

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: THE CROSS, THE POWER OF GOD

Scripture: Romans 6:4-13.

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead to sin is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

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The preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness;  
but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God.

Could Jesus have redeemed mankind without the cross? Perhaps. We do not know what other resources God may have had. But from our limited knowledge it seems to have been necessary for Jesus to suffer and die. His suffering was not a by-product or an accident, but was an essential and integral part of his mission.

Man had sinned -- had fallen -- had become separated from God, and subject to physical death, or the separation of body and spirit. In God's love for man, it was necessary that someone should overcome both of these separations or deaths -- that man should be restored to God, and spirit should be restored to the body. It was necessary that someone who partook fully of the nature of manhood, but who was more than man -- someone who was perfect, sinless, and infinite in power -- should voluntarily submit to death, experience and taste it to the full, and break its power. Only thus could man be released from its power, forgiven of his sin, and restored unto God. Jesus was such a person -- true man and true God, perfect, sinless, infinite in power and love.

If Jesus knew no sin, he owed no debt to sin; he did not have to die.

Speaking of his own life which was shortly to be offered, he said; "No man taketh it from me; I lay it down of myself." Jesus freely yielded himself to God's will and purpose -- to the suffering of the cross. When his appointed time came, he set his face steadfastly towards Jerusalem. He lost his own will in the will of the Father; he died to self. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 2:8) It was this submission of his own will, this self-denial, this crucifying of his own flesh, that enables Jesus to redeem man.

Such submission, such self-abasement and self-sacrifice are completely contrary to the nature of fallen man. The original sin of Adam and Eve was self-idolatry, setting up self as superior to God, demanding the right to have one's own way, to make one's own laws, and to be self-sufficient. Jesus' parable of the king who sent his servants to collect the rent for his vineyards is a preachment against the rebellion of self-will. The king's tenants first beat and drove off his servants. Then the king sent his own son, thinking he would command respect; but the tenants saw only an opportunity to

kill the son and get the kingdom for themselves to rule as they pleased. This was not only self-idolatry, and self-will, it was rebellion.

No man wants to suffer. No one wants his friends or loved ones to suffer. But sometimes -- as in the case of Jesus, suffering and death is the only way of achieving the goal or the result desired. When Jesus announced to the twelve that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer death, Peter said, "God forbid." Peter not only did not want his Master to suffer; he found it extremely difficult or impossible to accept or believe in a Messiah who would willingly humiliate himself to endure suffering. He wanted a strong, self-willed, triumphant Messiah. He and all the other apostles found it difficult to accept Jesus' teaching that "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life should lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal." If Jesus had saved his own life instead of losing it, all mankind would have been lost.

Every man must make the same choice that Jesus made -- whether to live to self, and die to God, or to die to self and live to God. Every man must choose whether to continue in his self-will, self-idolatry, and rebellion, or to crucify that rebellious self and let the life and the Spirit of Christ take over. Every man has need of a new birth. The old man must die, and the life of Christ must be born in him, making him a new man, with new ambitions, new desires, new goals, or he cannot be the man God designed him to be or the man God wants him to be. Without this new life, no man can be saved. The rebellious man, even though he knows God's will, refuses to do it -- doesn't do it. If it were possible for man merely to learn the will of God and do it of his own will, he could be his own savior. But no man can do the will of God unless he has been born again -- unless he has died to self -- unless the life of God, and not the life of the old, natural, unregenerate man lives in him. The self must die for Christ's sake before it can find salvation.

Pride, sensuality, disobedience -- in fact all the sins that men can and do commit grow out of one thing -- man's self-will, his rebellion, his self-idolatry. When we are unwilling to give up our own will and bow to the will of God, we are in rebellion. We are enemies to God. We are "enemies of the cross of

Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, (that is, their own self-gratification) and who glory in shame, who mind earthly things." (Phil.3:18) We are servants of Satan, who has been in rebellion against God since the beginning of time. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? (Rom. 6:15)

Giving up the life of rebellion, crucifying self, is a painful and humiliating process; yet it is the only way for us to find fulfillment, true freedom, and power. God is the Creator of all. He is omnipotent. His Spirit premeates all the universe in which we live. His law is everywhere. Since this is true, it is easy to see that no man can find freedom and fulfillment so long as he persists in rebellion against God. He must lay down his arms and surrender; he must submit to God's rule and God's law. He must die to self if he would live. Whosoever would save the old life of rebellion will inevitably lose it; but whosoever loses his life for Jesus' sake will find it.

This is the principle of the cross-- the preaching of the cross which to rebellious men is utter foolishness, but unto those who are saved is the power of God. It is the power by which Jesus made atonement for the sins of the world, and redeemed fallen man. It is the power by which individual men and women may be lifted from a life of frustration, futility, sorrow, and despair, to a life of fulfillment, joy, and freedom. We must die if we would live. We must lose our life if we would find it. We must die to sin if we would live unto God. We must crucify the old man with his affections and lusts, in order that the new man might live.

This suggests that there must be a definite act of commitment, one major decision, one major experience by which the old life is crucified and the new life is born. "We are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Yet this one experience is not all. We must take up our cross daily, if we would follow Christ, if we would live in Christ. In every act, in every decision, we must die to self if we would live unto God. Only thus can we lay hold of the power of God, for "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God."