

Grounded in Grace

Pictures of Hope and Redemption Pt 5

Picture #4 The Hidden Cross



¹ Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. Romans 5:1-4

We continue in this series of using pictures from 9/11 as illustrations of how God uses difficulties and tragedies to redeem our stories.

Finding the Hidden Cross

On September 13th a worker at the site named Frank Silecchia discovered a 20 foot (6.1 m)^[5] cross of two steel beams amongst the debris of Six World Trade Center.^[6] The cross was removed from the rubble and preserved. On July 23, 2011, the cross was blessed by Rev. Brian Jordan during a short ceremony before being loaded on a flatbed truck, moved back to Ground Zero, and lowered into the [National September 11 Memorial and Museum](#). Due to it being a large scale artifact, it was placed before filling in the rest of the museum displays.^[25]

The Perspective of the Cross

Paul understood the power of the cross when he wrote the churches in Rome about suffering. Paul's soul rested on the fact that he was justified (or declared not guilty) because of grace (given something that we don't deserve) through faith (belief and trust) in Jesus' death and resurrection on the cross. The redemption of the cross allowed him to experience peace with God. This peace was not just a peace of knowledge but a peace of experience. No matter what struggles, suffering or pain he endured, Paul knew that his life was deeply rooted in the power of the everlasting savior.

The cross allowed Paul to say with boldness and confidence that he would not only boast in the glory of God but also in the glory of his suffering. The sufferings in this life will lead to the fruit of perseverance, character, and hope. The hope is that one day the hurts will be healed, the brokenness will be redeemed, and that all things will sanctify our character to one day be perfect and holy. Paul lived with this assurance and this assurance gave him strength in the face of many trials.

In the midst of chaos and suffering, we need to find the hidden cross. The cross not only symbolizes suffering but it also symbolizes our redemption from suffering. Sometimes the cross of comfort transforms into the comfort of being loved by others when suffering and sometimes it is found in the form of suffering itself. And many times the cross is hidden from our sight until the clouds of confusion have been removed from our souls. Just like the 9/11 cross, we have seen God use tragedy to bring about his triumph.

I would like to share the last letter written by Dr. Knox Chamblin. He was one of my professors at RTS who passed away in early February from leukemia at the age of 76. This letter was written two weeks before his death. It is a testimony of the cross revealed to his soul as he embraced his suffering with confidence and assurance. As I now write this, he is healed. And so are those saints who came before and those of us who know Jesus now will soon experience the same in the future. I hope his last letter encourages your soul as you continue on the journey!

The Way of Suffering

*A skeptic, having witnessed the breadth and depth of human suffering, declared: "He is God and not good, or he is good and not God. Either he **can** end suffering but **will not**, or else he **wants to** but **cannot**." This falsehood is addressed in Psalm 62:11-12a, "Once God has spoken, twice have I heard this: that **power** belongs to God and that to you, O Lord belongs **steadfast love**." (Emphasis added.)*

*My leukemia and now Ginger's sarcoma have placed the weightiest burden upon us. We are beset with many fears and manifold anxiety; but the effect has been to draw us closer to God and to one another. Never before have we been so grateful for Biblical truth (see Psalm 34:4 and Philippians 4:6-7). We are praying that the promise of Psalm 30:2 will become true for us: "My God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me." While we pray for another ten years of life, we bow in reverence to the will of our sovereign God and heavenly Father. God delivers some of his children **from** this, others he delivers **through** this. In his commentary on Job, J.N.D. Anderson writes that suffering is God's most precious gift to his children. God has **entrusted** cancer to Ginger and me. We pray that the witness of our response will bring great honor to our heavenly Father and hope for the people of God.*

*There is great mystery in suffering, and many questions will remain unanswered until we enter into the heavenly glory. In face of this mystery, C.S. Lewis, in The Problem of Pain, says that looking at life is like looking at a fabric under a large magnifying glass. The fabric is clear at the center but blurry around the perimeter. So, says Lewis, keep the cross of Christ at the center of your world view. Here both the **power** and the **steadfast love** of God come to supreme expression. Furthermore, we can confidently embrace the words of Romans 8:32, "He who spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"*

With deep love and high esteem for all of you, Knox Chamblin