sought to hold him back and who shrank beneath his violence as he rushed to his destruction over her bleeding body. Oh, sinner, if you reject the Son of God and if you dare face eternity without having definitely accepted the Lord Jesus, you are plunging in over the bleeding body of the Son of God and you are staining your willful feet with His precious blood. No other sin can damn your soul. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). Still it is true that that central cross divides the world. "On either side one, and Jesus in the midst." Oh, dear friend, be sure you are not on the wrong side of the cross.

Two souls went forth from the cross that day,
Both dying by Jesus' side.
On either side with the Lord between,
But apart how far and wide?

For one went out into endless night,
Heaven open before his eyes,
And one went in with the Son of God
Through the gates of Paradise.

Two souls will go from this place today,
Both children of guilt and sin,

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**But one has said "no" to the Son of God,
The other has let Him in.**

**And bright as the light of love and heaven,
Redeemed one, thy path shall be.
But the gloom and the doom of endless night,
Poor lost one await for thee.**