

November 20, 2011

“Three Things ...”

“Three things God’s Holy Spirit enables us to do with Christ’s cross”

1 Corinthians 1:17-25; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16

I. Comprehend it!

1. Consider what Paul says about the unbelieving, “perishing” world’s view of the cross –

A. They consider it “foolishness”

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing ... (1 Corinthians 1:18 NKJ)

... and to the Greeks foolishness, (1 Corinthians 1:23 NKJ)

B. And a stumbling block –

but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block ... (1 Corinthians 1:23 NKJ)

C. Like other aspects of spiritual things they have no comprehension of it –

But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Corinthians 2:9 NKJ)

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14 NKJ)

D. Both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) fail to comprehend the cross without God’s Spirit – 1 Corinthians 1:23

2. Jesus said the same thing in John 3 to Nicodemus –

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3 NKJ)

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (John 3:5 NKJ)

"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' (John 3:7 NKJ)

Note: what Nicodemus needed to understand and see about the Kingdom of God was connected to the CROSS –

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:14-16 NKJ)

3. A lack of understanding of the cross of Christ was prophesied –
^{NKJ} **Isaiah 53:1 Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, *There is* no beauty that we should desire Him. ³ 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. ⁴ Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ 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. (Isa 53:1-5 NKJ)**

4. We do understand the things of God by the instruction of His Spirit –

But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." ¹⁰ But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. (1 Corinthians 2:9-10 NKJ)

²⁶ **"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (Joh 14:26 NKJ)**

II. Choose it!

Yet, the Spirit helps us not only to understand the cross but also to choose it –

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18 NKJ)

1st Corinthians 2:9-10 – when these things are revealed to us we choose, desire and even relish them -

Oh, taste and see that the LORD *is* good; blessed *is* the man *who* trusts in Him! (Psalm 34:8 NKJ)

1. *There is much that seems dreadful, and is dreadful about Christ's cross and yet the more the believer comprehends it, it's saving power, the LOVE of Christ seen in it, the more he will choose and even desire it -*

Note: Peter's great answer to Jesus' question "who do you say I am?"

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. (Mat 16:16-17 NKJ)

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

²² Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"

²³ But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." (Mat 16:21-23 NKJ)

2. *Because the CROSS works against our natural tendencies we must make Spirit led / empowered efforts to choose the cross –*

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶ esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

(Heb 11:24-26 NKJ)

It is the Holy Spirit that enables such against the flesh choices –

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16 NKJ)

3. *What an extremely difficult choice this can be, we NEED the Spirit's help –*

A. *Christ offered Himself with the help of the Spirit –*

¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb 9:14 NKJ)

³⁹ He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

We can make this choice as well; Paul did -

⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

III. Carry it!

²³ Then He said to *them* all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. ²⁴ "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. (Luke 9:23-24 NKJ)

1. *This is at least partly why we observe the LORD's Supper regularly, we remember what He did for us in order that we might walk daily / regularly for Him!*

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1 NKJ)

2. *We are called to "take up" our crosses "daily" yet how many vacations do we allow ourselves from this duty?*
 - A. *Do we read Scripture DAILY?*
 - B. *Do we pray DAILY?*
 - C. *Do we resist sin and temptation DAILY?*
 - D. *Do we embrace trials cheerfully, DAILY?*
 - E. *Do we take up our cross DAILY? Or do we give ourselves breaks or mini or major vacations from Christ's cross?*