

The Word of the Cross: A Command Invitation

"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me."
Luke 9:23

The cross life is not to be studied or imitated... it is to be lived. Jesus makes it clear that this command invitation is open to any and all - "...if anyone..." but that it will not be imposed - "...is willing..." We must choose to freely respond and override our unwillingness to "come after" anyone but ourselves in order to "come after" only Him.

What does that look like? It begins by "denying" the self formed in separation from God - the self-determining, self-interested, self-preserving self. We cannot follow Christ and this self at the same time. Don't think for a second that God will fix, improve, repair, or straighten our this (false) self... HE CROSSES IT OUT! An axe must be laid to its root (Lk 3:9) so the cross-less, Christ-less self is killed out of us. The cross-less self cannot function in the kingdom of God, in the church, since both are born of the cross.

We take up this cross-life "daily" - considering ourselves dead to all that does not come from God in the first place. In man's hands the cross was an instrument of death. In the Father's hands it is an instrument of life, severing us from what is deadly to our designed purpose - expressing God's life - and, at the same time, joining us to all we need to fulfill God's ultimate intent as beings created (and recreated) in His image. By the present tense application of the cross - "I am crucified with Christ" - not only was a wrong self crucified and a right self raised - but our new self cooperates "daily" with the Holy Spirit's application of the atonement to all our moment by moment experiences.

Only from such a crucified, risen place are we ready to talk about "following" Jesus, participating in His walk, His life. In no way does this mean imitation but rather participation (fellowship) in His very character... His surrendered, suffering, sacrificial nature. (Lk 9:22) Such a response will not take us where we want to go in life, but only where He wants to go (as us).

This is the word of the cross - it conflicts with the interests of the natural man at every point (Matt 16:22-23). There is nothing passive or accidental about it. We reject it at our peril (Lk 9:24-25). We embrace the word of the cross to our eternal gain.

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GREETINGS

I am grateful beyond words for all of you who pray for, financially support, and personally encourage us in this ministry. I wish I could convey the many expressions of appreciation from so many who receive counsel, teaching, and encouragement without concern for ability to pay, with "no strings" attached, with simple concern for them and the truth of Christ.

I want to say "Thank You" and pray that you will clearly hear your "well done" from God. Thank you for trusting us with the investment of Kingdom resources. We love to see the lights come on in those receiving the liberating truth of "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

We do have a couple of open dates left in 2015 and early 2016 if you are interested in a gathering. Please call and let us know if it seems good to the Spirit and to you to schedule an event.

Hope to see many of you face-to-face before the year is up!

Steve

CALENDAR





MAY

1-3 Waymont, PA (607-239-5006)
10,17,31 CCF
12 Alachua Study
26 Ocala Study

JUNE

3-7 Baton Rouge, LA (225-769-8844)

PRAISE and PRAYER

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-  The dailiness of the cross
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