

THE CROSS

The shed blood of our precious Savior, Jesus Christ, on the Cross was, to put it lightly, the miraculous turning point of humanity forever!

The Cross was a place of transformation, a “crossing over” if you will. It was a cross-over from death to life, from darkness to light, sin to sanctification, fear to peace, bondage to freedom, despair to hope, lack to abundance, sickness to wholeness! Oh hallelujah!!

How was this accomplished? Through the blood of Jesus shed on the cross, a new testament, a new covenant was cut between Father and Son on our behalf.

In the culture of the day, “cutting” covenant required the shedding of blood. In so doing, the purpose was essentially making available to the other party everything you own, including your authority and your life to save the other from harm of any sort. This is what Jesus did when he died for us, in our place, so that we were spared the punishment due us for our sin!. (“The wages of sin is death”)

The old covenant made between God and the children of Israel through the 10 Commandments was conditioned on them following the commandments perfectly. If they obeyed they were blessed; if not, they were cursed. (Deuteronomy 28) It proved to be impossible to consistently obey these laws.

In this new covenant there are no requirements to perfectly obey, no rules laid out, no particular behavior demanded – that would be the LAW! This new covenant is between Father and Son motivated by their love for one another and their love for all mankind. Because we are one with Jesus in the Father, this covenant belongs to us too and it’s unconditional! Our response is simply to believe (rely on, have confidence in, trust) and follow, obey the instructions of Holy Spirit as He leads us through His word or by His Spirit.

We, the body of the Son, are the benefactors of this new covenant, this great exchange, this miraculous transformation! Oh the joy, the peace, the thankfulness, the freedom, the love!! Oh the miraculous blood drenched cross! Oh the wonderful, glorious, lovely, adored Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High!

Oh Jesus, Oh Jesus

My life I owe to Thee

Oh Jesus Oh Jesus

You freely died for me!!

“What can I do for thee?” I ask. “Just trust and obey”

What joy to be in Thee by Papa’s glorious grace.

Oh rapture! Oh ecstasy; mine to enjoy.

Oh Jesus Oh Jesus

Thy face I behold

How glorious, how beautiful

How tender Thy gaze

Forever and ever Thou lovest me

I stand so amazed.

Wondrous love, wondrous King

Wondrous is Thy name

I will be forever Thine

My Friend, My Love Divine!

Forgiveness: Jesus died on the cross for my sins. No greater example of forgiveness than Jesus being crucified and dying on the cross for me.

God forgives every time you confess sin before Him, and fully repent of it. Psalm 32:1

The Lord is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

Ask God everyday to show you where your heart is not clean and right before Him Don't let anything separate you from all God has for you! Matthew 6: 14-15

Why is it so important to forgive others:

Not forgiving someone can make us have a bitter heart, and overtime can even cause physical and emotional problems.

When it is hard to forgive , ask God to give you a heart  of forgiveness for them. Pray for them! God can soften hearts- He can turn our anger and hurt into love! Forgiveness opens your heart and mind and allows the Holy Spirit to work freely in you! It makes us free!

Personal Story: I was involved in an auto accident several years ago. I suffered a bad concussion. The driver who hit us was a young boy. It took me quite awhile to forgive him. Even though I suffered a lot and still have headaches and other issues with loud noises even today, I see how God continues to heal me and He uses me in many different ways to help others. He has blessed me greatly! I have learned to forgive , and realize that God can use our storms to bring glory to His name!

Closing Prayer- Dear Lord, help me to be a forgiving person. Show me where I am not. If I have any anger, bitterness, resentment, or unforgiveness that I am not recognizing, reveal it to me, and I will confess it as sin. Make me to understand the depth of Your forgiveness toward me, so that I won't hold back forgiveness from others. In Jesus name I pray-Amen 

Karen MacWilliams



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Christianity often refers to Jesus' Passion as the "ultimate" or "perfect" sacrifice. The Christian church believes that Christ's death occurred as the ultimate payment for our sins and that it omits the need for sacrifices named by the Old Testament. **Christians turned from the notion of animal sacrifice to self-sacrifice.**

In Old Testament times believers appealed to God through acts of sacrifice in order to admit their sins and to ask God to forgive their sins and to be made right in His sight. This was a “blood sacrifice” giving God something of great value – the very life of their best animal. They did this at God's command, showing God how serious they were - how much they wanted to repent and be made new and demonstrate their trust in God.

In this season of Lent, it is our tradition to “give something up” to sacrifice something of ourselves with the goal of having a deeper understanding of the sacrifice Jesus made for us.

The scriptures tell us that even in sacrificing, our hearts can remain unchanged.

Consider the scripture from Micah 6:6-8 (NIV)

⁶With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? ⁸He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. **And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**

I believe this means that we can DO all the things our faith tells us: We can be baptized, we can attend worship regularly, we can give tithes and offerings, we can take communion and still not act justly, still not love mercy, and still not walk humbly before our God.

Another scripture that hit me between the eyes is from Amos 5: 21 -24 (NLT)

²¹“I hate all your show and pretense – the hypocrisy of your religious festivals and solemn assemblies. ²² I will not accept your burnt offerings and grain offerings; I won't even notice all your choice peace offerings. ²³ *Away with your hymns of praise, they are only noise to my ears. I will not listen to your music, no matter how lovely it is.* ²⁴ Instead *I want to see a mighty flood of justice, a river of righteous living that will never run dry.* NLT

Away with your hymns of praise? Noise to your ears? OUCH!

Throughout my life I have sung Christian music. I toured with the Continental Singers across America and into northern Europe. I sang at the National Cathedral. I founded several inter-denominational Christian choirs and sung in several others. I've been a choir director to adult, youth and children's choirs; I've been a Praise team leader. I've been a soloist at many church services, baptisms, weddings and funerals. I always try to do this with as much excellence as my talent and education allow – to give my best. **God is not impressed.**

Could it be that musical skill and beautiful moving songs are not what he seeks from me?

Because I have a measure of God-given talent and have received education in music, it is possible for me to make music with a spirit that lacks mercy; to sing praises at the very same time my actions lack justice; to call people to prayer with a haughty attitude. I confess, on occasion, I have done this and been aware of my attitude and actions. In those circumstances, I ask for forgiveness. What is more troubling to me is the times I likely did this and was not aware of it. When my sin remains unconfessed, my heart unchanged.

As Kara Lassen Oliver wrote in the March 15th devotional in “Disciplines”, The Lenten journey is an opportunity to consider how our hearts have hardened, how our hearts have gone astray, and where we have lost our hope along the way

What is God showing you about the hard places in your heart? How is He working to bring justice, mercy, humility, and righteous living to your everyday existence?

Surely, we are not capable of sustaining these goals on our own. Our sacrifices, whatever they be, are insufficient. Only God himself can make it happen.

Psalm 51: 10 - 17

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.

¹¹ Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit^[a] from me.

¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.

¹³ Then I will teach your ways to rebels, and they will return to you.

¹⁴ Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves; then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness.

¹⁵ Unseal my lips, O Lord, that my mouth may praise you.

¹⁶ You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering.

¹⁷ **The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.**

May this be our prayer.