

GROWING IN GOD PODCAST



GIG209 – Start Your Day at the Cross

Hello, and welcome to this podcast. I want to connect in this podcast today with a message that I brought recently in another podcast, which was entitled, *Christ Died For You and Because of You*. In it I talk about the importance of the Cross of Christ and the experience that we have in our initial salvation with the Cross. It is something that I feel like a lot of times gets buried as we go on and move into greater things. I know that in this podcast, we are talking about growing in God and maturing in the things of the Lord; and it is very important for us to mature in God, and to be receiving more and more by impartation of His nature and what He wants to make us into, and how He wants to move through us. All of that is extremely important. But it must be clear that we never outgrow the Cross. We never put aside or make secondary the Cross in our life, in our relationship with Him; it has to be a daily experience to us. And so, I wanted to title this podcast, *Start Your Day at the Cross*. I believe that this is important, and I believe it is also possible, which is one of the things that I want to get across.

For me, personally, I have been doing this for a while. I think it is extremely helpful. I think it is extremely important that in our prayer, in our meditation, in our waiting upon the Lord, we begin that reaching for Him and walking with Him in a very real connection with the Cross. And to do that, I think we have to stop thinking about the Cross as something that happened over 2,000 years ago. We know that it is important; we know that our salvation was won on the Cross, that we have forgiveness of our sins because of the Cross. But there is still, to me, a way that it kind of fades in the power, in the impact that it needs to have on our minds and on our hearts, really on a daily basis. It is too easy to kind of skip over the relationship with Christ on the Cross and move into other things. We know that He was crucified, we also know that He was resurrected; we know that in the power of the resurrection all of our future is turned loose. We know that we have the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that comes upon our life – all of these events that take place. But it does not take away, we do not outgrow, the reality of this relationship with Him that is on the Cross. And in order not to do that, I think there has to be something where we really feel, believe, and understand that the Cross exists right now today.

The experience of the Cross is right here, right now. It is one of the difficulties we have as humans, I think, being bound by space and time in this three-dimensional reality that we live in, that we lose sight of really how eternity functions – because the Cross will be with us eternally. It is not something that, “Boy, once we get to the Kingdom, that’s great! Now we have progressed into the Kingdom of God and we can forget all about certain things.” No, the Cross will always, always be with us. Just as we understand that Christ Himself will bear in His body the marks of the Cross, the Cross itself is existent in the moment; it is existent now in this moment.

It makes sense, if you think about it, because otherwise, how would salvation work? If the Cross is not available in every given moment of time, then how can people be saved? Because if it is something that is of the past or happened in the past, you can say, “Oh, you just believe by faith”; but faith is the substance of the thing hoped for. Faith is not reaching in to recognize the past; it is not an element of history. Faith is right now. It is the substance of the thing hoped for, and it is the evidence of what is believed. So when someone who is a sinner reaches and says, “I have the revelation of the Cross and

of Christ as my Savior, and I repent of my sins, and I believe for the washing of the blood of Christ and the experience of the Cross, that His death is for me right now and brings about my salvation,” salvation has to be a right now experience. For that to be real, then the Cross has to be available at every given moment of time, so that anyone at any time may reach into it. Otherwise, there comes some kind of strange thinking that the opportunity of salvation ends; but it does not. Salvation is available to us. It is available right this moment to a sinner as they are able to by faith stand at the foot of the Cross and gaze upon Him in that moment, and recognize that He is suffering for them, He is suffering because of them, and His suffering is winning for them forgiveness of sin as He utters those words, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And at that moment, He is not just talking about those that were crucifying Him; He is talking about the forgiveness that is ministered to the whole world through the Cross and through His salvation. So, He is bringing this moment to us. Salvation has to be a very personal moment. And it is in the moment when it is real to us that it is available to us, because it exists in the now moment. Because of that, it means that we are able to experience that moment in every given day that we live.

I believe Christ was expressing this in Luke the ninth chapter. At verse 23 it says, “And He was saying to them all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, He must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.’” Well, what is the Cross that we take up? I know many people interpret that as, “Well, I have to bear my problems, and I have to bear my concerns and my pain and my suffering and my sin.” No, no, no, according to Isaiah, all of that was borne by Christ on the Cross. That is what the Cross was all about.

