

Discerning New Evangelicalism

Lesson One

A Lost Vision of the Old Rugged Cross

“¹⁸ And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am? ¹⁹ They answering said, John the Baptist; but some *say*, Elias; and others *say*, that one of the old prophets is risen again. ²⁰ He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God. ²¹ And he straitly charged them, and commanded *them* to tell no man that thing; ²² Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day. ²³ And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. ²⁴ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. ²⁵ For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? ²⁶ For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and *in his* Father’s, and of the holy angels” (Luke 9:18-26).

Read Luke 9:23 and 26 again. The words of Christ in Luke 9:23-26 embody the definition of a living faith. Anything less is a contradiction against a living faith. Most of today’s Christians want a Christianity that makes no demands, creates no conflict and which raises no controversy. As well, most of today’s Christian’s want a Christianity that does not ask them to make sacrifices or do things they feel uncomfortable with. That type of Christianity is not Biblical Christianity. Yet Christ told us this would be the Christianity of the last days of the Church Age.

“¹⁴ And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; ¹⁵ I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. ¹⁷ Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: ¹⁸ I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. ¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Revelation 3:14-19).

In the last twenty-five to thirty years, this new Christianity has come into existence. It is called new-evangelicalism. It was created by liberalism, ecumenicism, and moral relativism. It has created a generation of worldly Christians who do not want to be denied material prosperity. Most of all, it has created a generation of professing Christians who do not want to be told what to do or how to live. This Christianity has declared their independence from the God of the Bible and all His antiquated “Thou shalt not(s)” under a banner of theological ignorance of the doctrine of grace called “Christian liberty.”

This Christianity has accepted the call to be more open minded and more tolerant of doctrinal diversities. This Christianity was seduced with soft words and manipulated with slick propaganda. Those who refused to compromise, were ridiculed, ostracized and called unloving while being branded as divisive.

Although it was not visibly evident, this new Christianity adopted a new Cross as its symbol. The new Cross was slick and polished like the new Christianity that gave birth to it. Its likenesses to the old rugged Cross of the Bible are superficial. Its differences are fundamental. Those differences have been devastating to the cause of Christ and the missional outreach of local churches.

From this new Christianity and new Cross has also risen a new kind of preaching. It uses the same language, but its message is not the same. The emphasis of this new preaching is completely different.

The preaching of this new Christianity and this new Cross is non-confrontational, soft applicationally and almost completely un-offensive. Unrepentant sinners can still be comfortable sitting under this new preaching.

The old Cross of the old Christianity (Bible Christianity) demanded extreme sacrifices and made absolute, unbending demands. The old Cross and the old Christianity slammed the door in the face of compromise. But most of all, the old Cross and the old Christianity gets in our face with truth, pulls no punches and boldly proclaims “thus sayeth the Lord.”

It is the old Cross we are called to “take up” and follow Christ with. The old Cross identifies us with the old way of the old Book of the old time Christianity. The old Cross speaks of the condemnation of sin and the wrath of God on the unrepentant. The old Cross proclaims God’s pending judgment on this world, on lost sinners and on Satan and his demons. The old Cross speaks of the moment in history when the love of God met the wrath of God and paid the wages of sin for the whole world in the Body of Jesus Christ. The old Cross is totally opposed to this world. The new Cross wants to be this world’s friend. The old Cross demands a life of self sacrifice and obedience to Christ (Gal. 2:20). The new says: “eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.”

What are the fundamental differences in the preaching of the new Cross?

1. The new Cross asks for toleration, not repentance.
2. The new Cross makes requests, not demands.
3. The new Cross teaches infiltration, not separation.
4. The new Cross promotes political activism, not Biblical evangelism.
5. The new Cross does not condemn the sinner. It only redirects him.
6. The new Cross is in the remodeling business. The old Cross is in the regeneration business.

What does it mean to take up our Cross and follow Christ?

1. Death by crucifixion was a common means of capital punishment.
2. The Cross stands for death; bloody, gory, harsh and cruel death.
3. To take up the Cross meant a willingness to make any sacrifice, suffer any pain, to do whatever may be required to maintain identity with Jesus Christ.
4. To be a disciple of Christ meant the willingness to constantly live under the shadow of the old rugged Cross. Being a Christian meant the willingness die for the cause of Christ, but the great difficulty was to live for Him.

Many professing Christians are willing to take up the new Cross. It is polite. It is culturally acceptable. It is white washed so the blood stains are covered over. The new Cross promises to raise fallen man to a higher plane of spiritual awareness. The old Cross says the “old man” is crucified with Christ. The old Cross offers life, but not an *improved life*. It offers a *new life* in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17). This new life is a life that is born out of death.

