

The Pivot of Destiny

For You and for Me

These Times 1954

ALL CHRISTIANITY is centered in a Man. But it is more than centered in a man, it is centered in a *Man on a cross*. That cross is the pivot of destiny around which revolves the fate of a universe, a world, and each human soul.

Paul indicated this great truth when he said, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 2:2; Galatians 6:14.

A French artist once painted a picture of the young lad Jesus working with Joseph in their little carpenter shop at Nazareth. Mary has just entered to gather some wood chips to start the evening fire. Just as she is straightening up with her apron full of chips, she sees Jesus lifting a plank upon the work-bench. The westering sun, flooding through the open casement, casts His shadow upon the far wall, and, as though prophetically, she sees the shadow as of One upon a cross.

on the cross. ★★★

By Thomas A. Davis

Jesus was born to die. The shadow of the cross fell across the manger of Bethlehem. Indeed, it cast its grim shadow back across the ages, darkening the idyllic Garden of Eden and beclouding the very streets of heaven. For, because of sin, Christ was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

And as He approached closer and closer to the hour of His terrible humiliation and sacrifice, that shadow began to grow blacker and gloomier across His way. The thought of the appalling death He was soon to die weighed Him down; and in great anguish of soul He prayed, "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour." But then the thought of His mission came to Him, and what the terrible fate of mankind would be were the bitter cup to be removed. So in submission He added, "But for this cause came I unto this hour." John 12:27.

And so one day the Son of man carried His cross to the place of suffering, and the mighty Creator and Sustainer of the universe gasped out His life as "the propitiation for our sins."

The lessons we learn from the cross are infinite. But two things project themselves above all else: the awfulness of sin, with its stupendous price, and the love and mercy of God.

The terrible nature of sin can be estimated only by standing before the cross and beholding the frightful death Jesus died. Dean Farrar has sought to describe the fearful death by crucifixion:

"He [Christ] was stripped naked of all His clothes, and then followed the most awful moment of all. He was laid down upon the implement of torture. His arms were stretched along the cross-beams; and at the centre of the open palms, the point of a huge iron nail was placed, which, by the blow of a mallet, was driven home into the wood. Then through either foot . . . another huge nail tore its way through the quivering flesh. . . . To prevent the hands and feet being torn away by the weight of the body, which could not 'rest upon nothing but four great wounds,' there was, about the centre of the cross, a wooden projection strong enough to support, at least in part, a human body which soon became a weight of agony. . . . Then the accursed tree—with its living human burden . . . was slowly heaved up . . . and the end of it fixed firmly in a hole dug

deep in the ground. . . . The feet were but a little raised above the earth. The victim was in full reach of every hand that might choose to strike. . . . A death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death *can* have of horrible and ghastly—dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of untended wounds—all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at



all, but all stopping just short of the point which would give to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness. The unnatural position made every movement painful; the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish; the wounds, inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrened; the arteries—especially of the head and stomach—became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood; and while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of a burning and raging thirst." —*The Life of Christ*, pp. 648-650.

Such were the last, anguished hours of our Redeemer. And added to all that was the most awful pain of all. As the Saviour writhed in that final agony, the light of the Father's face was veiled; and He was left comfortless, alone, to be crushed beneath the horror of sin, while

from His lips was forced the despairing cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Witnessing that terrible sight, hearing that soul-searing cry, how can any insist that God's love is too great, His mercy too boundless, to punish those who reject His grace and turn from His law? Let none thus deceive themselves. By Christ's death God showed that so immovable and eternal is His law that not even to save His Son, "His only-begotten Son," could it be set aside. And upon those who neglect or reject God's grace and His law shall His vengeance fall, unmixed with mercy.

Upon the stone wall of the cell of a prisoner who had just died was found drawn a large cross. At the four ends of the intersecting beams was written the word "Love." And the cross does indeed demonstrate the height and depth and breadth of God's omnipresent love. Set down in the hard rock of human sinfulness, it towers up into heaven, while encompassing all humanity in its span.

Nor is this love passive. Speaking of its power, Christ said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." John 12:32. As a giant electromagnet draws to itself the iron and steel in its field of attraction, so the eternal, all-pervading love of God, centered in the cross, attracts us and all the dwellers of the universe to Him.

"The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if he does not resist, he will be drawn to Jesus; a knowledge of the plan of salvation will lead him to the foot of the cross in repentance for his sins, which have caused the sufferings of God's dear Son." —Mrs. E. G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 30.

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:9, 10. In this unspeakable Gift heaven emptied itself for fallen humanity. It had no richer treasure to offer. And in nailing Him to the cross, mankind showed their scorn for that Gift and their ignorance of its tremendous value. But heaven and the Father have not turned from us because of this, much as we merit it. Instead, God is trying to bring to our dulled senses and hardened hearts some realization of that Sacrifice. His Holy Spirit is constantly seeking to impress us with our need of Heaven's remedy, the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross. ★★★