

THE OLD RUGGED CROSS

by Ken Green

I love the old hymns, and one of my favorites is “The Old Rugged Cross.” Few hymns more powerfully call to mind the cross of Calvary than this one. Consider the stanza, “Oh, that old rugged cross, so despised by the world, has a wondrous attraction for me.”

To the child of God, the cross of Jesus Christ is, indeed, a wondrous attraction. While the world rarely if ever contemplates the cross, it is the very heart of who we are as Christians. What makes the cross of Jesus so significant? Just what does it represent?

The cross represents the ultimate in SUFFERING. The Romans perfected crucifixion as a means of slow, agonizing, torturous death. The nails were driven through the nerve centers of the hands and feet. The most subtle movement would wrack the body with excruciating pain. As the crucified became weak from dehydration and blood loss, it became difficult to lift the body up to exhale and death came slowly by asphyxiation.

The cross represents the ultimate in SHAME. Crucifixion was a humiliating spectacle to behold. It was generally reserved for the basest of criminals, or for enemies of the state. Such were naked or nearly so. Jesus, “for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb. 12:2). Another great song reminds us, “Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned he stood; sealed my pardon with his blood. Hallelujah! What a Savior!”

The cross represents the ultimate in SIN. No, it was not for some evil that He had done that our Savior had to die. He did no sin (1 Pet. 2:22). He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus took with him the sins of the world to the cross, the sinless dying for the sinner. Though Jesus did nothing worthy of death, he took upon him our sins that we might be set free (Isa. 53:6-12).

The cross represents the ultimate in SALVATION. To most, a cross is an ugly symbol of death; to the Christian, it is a glorious symbol of life! Without the cross, man is helpless, hopeless, and hell-bound. Thanks to God for the offering of His Son upon the cross! “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18).