

CHAPTER 1

**THE GLORIES OF THE CROSS**

VIEWING THE GLORY OF THE PARADIGMATIC ASPECTS OF THE CROSS

Throughout the chapters of this book, it is intended that the reader will be challenged to consider the supreme importance of the Cross of Christ as a paradigm for every aspect of the believer's life and also as the source of power to transform him into the likeness of Christ in His suffering and death.<sup>1</sup> It is the author's prayer that every reader become more passionate about worshiping God's nature as revealed by Jesus through the Cross and about being conformed to the paradigm of the Cross. Further, it is hoped that this series will help remedy what I have perceived as a tragic neglect of the teaching of the Cross in many parts of the Christian Church, especially of the teaching of its paradigmatic aspects.

It is crucial that every reader, as he or she is considering the Cross as a model for Christian experience, is not focusing primarily on the outward torture and other abuse that Jesus suffered, but on the **attitudes, strength of character, love, forgiveness, motivation and disposition that Jesus manifested** during His crucifixion and the hours preceding it. A glance at the table of contents will give readers an idea of the many-sided aspects of the Cross as a paradigm, each chapter focusing on the nature of God revealed in Jesus and the our being changed into His likeness.

A. B. Simpson likens the different ways that we can see the Cross as being like the colourful patterns seen in a kaleidoscope: "With every turn, the holy Scriptures show us some new light and some different aspect of its many-sided glory and significance."<sup>2</sup> I would like to add to his statement that our commitment to being conformed to His death can be considered a kaleidoscope itself in that this commitment brings with it revelation that allows us to see glories in the Cross that we can not see otherwise and to see in a new way the truths of the Cross that we already know.

No doubt some would find it strange to talk about the glories of the Cross, when we realize that crucifixion was the most horrible form of torture and the most degrading and shameful method of execution. However, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can see past the horror of the Cross and agree with Calvin that the greatest manifestations of His glory in Scripture are shown at the Cross:

For in the cross of Christ, as in a splendid theatre, the incomparable goodness of God is set before the whole world. The glory of God shines, indeed, in all creatures on high and below, but never more brightly than in the cross . . . .<sup>3</sup>

If it be objected that nothing could be less glorious than Christ's death . . . , I reply that in that death we see a boundless glory which is concealed from the ungodly.<sup>4</sup>

It is in the Gospel of John that we read of Jesus being glorified in the Cross. Three times, John speaks of His being "lifted up" (John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32) and thus "spiritually exalted before the eyes of the world".<sup>5</sup> When some Greeks came to see Him, Jesus said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (John 12:23). Soon after Jesus prays, "Father, glorify your name!"; then

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<sup>1</sup>Taken from Philippians 3:10, developed in Chapter 2.

<sup>2</sup>A. B. Simpson, *The Cross of Christ* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications 1994), 2.

<sup>3</sup>Calvin, *St. John*, p. 68, quoted by John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1986) 206.

<sup>4</sup>John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 205.

<sup>5</sup>John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 205.

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the Father answers, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again” (John 12:28). Just after Judas left the upper room, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.” (John 13:31). Finally, in Jesus’ great prayer, “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.” (John 17:1)

Nowhere else can we fully see God but in the face of Jesus Christ . . . . In Him we see not only God but His glory displayed. This gives us a new understanding of that which makes God glorious—and it comes a both a surprise and a shock. For the face that reveals the glory of God is a marred face, spat upon and disfigured by the malice of men . . . . But you say, that is not the vision of glory, but of shame and disgrace! However, it is glory as God counts glory . . . not so much in His ability to exalt Himself and humble man, but in His willingness to humble Himself for the sake of man . . . .<sup>6</sup>

Not only is it imperative to see the glory of God manifested in Jesus in His suffering and death; we must see that we are to express the same glory that Jesus expressed—“the paradigm of the Cross”. Consider what Andrew Murray declares about the chief glory of Christ and our conformity to it:

We know that the death of the cross is His chief glory. The one mark by which He is separated here in earth and in heaven, from all other persons, both in the Divine Being and in God’s universe, is this one: He is the Crucified Son of God. Of all the articles of conformity, this must necessarily be the chief and most glorious one—conformity to His death.<sup>7</sup>

I picture myself as a kind of tour guide, having chosen a strategic viewpoint to give readers a panoramic glimpse of many of the glories of the Cross. In the next chapter we will let Paul point the way to this place in Philippians chapter 3 (v. 10), where he details how passionate he was to know Christ and be conformed to His death. When we come to this same passionate commitment as Paul did, we are able to see spectacular glory in all the aspects of Cross—the glories that were shown in Jesus during His trial, suffering, and death and that God wants to manifest through each one of us in every area of our lives, individually and corporately.

Thus the reader can picture his prayerful reading of this essay as joining me in climbing up to a wonderful vantage point to look over a magnificent scene of mountain peaks, lush valleys, canyons, waterfalls—metaphors of the glory of God shown through Jesus Christ—areas that I sincerely pray every reader will explore later in detail. Some of these areas, many readers will have already become acquainted with; there are some areas that some will know better than I. Probably, there are those who have never considered some aspects of the Cross, at least from this viewpoint, but will be eager to adore our wonderful Lord in each aspect. Those who have been here before surely will greatly enjoy another good look at the spectacular scenery. I pray that all will commit themselves to explore many of the paradigmatic areas of the Cross and that all will find themselves worshiping Jesus more passionately and being conformed to His death in deeper and more fruitful ways than ever before.

Finally, I want to stress that it is impossible to reflect the glory of the Cross by our own effort and thus it is important we explore aspects of the Cross that reveal to us the power of the Cross to change us to the nature of Christ. One crucial aspect is the truth that we were “crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20); another is that the glory Jesus expressed on the Cross lives in us and is manifested more and more through us as we focus on that glory. We will explore these wonderful aspects of the Cross and many others throughout the chapters of this book.

<sup>6</sup> Roy and Revel Hession, *We Would See Jesus* (For Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1958) 20-21.

<sup>7</sup>Andrew Murray, *The Believer’s Secret of Living Like Christ* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1985) 124.