

# The Blessedness of the Altar part 5

## The Power of the Altar

*"For the Preaching of the Cross is the Power of God..."*

*I Cor. 1:18*

Throughout this series of articles we are exploring the wonder of the Cross of Christ as God's living and active Altar for, in, and through each of us. I pray that these times of sharing will bring to the reader a "fresh look" at the most important thing in our lives... the Cross of Christ and how that personally affects each of us daily. Many times the most profoundly important things in our relationship with God are shrouded with a cloud of mystery or misunderstanding. Because they are not "easily comprehended" and even distasteful when seen through our veiled eyes, we can tend to become satisfied with a surface look and explanation. But God knows that deep hunger within you to know Him as He truly is, and so He draws us to take another look at the things that have at times become so common and ineffectual. May our hearts trust in God's perfect care as we open to Him to make real in us the power of His Cross. I once again beseech you to search these things out in the scriptures on your own to see if they are so (Acts 17: 11). My opinion means nothing apart from the authority of the Word of God. May the Lord bless each of you as you seek Him.

### **The Reality of True Power**

*"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:*

*But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;*

*But unto them who are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (I Cor. 1:22-24).*

In the last article we discussed the incredible potential of the altar. Such enormous increase can only come from something extremely powerful. Our question now is what KIND of power does the altar hold? The scriptures tell us that it is the kind of power that is of GOD Himself (I Cor. 1:18).

Before we look at what this power is, let us look at what it is not. Our first point will be what many consider to be the heights of spirituality. Since the birth of the Church in the book of Acts until now there has always been a desire to experientially know the power of

God in a miraculous event, or through a gifting of the Spirit. Here again, we must ask ourselves this question upon bended knee and with bible in hand, *"Is the power of the altar miracles, gifts and spiritual phenomena"*? Jesus refused to miraculously deliver or heal Himself from His altar. Rather, He delivered His Spirit into His Father's care, bowed His head and died. Paul told us the Jews were seeking a certain kind of power, but this power was not the true eternal power of God.

Our next point deals with the Greek's angle, which is knowledge. There is a sense of empowerment and strength found in knowledge. To many, the Cross is a tool of theological correctness, denominational validation, and deeper spiritual knowledge. But we must ask ourselves. *"Is the true power of the altar that it makes us wise and teaches us deep and spiritual truths"*? Jesus was not preaching or teaching on His Cross, He was dying. Paul told us that Greeks seek wisdom, but this wisdom does not contain the power that is of God. The altar is not a place of getting, but of giving. It is not the place of our increase, but of His increase and our decrease. To gain knowledge can simply be a way of adding something to ourselves rather than experientially knowing and being filled with the Life of God which is Christ in us (Eph. 3:19). To be filled with Christ in this way requires that we first be emptied of ourselves.

Finally Paul tells us that the true definition of the power of God can only be found in the preaching of the Cross, and is only accessible to those who will partake of that power (I Cor. 1:18). Now let us consider that statement in modern day terms. Imagine that you had the choice of three different church services to attend. The first service is supposed to be a time of mighty miracles. The second service is going to be an incredible look into hidden mysteries of the scriptures. And the third service is going to be someone declaring that you are dead with Christ. Which service would you want to go to? What kind of power are you seeking? Please understand, I praise God for His miracles and divine touches. In fact, I regularly receive His grace in healings and countless miracles. But a miracle is not the power that transforms me so that no longer I but Christ lives in me. I also search the scriptures continually, but my motive is to see Jesus and be changed into His image, not just gain knowledge. May our hearts pant after that which will bring us into a greater measure of His Life!

*"Paul was jealous for Christ to become the Life of the believer and not just a new doctrine. Paul knew that the only way this was going to happen was through preaching the Cross, and not encouraging people to continuing slipping past the Altar still alive".*

***"The Weakness and Foolishness of the Cross is Greater Than All That is of Man"***

*"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty" (I Cor. 25-27).*

Immediately after declaring the reality of what true power is, Paul goes on to say, *"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than man" (I Cor. 1:25).* What a statement this is!!! Paul is saying that the weakness and foolishness of the Cross is greater than all that is of man. Those who are wise and strong reject the power of the Altar BECAUSE they don't want to die. They would rather been made wise and strong for God than receive the cross of their own crucifixion so that Christ might be their life, their all. And so God chooses the foolish, small, base and weak things to confound such people (I Cor. 1:26-27). Through these vessels of weakness God is trying to display the power of His Altar to bring forth His Son in whomsoever would believe and receive His Cross. Time and again I have seen people astonished that God could use someone that was commonly considered stupid and weak. To them it was like some unfathomable miracle that Jesus came out of such a person. They had set their hopes on the one who was strong and wise to be the vessel of increase. And yet that is the very mentality that rejects the true power of the Altar because it still believes God wants to empower mankind and make him strong and wise, rather than empty the vessel so that Christ can be the fullness within. Paul was so adamant concerning the power of the Cross to eradicate all flesh that he goes on to say "that NO flesh should glory in His presence" (I Cor. 1:29). Paul was jealous for Christ to become the Life of the believer and not just a new doctrine. Paul knew that the only way this was going to happen was through preaching the Cross, and not encouraging people to continuing slipping past the Altar still alive.

