

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 15 (April 6-12, 2014)

In yesterday's devotions, I mentioned the glorious conversion of John, my new brother in Christ. This week, I want to show how Calvary makes that transformation possible for anyone who receives Jesus into his/her heart.

Sunday, April 6 (read Luke 23:32-34)

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34a)

This is an important verse for many unbelievers who have never clearly heard and understood God's plan of salvation. Some of them may have become addicted to drugs, alcohol or promiscuity during their teen or college years, making their lives miserable. Others may have lived such good lives **in their own estimation** that they never asked Jesus to forgive their sins. Jesus offers salvation to any of these who can hear His voice, even to those on their deathbeds. However, most of the last-minute decisions I have witnessed have come from those who never understood why Jesus died for the entire world. Sadly, on the other hand, many of those who have sat in church week after week, hearing clearly but rejecting His redemption story, do not hear from Jesus during their last days on earth. They often go out into eternity cursing the One who died in their place because they rejected His offer when He called to them (see 2 Cor. 6:1-2).

Monday, April 7 (read Luke 23:39-43)

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." (Luke 23:42)

If you read yesterday's passage from Luke 23:32-34, you saw that Jesus was crucified between two thieves. One of the men scorns Jesus and demands physical deliverance from the cross (v. 39). The other thief takes responsibility for his own actions and asks for mercy from the Lord. In doing this, he gives the entire plan of salvation: 1) I have sinned, 2) I deserve death, 3) Jesus is perfect (all in v. 41), and 4) Jesus, remember me (v. 42). This thief hanging beside Jesus had done no works to deserve salvation; he had to depend on the **mercy** and **grace** of the Lord. Have you learned that we are all in that same dilemma? If so, you will rejoice with any needy soul who receives Jesus on his/her deathbed.

Tuesday, April 8 (read Galatians 6:12-16)

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Galatians 6:14)

I learned to quote this verse when I was a teenager, but only recently am I learning to live by it. I seldom preach a message without referring to the symbolic cross hanging on the wall behind me. Anything I have ever accomplished in life has come as a direct result of the cross of Calvary, on which Jesus forgave all my sins. How could I boast when I deserved death instead of life (Romans 6:23)? How could I boast when "every good and perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17)? How could I boast when Jesus states that, "apart from me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5)? What have you done that you can't wait to brag about when you stand in the presence of Jesus? I pray that you will learn to boast only "in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Wednesday, April 9 (read Colossians 2:13-15)

He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross. (Colossians 2:13b-14)

The written law contained more than 600 rules, all of which we had to perfectly keep in order to be able to stand before our Holy God. No one throughout history has been able to come close to that standard. That's why the cross of Calvary stands as a testimony to anyone who will spend eternity in Heaven with the Father! For Jesus, the physical pain of the cross was nothing compared to the emotional pain of carrying all the sins of the entire world, causing Him to be temporarily separated from His Father who could not look upon sin (see Habakkuk 1:13). The next time you hear someone ask, "Don't you think that all religions lead to God?" ask the questioner if anyone else died for his/her sin. The cross stands alone in giving us assurance of eternal life.

Thursday, April 10 (read 1 Corinthians 1:16-25)

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 1:16)

The "message of the cross" is that Jesus died for the sins of the entire world, but only those who believe in Him and receive Him into their lives will possess eternal life. That is foolishness to a world that believes all roads lead to God. That is also foolishness to those who think God is like a grandfather who gives you everything you ask for, but who doesn't hold you accountable for your actions. The "message of the cross" is quite simple: "Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers" (1 John 3:16b). If that seems foolish to you, the "message of the cross" has not been made clear enough or, worse yet, you may be spiritually blind. Ask Him to give you a clear vision of His cross!

Friday, April 11 (reread 1 Corinthians 1:16-25)

. . . but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. . . (1 Corinthians 1:23)

God's plan of salvation requires that we come to Him **heart first** and not **head first**. We believe in Him with our **hearts** and we ask Him to come in and live in our **hearts**. We say that we have given our heart to Jesus. I often say that some people will miss Heaven by 18 inches, the distance between their head and their heart. I'm sure there are many who believe all the facts about Jesus, but who have never surrendered their hearts to live for His glory alone. There is room for debate on a few Biblical passages where the intended meaning is not perfectly clear, but there is no debate over the necessity of the cross. God's **power** and **wisdom** are made known by the crucified Christ (v. 24). Don't follow the wisdom and strength of men. Instead, follow the "weakness" and "foolishness" of God (v. 25)!

Saturday, April 12 (read Hebrews 12:1-3)

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

This is another great KLUFROG (Keep Looking Up—Fully Rely on God) verse. Jesus called you to Himself to begin your faith journey, so you can be sure "that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). Jesus knew that "He had come from God and was returning to God," (see John 13:3) and He also knew that the acceptance of His death and resurrection would prepare us for Heaven (see John 14:1-4), so He "endured the cross," knowing the **joy of eternity**. Are you sure enough of Heaven that you can enjoy carrying your own cross down here? Tough times are ahead. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith" (v. 2).