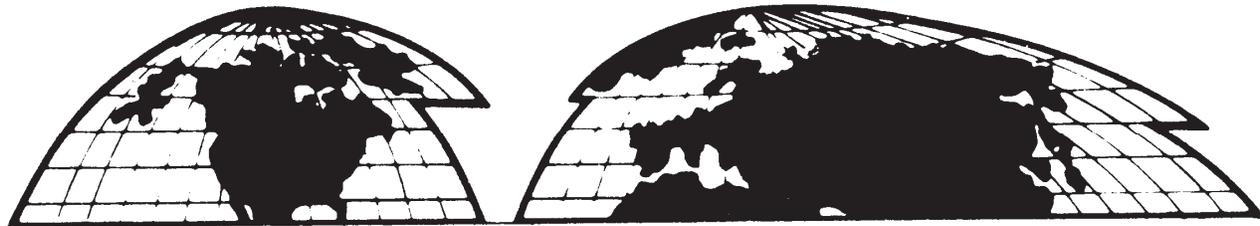
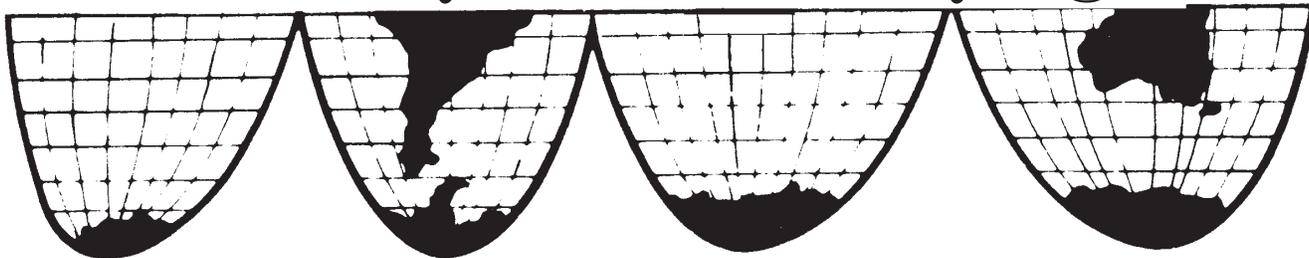


PRAYER IS THE MIGHTIEST FORCE • II CHRON. 7:14



World Prayer Band Prayergram®



Challenging Christians to Pray — November 2008

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*“Intercessors are like eagles, they don’t flock,
you find them one at a time.”*



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Cross — Our Home

I am disturbed by the popular notion that the preaching of the cross is negative — that one must soft-pedal the truth in order to capture and captivate the carnal world. Consequently, many professing Christians are eager to crossover without the “cross,” sort of sliding into eternity with no real affinity to the Lordship of Christ.

The Bible does not teach about “sliding salvation.”

Salvation is free, but the cost of walking with Jesus is very high. The cross spells death to the man of self and it is unavoidable to the believer. The cross is not a symbol of earthly indulgence and self-sufficiency; rather it is a symbol of poverty, of self-denial and death. It is the symbol of those who cast their lot with Him who said, “*Take up my cross and follow me.*”

The cross, an insignia of shame was transformed into a thing of beauty and splendor. If preachers and churches unashamedly proclaim the message of the cross, they are not going to be the darling of the secular world. The apostle Paul knew that if he tried to mold his message to the way people wanted it, he would sabotage it. He knew that the message of the cross would be lost in such a way that no one would be converted. It pains me to say that some preachers nowadays are not very keen on preaching about the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. A preacher that does not focus on preaching about the blood of Christ is not worth your time or effort.

Make no mistake about it: the message of salvation that is explained in the Bible causes great offense. It shows us that we cannot save ourselves but that we must depend completely on the finished work of Christ. It calls us to love and worship a God Who took on the form of a man for the purpose of redemption. Today many consider preaching as funny and foolish and distasteful to their taste. If the preaching sounds silly and foolish to us, however, that’s a reflection on us, not on the message that is being proclaimed. And the naked truth that it sounds so foolish shows us just how far we have drifted from God. *Many are by-passing the most sacred and essential doctrine of the Christian faith — the cross. In today’s politically-correct climate, the gospel is sliced into so many pieces to accommodate various groups as though the gospel is no longer the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, we have New Age gospel, psychosomatic gospel, social gospel, political gospel, environmental gospel, humanitarian gospel, global-warming gospel*



Matthew Skariah

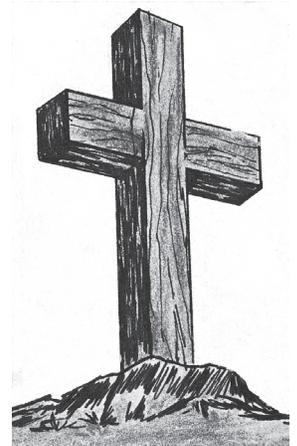
and finally country-club gospel. These are man-made gospels without the cross; these gospels have no redemptive value and make no mistake about it. The cross is the magna carta of the Christian faith. The apostle Paul said, “*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God*” (1 Corinthians 1:18). He could have preached on any number of subjects if he wanted because he was a scholar in his own right. But instead, he preached about Christ and Him crucified. We preach about the cross out of gratitude. It helps us love and serve others. Let’s not utilize the cross for our enjoyment!

