

Four Demonstrations of the Power of the Cross

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Let me give you four demonstrations of the power of the cross. Listen to this, some of you may know Robert Murray M'Cheyne, that is a name that stands out as godly men who have gone before us. He was a Scottish Presbyterian, died at the age of 29 years. He was a very godly young man. Many of his sermons and his biography for certain have preserved to this day. Listen to what came from his pen.

He writes this after hearing this in some meetings. "The most striking example of self-devotedness in the cause of Christ which I ever heard in these days of deadness was told here last week by an English minister. It has never been printed, and therefore I will relate it to you just as I heard it to stir up our cold hearts that we may give ourselves to the Lord. The awful disease of leprosy still exists in Africa. Whether it be the same leprosy as that mentioned in the Bible, I do not know, but it is regarded as incurable and so infectious that no one dares to come near the leper. In the south of Africa, there's a large laser-house for lepers. It is an immense space enclosed by a very high wall, and containing fields within which the lepers cultivate. There's only one entrance, and it's strictly guarded. Whenever anyone is found with the marks of leprosy upon him, he is brought to this gate, obliged to enter in, never to return. No one who enters in by that awful gate is ever allowed to come out.

Within this abode of misery, there are multitudes of lepers in all stages of the disease. Doctor Hallbeck, a missionary of the church of England, from the top of a neighboring hill outside the laser-house saw lepers in it at work. He noticed two particularly sowing peas in the field. One had no hands. The other had no feet. These members being wasted away by the disease. The one who lacked hands was carrying the one who lacked feet upon his back. And he again carried in his hands the bag of seed. And he dropped a pea every now and then, which the other pressed into the ground with his foot. And so they managed the work of one man between the two. Ah, how little we know of the misery that is in the world, such as this prison house of disease.

But you will ask, who cares for the souls of the hapless inmates? Who will venture to enter in at this dreadful gate never to return again? Who will forsake father and mother, houses and land, to carry the message of a Savior to these poor lepers? I'll tell you who: Two Moravian missionaries, compelled by a divine love for souls have chosen the laser-house as their field of labor. They entered it never to come out again. And I am told that as soon as these die, which die they likely will, a most fearful death, other Moravians are quite ready to fill their place. Ah, my dear friends, may we not blush and be ashamed before God that we, redeemed with the same blood and taught by the same Spirit, should yet be so unlike these men in vehement heart-consuming love to Jesus and the souls of men."

And I just ask you, what is it that makes two young men devote themselves as missionaries to the cause of God, to leave father and mother and home and comforts, and go into a distant land. It is a thing of power that does that! It is a thing of power that releases men

from the comforts of this world to go do that. It is the power of the cross of Christ. This comes in part from the pen of Spurgeon, the Baptist pastor from 150 years ago.

He tells a story of a Mr. Thomas Hawks, taken, chained around the midsection to a stake, and he was burned for his faith. Hawks, when he was in prison, before having gone to the stake, promised his friends, by the help of God, I will show you that the most terrible torments can be endured in the glorious cause of Christ and His gospel. The comforts of which were able to lift the believing soul above all the injuries men can inflict. Once the flames were kindled around him at the cross, they quickly blazed with such fierceness that his speech was taken away by their violence. His frame shrunk. And the people assumed him dead. His body was consumed. The onlookers, seeing how burned he was, expected to see his body break apart over the chain and fall into the fire, but instead, he lifted his flaming hands, each finger spurting fire. He clapped them three times with a shout, "of none but Christ, none but Christ!" You tell me, folks, what has power on this earth to put a man in flames, and with all victory and power and authority and triumph to shout, "none but Christ!"

Folks, what wondrous energy seized the man? What made him strong? What helped him to bear under that kind of cruelty of men? What made him unmoved in the flames? I'll tell you. It's another thing. It's a thing of power. It's the cross of Jesus Christ. For unto us who are saved, Paul says, it is the power of God. The cross has power to loosen our grips on life, and to stand up before the most cruelty of man and say I will go to your stake, but I will not deny this cross. Folks, you can not deny the cross when you've tasted its power. You cannot come and lightly speak of it and say I no longer believe in it, or recant of it if you know its power. When the persecution starts, the ones who Matt talked about in the Sunday school who will not endure to the end. They will walk away precisely for that reason. They never experience the power of the cross. You will hold to your faith in the very flames themselves and all consumed in fire, cry out to the victory of Christ, one way, there's one power in this world that produces it: it is the power of the cross.

This is preserved for us by that most notable Christian Jonathan Edwards. The life of David Brainerd, on his deathbed, Brainerd, under the extreme agonies of death, in a day when there was no morphine, there was no Tylenol, there was no aspirin even. He told those who gathered round him, "it is another thing to die than people imagine." At times he was completely delirious with pain. He said that it was impossible for any to conceive of the distress he felt. He was concerned in his pain lest he should dishonor God in his extreme agony. He said that the thought of enduring it one minute longer was almost insupportable. He is there wracked with the kind of pain that the thought of having to endure it one minute longer, was almost driving him mad. He was being cared for by Jonathan Edwards daughter Jerusha Edwards, and he loved her. And in all of his pain and all of his suffering, and realizing he's about ready to leave the woman he loves, he says with joy and peace that he's ready to leave her and leave life, he's ready for eternity.

And I'll tell you this, what gives men on such a deathbed as that, hope at death? Listen, I saw my aunt die. I went to the hospital. She died without Christ. There was such terror in her eyes. She was a forty-some year old woman, crying like a little child for her mother, "Mommy!" She had a look in her eyes. I was at my step-father's bedside when he died without Christ. If you think you can spurn Christ, come to church, be religious, and get to the end and get on your

deathbed, and if you think you'll die easy without Christ, if you'll die easy having lacked assurance all through this life, if you'll die easy trusting in your church-going or your works, I've seen it. People don't die easy. There's only one thing that causes men to die easy. And it is a power unknown to this world. It is a power that comes from that cross.

I have one more and I'm done. King James II, in February 1685, had two Covenanters, two women, Margaret Wilson, aged 18, and Margaret McLaughlin, 64 arrested near Wigtown on suspicion of having attended an unauthorized prayer meeting. They were tied to stakes in the rising tide at Wigtown. But if they simply would disown their faith, disown their Savior, they would be freed. They both refused. The older Margaret was first to drown. With the younger Margaret refusing to bow to the tortures of the soldiers, who were gathered round her forcing her head under the water, they mockingly shouted, "Take another drink, henny!" But she defied them by singing Psalm 25 as the waters engulfed her. The bodies of the two Margaret's were buried together in Wigtown graveyard, along with three local men also executed a few days later for their faith. I just ask you folks what miracle of grace gives the meekness, and the patience, and the cheerfulness, and the self-denial to two Moravian men, to a man in the flames, to a man wracked with pain on his deathbed, to two ladies in a rising tide? Brother, sister, I'll tell you this: There is power in the cross. And there is power there to free us from all fear of loss in this life - to let it go. You're not citizens of this world. The power of that cross has set us free and ransomed us to God. We are people of another Kingdom. The power of the cross calls us not to ease and not to luxury, and not to retirement and rest and securities. You're called to live in the power of the cross.