

THE MEANING OF THE CROSS

-I Peter 2:21-25

Christianity is a rescue religion. It declares that God has taken the initiative in Jesus Christ to deliver us from our sins. This is the main theme of the Bible.

"You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins"

(Matthew 1:21)

"The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 10:10)

"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". (I Timothy 1:15)

We have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world."

(I John 4:14)

Through Jesus Christ the Savior, we can be brought out of exile and reconciled to God. We can be born again, receive a new nature and be set free from our moral bondage. And we can have the old discords replaced by a fellowship of love.

OPEN

In the nineteenth century a liberal optimism flourished. It was then widely believed that human nature was fundamentally good, that evil was largely caused by ignorance and bad housing, and that education and social reform would enable us to live together in happiness and goodwill. John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. promoted this philosophy in more recent years.

What evidence do you see today that such optimism about human nature was well founded?

What evidence do you see that it was unrealistic?

What evidence do you find in your own life that you need to be rescued - not from external problems but from undesirable characteristics within yourself?

READ AND STUDY- 1 Peter 2:21-25

1. What two purposes does Peter put forth for Jesus' death?
2. In verse 24, "the tree" refers to the cross. When Christ willingly died there, what did he accomplish for sinful humanity (v. 24)?
3. Why would Christ's death as "an example of love and sacrifice" be insufficient to gain God's forgiveness for our sins?
4. Do you think if Jesus' death as only an example, or do you believe that he also bore your sins? Explain your answer.
5. How does Jesus' behavior before his enemies show his confidence in the purpose of his death?
6. What response from believers in Jesus does Peter anticipate (vs. 24-26)?
7. How does Peter's anticipated response in verses 24-25 compare to your response to what Jesus did on the cross?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

How have your loyalties been changed because Jesus died for you?

What can you do to demonstrate your change in loyalties?

Offer your life to Christ and accept his willing sacrifice for your sins - whether today for the first time or renewing your commitment to him.