***"Of God... or ... Of Man?"***

The power OF GOD is not the power OF MAN. Man would love to be increased through wisdom and strength, just like the Greeks and Jews were seeking. Man (mankind) seeks divine empowerment to make himself wise and spiritual. Man also seeks the power to overcome personal weakness, power to be delivered from enemies, and power to strengthen his own personal virtues, such as love and patience. But the Cross is not the power that is OF MAN, it is the power that is OF GOD. God's power is to increase DIVINE LIFE, rather than strengthen our old sinful lives. God's power is to bring forth HIS SON, not more of the old man in his adamic fallen nature. Thank God for HIS Cross that removed us so Christ could be our all in all!

## *God's Tool of Choice*

In the last article we discussed that the potential of the altar was the exponential increase of Christ springing forth in resurrection Life. We heard Jesus teaching His disciples that the true path to fruitfulness required the way of the cross / altar. Throughout that article we discussed the vanity of trying to bring forth fruit through any other method than the altar. Remember, in John 12:24 Jesus said, *“verily, verily I say unto you, EXCEPT a seed fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone and will not bring forth fruit.”* Now we are looking at the specific power that the altar holds to be able to bring forth such incredible increase.

God chose the altar of Christ's Cross upon which to release His power. The altar was God's tool of choice. The altar was His method of increase. Jesus may have done many miracles, but only the Cross is called the very power of God in the scriptures. God never released the fullness of His power through Jesus until He was dying upon His altar. It was only there that an old creation was crucified and new creation was brought forth (Heb. 2:14, Col. 1:18).

The power of the Cross is not found in adding something to mankind but in REMOVING mankind's old nature to replace it with a NEW LIFE (Roms. 6:4). That is why Paul said, *“I am CRUCIFIED with Christ”* rather than *“I am empowered in my flesh by Christ”* (Gal. 2:20). Paul finished his statement with these words... *“nevertheless I live yet it is not I but Christ living in me”*. Herein we discover the incredible efficacy of the altar. An old creation was crucified and put away through the Cross of Christ, and a new creation filled with Christ was brought forth (II Cor. 5:17). No other method or tool could have ENDED one entire creation, nature, kind of man and brought forth a new creation filled with Christ.

This is foolishness to the world. It makes no sense that life would come out of death. What makes sense to the world is that increase would only come through working hard. Many believe that increase in ministry should go forth through human effort and great feats of divine empowerment through special spiritual men and women. To the un-renewed mind there is no power in weakness, only in strength. But God told Paul His strength was made perfect in Paul's weakness (II Cor. 12:9). Because it is so foreign to our minds that we should live by the Life of Another, we wrestle with the Cross as we try to make it strengthen our flesh, rather than receiving it's death blow so that Christ can live instead. What a blessed time it is when we finally come to an end of ourselves and are ready for Christ to truly be our Life! This is not a time of failure but of finally entering into the eternal plan of God for our lives.

### ***The Dynamite of God!***

Let us look at the word “power”. We have many idea’s of what it looks like when something is powerful. Atomic and nuclear bombs are powerful enough to incur massive destruction, even end all life on the earth. The Greek word used for “power” in I Cor. 1:18 is “dunimos” which is the root word for “dynamite”. Here we find that the power that emanated from Christ’s death was like an explosion. Yet even the greatest explosions that we can imagine do not come close to the power that was released from Calvary. The death of Christ released enough power to eradicate not just one generation of humanity from the planet, but the entire race of Adam, the entire Old Creation, and then to make all things new in and by Christ. In fact the release of power from Calvary was so potent that it’s ability to annihilate all flesh reaches right into this present moment and motive. This is proven when you look at the tense of the Greek verb Paul used when he declared “I am crucified” in Galatians 2:20. “AM CRUCIFIED” speaks of a past finished work having continuing effects in the present. In other words, the waves of power released from Christ’s death are still flowing forth and eradicating anything that will open to its reach. The work of the Cross was not a one time explosion that is now stagnant and unable to touch us today. The waves of “cross-radium” still radiate out from Calvary’s altar and release power to all who will believe.

When God’s power really touches us, it ENDS us. Yet we want the power of God to BLESS us. And this is why the preaching of the Cross was and is severely persecuted, even by the Church herself. Yet, how can God fill a cup with Christ if it is already full of us? We despise the very tool that will be the answer to our deepest heart’s cry for more of Jesus because we have not truly seen what the power of God does to all flesh.... crucifies it.

### ***"What is Our True Belief?"***

We can discover our true belief in what God's power is by observing how we measure others. Do we honor people based on how much they know? Do we more highly respect certain people because of a spiritual gift of empowerment? Or have we come to God's measurement that judges all humanity based on whether it is Christ or us doing the living? Only those who have been impacted by the power of God through applying His Cross within will truly know what it means to say, “*Not I, but Christ liveth in me*”. May we join with the Apostle Paul in His determination to know nothing among us except for Christ and Him crucified (I Cor. 2:2). Let us always remember that the true blessedness of the Altar is that through its power it can be Christ and not us who is doing the living. May the Cross we believe in be effectual in us, impacting and bringing to bear its true and eternal work. Amen!

## *Personal Notes*

*"Those who are wise and strong reject the power of the Altar because they don't want to die. They would rather been made wise and strong for God than receive the cross of their own crucifixion so that Christ might be their life, their all".*