



Office of the President
3015 Ave K NW
Winter Haven FL 33881
863.299.4084

PRESIDENT'S LETTER - March 09

Fellow Workers: Called to Take Up Our Cross:

The apostles were offended by the cross. Peter rebuked Jesus when "He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." (Mark 8:31). Just as the disciples tried to keep the cross out of Jesus' life and their own lives, man by nature tries to keep the cross out of his life. Many churches do not preach Christ crucified because sin is such a downer. People do not want to hear about their sins. We also would like to avoid the cross and suffering in our personal lives.

Mark 8:31-39

Lent places the cross right where it belongs 1) at the center of Jesus' life and purpose; and 2) at the center of our life and purpose.

1. The cross was at the center of Jesus' life and purpose.

After the Mt. of Transfiguration, Jesus set His face toward Jerusalem and the cross. At this point in Jesus' life, He began to plainly teach His disciples what **must** happen. This was a divine necessity, not an option for Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had sent Him into this world as true man to rescue mankind from sin and Satan and to deliver man from death. Jesus had not come to be an example of how we should live in order to please God. Jesus had not come simply to teach us about God's love. Jesus had come to die at the cross as God's perfect sacrifice for sheep who loved to wander.

Isaiah, 700 years before, revealed the purpose of God's suffering Servant. (Isaiah 53:3-6) "He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

The cross is the heart and center of Jesus' purpose in coming to this world. Jesus began to teach His disciples that "the Son of Man must suffer many things." Jesus then

went into detail. He must be rejected by the elders and chief priests and the scribes. He must be killed. And after three days He must rise again. Jesus was not the victim of the cross and Roman justice. Jesus submitted to the cross in order to bear our sins and pay the price God's justice demanded. Jesus laid down His life for us. Jesus overcame through the suffering and the death of the cross.

2. The cross is the center of our life and purpose.

Just as Jesus endured the suffering of the cross so His followers will also experience the cross in their lives. This does not mean that we will have to pay for our sins at the cross. The "cross" refers to the rejection, suffering, and even death that comes to us as a consequence of being followers of Jesus. Jesus lays out the reality of the Christian life and discipleship (following Jesus). "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." We do not take up our cross, when we are ashamed of Jesus and His words in the face of the opposition of this world.

The hardest thing is to deny ourselves and put Jesus first in our lives. Our natural reaction is to put self first whether in self-preservation, self-gratification, self-esteem, and all the other self-. The "ego" (the big I) is the center of our existence. The root cause of all sin is putting self first.

Let us as pastors take up our cross and follow Jesus. This means that we confess Jesus in the face of opposition and hatred. This means that we preach the cross of Christ. Do you think it will be easy to take up your cross and follow Jesus? The disciples were ashamed of Jesus when He was arrested, tried, convicted, and nailed to the cross, and they had been with Jesus. We also deny Jesus like Peter did in the face of the most minor challenges. We follow the godless and immoral conduct of the world rather than stand up and confess our faith in Jesus. We make the things of this world our god and put them before Jesus and His word. We compromise Jesus' words. Jesus says, (Mark 8:38) "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

This Lenten season we see Jesus take up His cross and die for us. Let us then take up our cross and follow Him.

Watch and Pray,



PS

CBP figures are to be in the hands of Pastor Mike Roehl by March 15.