

The 6th Mid-Week Lenten Service
Matt. 10:37, 38 (1 Peter 5:10, 11)
March 25, 2015

My Fellow Redeemed In Christ

Tonight We Conclude Our Lenten Series On Cross Bearing. We Have Covered A Lot Of Ground: We Have Talked About **"What It Means To Bear The Cross"**, That **"Every Christian Bears The Cross"**, **"The Right Attitude Toward Bearing The Cross"**, **"The Purpose Of Bearing The Cross"**, And Last Week We Heard About **"The Cross And Sin."** Tonight We Conclude Our Lenten Series With What We All Want And Pray For: **"The Strength To Bear The Cross."** In His First Letter The Apostle Peter Says This: **"And After You Have Suffered A Little While, The God Of All Grace, Who Has Called You To His Eternal Glory In Christ, Will Himself Restore, Confirm, Strengthen, And Establish You. To Him Be The Dominion Forever And Ever. Amen" (5: 10, 11, Esv).**

I. God Gives Us The Strength To Bear Our Cross By Assuring Us That Our Sins, All Of Them, Are Forgiven. They Are Forgiven Because Jesus Took Up His Cross For Us.

A. This Is So Important For Us To Remember When We Are Experiencing A Cross. When We Are Suffering, Our Natural Inclination Is To Think That God Is Punishing Us For Our Sin. We May Feel This Way Because There Is Some Sin That Especially Bothers Us And That We Feel Guilty About. And If This Guilt Is Joined To The Belief That God Is Punishing Us For Our Sin, We Can Become Angry With God, Accusing Him Of Being Unfair. We Might Feel That God Has Deserted Us. Of Course, When We Feel This Way We Have Forgotten All About The Meaning Of Bearing A Cross. When We Feel This Way We Have Forgotten That God Loves Us. We Have Forgotten That Our Sins Have Already Been Punished When Jesus Took Up His Cross For Us. We Have Forgotten The Purpose Of Bearing The Cross....To Bring Us Closer To God. All Of This Comes From Forgetting That God Loves Us And He Forgives Us All Our Sins.

B. So If We Are Going To Be Able To Bear Our Cross---We Need To Be Assured That God Really Does Love Us And Forgives Us. Peter Reminds Us Of This Truth When He Refers To God As **"The God Of All Grace"**. Grace Is The Undeserved Love Of God. When We Feel Really Guilty About Something It Is Hard For Us To Believe That God Really Forgives Us. How Can God Forgive Us When We Have A Hard Time Forgiving Ourselves? But He Does. When Jesus Died On The Cross He Said: **"It Is Finished!" (John 19: 30, Esv).** God's Forgiveness Doesn't Depend On Forgiving Ourselves. God Forgives Us Whether We Feel Forgiven Or Not. But We Need The Constant Reminder And Assurance That God Really Does Forgive Us. We Cannot Carry Our Cross Unless We Believe We Are Forgiven. And Believing That God Forgives Us Helps Us To Eventually Forgive Ourselves. Indeed, If God Forgives Us We Need To Ask Ourselves **"How**

Then Can I Not Forgive Myself? Am I More Important Than God?" As We Are Assured Of God's Love And Forgiveness We Can Deal With Any Cross We Might Have. .We Can Let Go Of Feelings Of Guilt Or Anger That God Is Punishing Us. And In God's Love And Forgiveness We Fill Find The Strength We Need To Bear Our Cross. For We Know That God Is Working For Our Good.

ii. But There Is Another Closely Related Way That God Gives Us Strength To Bear Our Cross: He Assures Us Of A Much Better World To Come Where There Are No Crosses To Bear.

A. We Americans Have A Tendency To Live For The Moment. Everything Has To Be **"Contemporary"**. Americans Aren't Impressed With The Past And Think Little About The Future. We Get So Wrapped Up In This World That We Can Easily Forget That There Is Another World Coming. I Struggle With This Too. We Often Live Our Lives, Make Our Decisions, And React To Our Problems As If This Is The Only Life That We Are Ever Going To Have. Many Years Ago There Was A Beer Commercial On Television That Communicated This Idea Of Living For The Present. Maybe Some Of You Remember It: **"You Only Go Around Once In Life, So You Have To Grab All The Gusto You Can."** Suffering And Bearing Crosses Does Not Fit Very Well Into This View Of Life. For In This View Of Life Suffering And Bearing Crosses Interferes With Grabbing All The Gusto You Can. In Other Words, Suffering And Bearing Crosses Interferes With That American God Called **"Happiness."** God Has Never Promised Us Happiness In This World.

B. But God Has Promised Us A New And Better World To Come. Our Dear Lord Jesus Is Coming Back Some Day. Peter Reminds Us That God Has **"Called You To His Eternal Glory In Christ."** Indeed, One Of The Reasons That God Allows Us To Bear The Cross Is To Create Within Us A Desire, A Longing For That Eternal Life That He Has Promised Us. Why Would We Want To Go To Another World If We Think That This One Is Just Fine? Of Course, We Don't Know All The Details About The Next World, But We Know Enough That We Want To Go There. For One Thing, There Will Be No Crosses. There Won't Be Any Sadness Or Pain Or Suffering. Death Will Be No More. There Won't Be Any Sin. In The Person Of Jesus Christ God Himself Will Live In Our Midst. There Will Be Joy And Pleasure. Indeed, The Joy And Pleasure Of The Next World Will Far Outweigh Any Suffering We Have In This One As Paul Says In Romans: **"For I Consider That The Sufferings Of This Present Time Are Not Worth Comparing With The Glory That Is To Be Revealed To Us." (Rom. 8: 18, Esv).** But Paul Got This From Jesus Who Said In His Sermon On The Mount: **".Blessed Are You When Others Revile You And Persecute You And Utter All Kinds Of Evil Against You Falsely On My Account. Rejoice And Be Glad, For Your Reward Is Great In Heaven, For So They Persecuted The Prophets Who Were Before You"** (Matt. 5: 11, 12,

Esv). It Is This Hope Of Glory In The Next World That Gives Meaning To Our Suffering In This Life---
And Gives Us Strength To Bear Our Crosses As Jesus Bore His.

Conclusion: It Is True, That On Our Own We Will Not Have The Power And Strength That We Need To
Bear Our Cross. Left To Our Own Devices We Will Only Grumble And Complain About Our Crosses; We
Will Doubt God And Be Angry With Him. But In The Promises Of Jesus Christ God Will Do For Us What
We Cannot Do For Our Selves As Peter Has Said That God : **"Will Himself Will Restore, Confirm,
Strengthen, And Establsih You" (V. 10, Esv).** For In Christ We Know The Love Of God In The
Forgiveness Of Our Sins And The Hope The Eternal Life In A New World Yet To Come.. And So In The
Midst Of Our Crosses We Say With Peter **"To Him Be The Dominion For Ever And Ever. Amen."**