“²³ And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. ²⁴ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. ²⁵ He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. ²⁶ If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will *my* Father honour. ²⁷ Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again. ²⁹ The people therefore, that stood by, and heard *it*, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. ³⁰ Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. ³² And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw

all *men* unto me.³³ This he said, signifying what death he should die.³⁴ The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man” (John 12:23-33) ?

“Judgment” (John 12:31) refers to the death sentence of condemnation on the human race, fallen in Adam. Christ came to satisfy the “judgment” of God on the old Cross. When Christ says He “will draw all men unto me,” He means to the old Cross as a place of the satisfaction of God’s just sentence on all mankind in the crucifixion of Christ. That is the Cross we are called to take up and be identified with throughout our lives regardless of the costs to us personally.

“¹⁹ For this *is* thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰ For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God. ²¹ For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: ²² Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: ²³ Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously: ²⁴ Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (I Peter 2:19-24).

The old Cross is a symbol of the guilt and shame of sin.

A crucified person had a sign hung around his neck proclaiming the crime he was guilty of. The old Cross is a place of the shame and reproach caused by sin.

1. The new Cross of the new Christianity changes the gospel message to be culturally adaptable and socially acceptable.
2. The new Cross of the new Christianity wants to take away the shame and reproach of sin and leave man with his self respect.
3. The new Cross of the new Christianity wants to make getting saved comfortable and painless without a guilt of sin, without the anguish of the recognition that it was my personal sin that necessitated the crucifixion of the incarnate Son of God.
4. The old Cross was a place of shame and reproach. A man was stripped naked of all this world’s coverings. Only naked men were crucified.

Millions of people will spend eternity in hell because they have been deceived into the new Cross of the new Christianity.

1. In the new Cross, there is no recognition of their guilt of sin.
2. There is no recognition of their deserved condemnation, so no plea for mercy.
3. There is no turning from sin and turning to Christ and therefore, no acceptance of what Christ has accomplished for them and no reception of salvation as a free gift of grace.

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;” (Acts 3:19).

“For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Acts 28:27).

The old Cross of the old Christianity does not speak the language of diplomacy and public relations. It is an ultimatum from God; “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:20a).

“¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. ¹⁸ He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God . . . ³⁶ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:16-18 and 36).

To take up the Cross of Christ meant death to the secular. From that point on, the life of that believer was separated from the world and unto God. The life of that person belonged to Christ.

Conclusion:

The old Cross of the old Christianity is the Cross we are called to take up. The old Cross is what real Christianity fundamentally is. Without the old Cross we do not have a Biblical Christianity. Every Christian makes hundreds of choices each day as to which Cross he identifies himself with.

When we fail to tell others about Christ because of fear of social ostracization or ridicule we take up the new Cross of the new Christianity of the “lukewarm” in Revelation 3:16. When we try to take the offense of the condemnation of sin and the guiltiness of mankind out of the gospel, we take up the new Cross of the new Christianity, not the old. When we speak the language of diplomacy rather than confront the world with the lostness of their souls and eternity of hell, we take up the new Cross of the new Christianity, not the old.

The Old Cross of the old Christianity boldly proclaims there is no other way but the way of the Cross. Salvation is a free gift by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Discerning New Evangelicalism
Lesson One
A Lost Vision of the Old Rugged Cross

1. Read Revelation 3:14-19. Describe the new Christianity of the last days of the Church Age from this Scripture. Give some its characteristics and discuss Christ's attitude towards it. _____

2. Discuss the fundamental differences between the new Cross of the new Christianity with the old Cross of Biblical Christianity. _____

3. Discuss the fundamental differences between the preaching of the new Cross of this new Christianity. _____

4. Discuss the meaning and theological significance of taking up the Cross and following Christ. _____

5. Read John 12:23-33. Discuss the significance of the statement in verse 31, "Now is the judgment of this world." _____

6. From the context of your answer to question five, discuss the meaning of "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." _____

7. Read 1 Peter 2:19-24. From the context of these verses and your answers to questions five and six, discuss the meaning of 1 Peter 2:21. _____

8. Compare the Cross as a symbol of the guilt and shame of sin with the statement of Christ in Luke 9:23 and the believer's command to be identified with the Cross of Christ throughout this life and how that identity differs from the identity with the new Cross of the new Christianity. _____

9. Read Acts 3:19 and Acts 28:27. Discuss the difference between intellectual decisions (head knowledge) and conversion that results from genuine conviction of sin, deserved condemnation, guilt of sin and the guilt that our sins personally called for the need of the crucifixion of Christ, repentance of sin and acceptance by faith of Christ's finished work. _____