Isaiah 53, at verses 4-5, says, “Surely our griefs He Himself bore.” So if you are saying, “Well, I have to take up my cross daily, and that includes my griefs,” no, He bore that. “And our sorrows He carried.” You say, “Well, I am sorrowful. I have all these events in my life that are tragic, that are terrible, and as I go through my day, I am bearing my cross. I am just trying to get through, believing God forgave me of my sins,” and whatever. No, He bore, He carried, your sorrows. “Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our wellbeing fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.” So what, exactly, if you are translating this Scripture out of Luke about taking up your cross daily and following Him – what pain, what suffering, what iniquity – what does it mean that you are having your own personal cross? There is no such thing. There is one Cross – the Cross of Christ. And on that Cross He died for all of your sins, all of your sorrows, all of your disobedience, all of your unbelief – everything in life He took upon Himself and He died upon that Cross for you. And He died because of you – because you are disobedient, because you are a sinner, because of the Adamic nature that dwells in you, all of those things He died for. He died for it all; therefore, there is only one Cross to be looked upon daily, that is His Cross. And Christ is saying you must take up that Cross daily and follow Him.

So, I believe that we are supposed to begin our day at the Cross. I think that we are to revisit Christ in that moment. You say, “I don’t know if I get that. That is too mystical.” Well, let me just say that everything about belief as a Christian is mystical. I mean, if you do not believe in the mystical, you have to be having a hard time with the Virgin birth and most other things that we read of – healings, deliverances, casting out devils, calming the winds of the storm – everything is mystical that surrounds God in our faith, because God dwells outside of this realm of time-space that we are bound by; therefore, whenever God moves it seems to us to be mystical, because we cannot see where it is coming from or what is happening. That is what Christ said about the spirit world and the Holy Spirit – it is like the wind – you do not know where it is coming from, where it is going to. So, yes, there is a mystical

element to it. But believe me, the cross is right here, it is right now, it is available to you to close your eyes and to stand at that Cross, and to connect with Christ as your Savior.

I know that there are absolutely other realities of who and what Christ is for us; that is why I believe in growing and maturing in God. It says that He is Savior, and Lord. So yes, we do go beyond the forgiveness of sin, and we do go on beyond the Cross into other aspects of our relationship with Him. But you do not stop recognizing, and you do not stop worshiping, and you do not stop realizing that the very beginning of your existence is at this moment; and He is saying, "You need to take up that Cross daily." There is something about the Cross and in the Cross and Christ in that moment that we need daily to return to. We need to start our day with that relationship, with that connection with Him – who He is, what He has done for me, what He has done because of me. And we must begin at the true beginning, which is the Cross. If we are trying to start our day at any other point, then something is going to be missing as we go through our day.

In Galatians 6, starting with verse 14, it says, "But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Imagine, take that literally – the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Now tell me that is not the spot in which to begin our day. I want to begin my day having been freed from the world, having the world crucified off of me and me crucified away from the world. I want this new life, this new creature, this new beginning; and that beginning only comes at the moment of the Cross. That is what Paul is saying: "I have nothing else that I would ever boast in, except that cross experience of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." If you are having problems in your day, and things are coming in and they are bonded to you and you are bonded to them, and you are just struggling to get through what life is bringing to you, then I tell you, there is an answer for it – be crucified to it, and have it crucified away from you. And that is done at the Cross.

He goes on in verse 15 to say, "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." Where we become a new creation is at the Cross; and if you are still living struggling with your old life, maybe it is because you are not beginning your day at the Cross. And again, I just want to reemphasize to you – it is there. You are able, you are capable, because Christ said it: Take up your cross daily. Go to the Cross daily. You are able to close your eyes, to set your focus upon Him, to close out and shut away everything else from you, and to literally stand at the foot of the Cross – to embrace Him on the Cross, to embrace the work that He not only did, but is doing. Remember, it is Christ who ever lives to make intercession. He did not just walk away from the Cross in resurrection and forget about that work that had to be done. His life exists on that Cross to deliver you on a daily basis from every need you have, every problem that we have. He is there to bring us into a new nature. He is there to separate us and free us from this world around us, that brings such trouble and problems to us. This is something that we must really have real to us. And I think if we could learn to begin our day – maybe learning to do it before you even get up, when you wake up, just while you are in that state of still being partially asleep – close your eyes and transport yourself to the Cross of Christ, to His work, to that cry, "Father, forgive them." That cry that He had, "Why have You forsaken Me?" – remembering that we, especially as Gentile Christians, existed in the world without God, without Christ in our lives; and because of the Cross, we now have access. He died to reconcile us to the Father. He died to bring us into fellowship with Himself and the Father. He died that we might have the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out upon us, so that we could grow and mature in the things of God. All of this begins at the Cross.