We never know the magnitude of the cross completely until we realize that our sins sent Him there. The cross was not a gold-plated ornament, but a blood-soaked beam of wood, upon it a bruised and bleeding body, not so nice to look upon. But after all, Jesus was not dealing with the niceties of the world; He was reconciling sinful humanity to a holy God. If a man really loves Jesus, he will never be ashamed of the cross. The message of the cross stings before it heals. Believe me, the way of the cross will never become an attractive path for the “carnally minded” and the New Agers. Furthermore, the message of the cross is neither optional nor negotiable. *When we cease to proclaim the message of the cross, we cease to exist as Christians.* I am afraid that many Christians have become cavalier in the practice of true biblical faith — the faith of our fathers—holy faith! Real faith must be tested as someone has said, “*The ships are built for the sea not for the harbor.*”

The cross stands as the insignia of God’s love and our devotion to Him. For example, Mr. Alton Lang, who played the part of Christ, drew himself up to his full height and with compelling dignity and rebuke replied: “*Sir, if I did not feel the weight of His cross, I could not play the part!*” Can any person? Can you? Let’s remember, it took a negative cross to give birth to a positive life! Our spiritual success depends, to a great degree, upon our love for the sacrifice of Christ on the cross of Calvary.

Christians need to experience the “power of the cross” that goes far beyond the “torrent of present-day doubts and fears.” My eyes well up with tears when I think about my Savior and how He emptied Himself on the cross.

Let us take refuge under the most powerful force ever, the cross. So powerful, it stops everything in its track and brings us up against a brick wall where we must make a decision for Christ either way. Calculate the horrendous cost of not loving the message of the cross. The pagan does not love the message of the cross; our culture is being seduced



by paganism. Fancy talking people say that we can live by euphemism; they are infatuated with the social gospel, but refuse to submit to the implications of the cross. The cross is the deep mystery of all ages. The heart of the believer is the cross. I admit to being a “lover of the cross.” I feel most comfortable and safe when I seek refuge in the arms of Jesus. I’m eternally grateful to know that I have a loving Father, my great Physician who is always eager and ready to bandage my wounded heart, kiss away the pain and sorrow and gently reminds me — it will be all right, child. I long ago ceased to care about the opinions of those who attempt

to undermine the message of the cross or promote a hypothetical gospel of convenience instead of a gospel of conviction. I know my Savior by personal experience not by hearsay or theological expediency. Thank God for the cross of Calvary. A Church can never be without the message of the cross which is forgiveness of sins, and believe me, those who attempt to build a church on the basis of personal charisma are headed for collapse and don’t be surprised when that happens.

Read the following thoughts about the Cross by men of biblical integrity, character, godliness and great intellect.

“Only the cross which shocked and condemned the world can reconcile it. The cross offends and scandalizes and the cross alone can touch our touchy souls. It is impossible then to be ashamed of the Cross. The offence of the Cross continues and so the preaching of the Cross must continue.” — Charles Malik, Scholar and Statesman

“Only the crucified man is at peace with God. If we don’t think much about sin, we have never been to the cross. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” — Dietrich Bonhoeffer, German Theologian and Martyr

“The Christian that would live must die. If we would have his Olivet of enriched communion, we must seek it by way of Golgotha and the Cross. If we would gain, we must lose.” — John H. Jowett, Renowned Pulpitier

“An old-fashioned evangelist, with his straight-to-the-heart message of the cross, can often accomplish far more than his apologetic methods. The Christian gospel is powerful, to the ‘breaking down of strongholds,’ those of the mind and those of the heart.”

Prayer for Guidance:

Merciful Father, work in our hearts and within our churches so that there may be a new renewal and commitment to the preaching of Your holy Word. Help us resist the temptation to make Your message more palatable and politically correct. Dear Savior, thank You for dying on the cross for our salvation. Now let thy message flow from our lips to the heart of all those who seek thee earnestly. We pray in Your name, O Jesus, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

You Make The Call

On Biblical Giving

True giving is an act of worship, and when we give from the heart as a token of our obedience to God, His name is being glorified and our mind is at peace knowing that we did not use any worldly methods to extract money from reluctant people. Are we at peace with God when financial matters are concerned?