You do not jump over the Cross and try to appropriate these things. We put ourselves at that moment of the Cross, and at that moment we appropriate, once again, every day, every day. You must pick up that Cross daily and walk with Him. Once we pick up the Cross, then we are enabled to follow Him, to be with Him; and we should live as Paul did: "For I am determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." Everything that Paul did, everything that he said as he ministered to those Corinthians, he was determined to not know anything; everything he started from of knowledge and understanding was the crucifixion of Christ. And I encourage you, go back through some of these Scriptures in Corinthians and Ephesians, Galatians. Read about the life of Paul, and realize, he literally did live his life at the Cross, and from that moment of salvation.

I really bless this to us. I want it to be so real, and I want us to know that the Cross is there, moment by moment. Get out of your thinking this idea that the Cross happened thousands of years ago, and we relate to it from a distance as a historical thing – "Oh, yes, we believe that it did happen," and, "Yes, we believe that because of it, our sins are forgiven." No, you have to embrace Him on the Cross today; and it works today. First John 1 talks about this. He says in verse 7, "But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." It is a now reality. We can walk in the Light as He is in the Light; and when we do that, the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sins in the moment. That is what these verses are talking about.

Verse 8, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." Verse 9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That happens right now. If I confess my sin in this moment, then the Cross is alive in this moment, and He forgives me in this moment, and cleanses me in this moment from all sin and unrighteousness. That is the reality of the Cross. It is now. We have to get in our minds that it exists right now and you can embrace the Cross, you can be at the Cross, you can embrace Christ on the Cross at any given moment. And yes, is there a life beyond that? Yes, we know that He is not only Savior, He is Lord, and we are to know Him as Lord. We are to grow in the things of God, and that does mean moving on. But you never stop walking on the foundation; and the Cross of Christ is the foundation of our life and relationship with not only the Father, but with Christ also. And no matter how much of a house we build upon that foundation, you will always be standing on that one and only foundation, which is the Cross.

I will give you another example of the fact that exists right here, right now, among us. It is in Romans 10, and I encourage you to go back to verse 2 and start reading from there; but I will begin with verses 6-10:

But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down), or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

So in this moment, in any moment, we are able to believe in our heart, to speak with our mouth, that we stand in and at that Cross. We do not have to say, "Oh, the Cross was far away in history. Who is going to go for me back into history 2,000 years and bring the reality of the Cross up to this moment, that I might believe?" No, it is right here. It is right now. Faith is the substance of the thing hoped for. It is the evidence of the thing not seen. You may not see the Cross. You may not see Christ on that Cross.

But it is right there, and your faith brings it into the moment. Your confession brings it into the moment. Your heart brings it into this moment right now, and it brings it into every moment of our lives that we choose to live with Him.

This way of life was so real to Paul. I want to read just one more Scripture out of Philippians 3, and I will start with verses 7-10. Paul is talking in these verses about all the things that he was in himself and the righteousness that he had as a Pharisee. And he goes on to say,

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ [and you have to remember that he is talking about the Cross, the knowing of Christ, the gaining of Christ; he gained Christ from the Cross], and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

See, Paul had this experience. He recognized Christ's suffering for Paul, Christ's sufferings because of Paul; and he made himself conformed to the death that Christ died for him. And this is Paul; who knows how long after his initial salvation experience that he was still living daily, as Christ had said, "Pick up your cross daily and follow Me."

Verses 10-15,

That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you.

It is amazing – he lived reaching every day, as a mature as he was, for this experience of knowing Christ, of going back and picking up that Cross. And you say, "Well, I am not sure that he is really talking about the Cross here. It seems like he has gone on to talk about other things." Oh, okay. Let's keep reading, then, and we will see if that could possibly be true. Verses 15-18,

Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that to you also; however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ.

People who were purportedly walking; it says they were walking: "For many walk." There are people who are walking right now as believers who have left that daily experience and necessity of the Cross of Christ in their lives. Let us not do that. Instead, as Paul is entreating us, let us follow his example and walk as he walked, forgetting the things that are behind, but everyday pressing on to know Him.

And there is no knowing of Christ without knowing Him in that moment, in those moments, on the Cross, where He is dying for me, and because of me. And He is dying for you, and because of you. And He is dying for the whole world, who hopefully at some point will have this revelation and come to the Cross, because it is available right now in this moment.

And I encourage you, after listening to this podcast, spend some time with Him at the Cross.

Amen.