When we practice loving obedience in the matter of pure biblical giving, the blessings are untold. God’s work will be carried out whether we comply with His instructions or not. No one is big or powerful enough to thwart, sabotage or stifle the work of our sovereign God. As a ministry, we will not compromise the truth of God’s Word to gain financial support. The Lord is the Patron of this ministry. He supplies all our

needs as we depend on Him daily with a pleasurable heart.

The Lord does not make us do anything; He presents us with the opportunity to give and serve Him with a heart full of love and gratitude. We should liberate our mind from serious error when it comes to asking and receiving. We’re told to make our request known to God, not man. Our giving is a part of ourselves and it has to come from willing and obedient people who love and honor God with their substance. The work of the Lord is not a human endeavor; it is empowered and administered by the Holy Spirit who knows the very intent of our hearts. Remember, we’re the followers of the world’s greatest Giver, God.

*God is our SecureCare and He is not broke.
His treasury is full and overflowing.*

Speaking Candidly

by Matthew Skariah

God-pleaser or man-pleaser

Saul of Tarsus was a man-pleaser, but Paul of Tarsus became a God-pleaser. After his experience on the Damascus road, Paul went to the Arabian desert, seeking solitude, quietness in obscurity. What was he doing there, organizing a bible-conference? Of course not. Ours is a mobile society, constantly moving, spinning our wheels to no end.

We can't even live a day without a phone, e-mail and the internet. Paul was there for 3 years preparing for the task ahead. He did not ask around to shape his theology or ministry spectrum by taking an evangelical survey to see which way the wind blows.

Where is the "discipline of delay" today? This generation is frantically searching for ways and means to climb the ladder of success. What are we supposed to do when we get up there? Some of the loveliest people in the world are the ones who live in obscurity. This maddening pursuit to make a name for ourselves must stop. Preachers are thrust in the forefront as illustrious examples of religious success in life, and the very recognition of such idea — we are prone to carnality, self-interest, self-importance, and above all, a sense of indispensability. The idea that the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot function without a certain individual is ludicrous.

Moses had his wilderness; Paul had his Arabian desert and Hudson Taylor had five years of obscure living in one of the poorest sections of East London at the age of 26. It was during that time, shut up in prayer, agonizing in prayer — Taylor gave birth to the "China Inland Mission." Today we hear, "give more, do more, and push harder and allow self run muck. Once upon time, I was driven by my ambition, my ego, my pride and now, thank God, I am God-driven.

As a free society, we resist any kind of moral and social restrictions that cramp our style. Social and moral restrictions are necessary for the development of a spacious life in Christ. Let's please our Lord in all we say and do! Let's remain steadfast and sure. Stand true to God and to the highest and best!

We have been sold a bag of lies that tomorrow belongs to us. The next breath we're about to take belongs to God and it is His gift to cherish. Empires rise and fall, everything human seems fleeting. We talk about our retirement, 401-K, nest eggs and all other earthly securities. As we know in today's economy, our nest eggs can become scrambled eggs. If you don't believe it, ask the former employees of Enron Corporation. Nothing ever stays permanent in this life, except our faith in God. "Forever, O LORD thy Word is settled in heaven" (Psalms 119:89). What is settled in heaven can never be unsettled on earth.

Faith comes from living in God naturally, gently and spontaneously. It is the result of His life flowing in us, of our helpless depending on His strength and power; not of our finagling, trying and struggling to be good. Rest comes by resting on the faithful One,

the Lord Jesus Christ. It takes courage to be prudent; takes courage to practice virtue; takes courage to forgive and receive forgiveness. Finally, it takes courage to have faith in God.

Lord, grant us the tenacity to endure, and the resolve to go forward and the courage to resist. Help us trust you without the smallest admixture of doubt! It is a fitting reprise to remember the words of D. M. Patton, "The golden summary of our life is to be this: as to the past, a record of gratitude; as to the present, a record of

service; and as to the future, a record of trust." No one knows the uncertain future except our sovereign God. Where can we be as secure as under the wings of our beloved Savior?

If we have no intimate friendship and fellowship with our heavenly Father, what purpose will it serve us to have religious success, friends, fortune and fame?

Culture Watch

CRUNCH TIME

"We may be called to traverse strange ways, but we shall always have our Lord's company, assistance and provision. We need not covet money, for we shall always have our God, and He is better than gold; His favor is better than fortune."

—Thomas A. Kempis