

IN DEPTH BIBLE STUDY: SPIRITUALITY OF THE CROSS

CLASS 7 and POWER POINT 7:

1. What about the connection of our lives, the here and now with Golgotha? Christ died for the whole world, He atoned for all, but not all have faith. If there is Objective justification, there must be an inner justification, where Christ's cross has an impact on the life of the individual. If faith is not a decision or experience, and if salvation is the work of God, it seems that faith would be the work of God as well. How do we attain a life-saving faith?
2. Answer: In LS it has to do with the "Means of Grace," we are connected to Christ and the Holy Spirit works both faith and good works in our lives by the means of the Holy Spirit. (See chart)

THE WORD OF GOD/THE BIBLE

3. No prophesy came from the will of man, but men spoke as they were carried by the Holy Spirit, 2 Peter 1:20. God, who is in control of history, caused His Word to be put into writing, Christians believe that "All Scripture is God breathed," 1 Timothy 3:16.
4. To say that God's Word written in a book that anyone can read whenever sounds unspiritual to many people. They prefer vague communication with the divine. They seek, esoteric, channeled oracle or some sort of riddle or more mystical experiences with the divine. Christians see God's Word as objective, tangible, accessible and written in ink and paper.
5. Luther states that my neighbor and I 'err,' in his Large Catechism, but God's Word cannot err, not only is it true, but it is truth. Jesus says, "Your word is truth!" Human reason can prove a lot, medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas stated that reason can prove there is a God (Some Christians disagree with this). To Aquinas reason can't tell us much about God, His purpose, His disposition towards humans, as for that knowledge God would need to reveal Himself, to tell us about Himself, His work in history. How can we know these things? There needs to be human language and we are dependent utterly upon His Word.
6. Lutherans and others believe the Word is authoritative and it's the source and touchstone of valid theology. When one shares Christ, God's Word exists. What humans say can't be considered God's Word unless it agrees with and is an exposition of God's Word. Lutherans and other Christians believe that the Bible is accurate with God's action in history. We could not know about the incarnation and atonement happening if we could not read about them. Otherwise these objective events would dissolve into time and we would be oblivious to them. The narratives of the Bible tell us what we need to know.
7. Lutherans see something else with Scripture, it is the means of grace. The Word not only conveys information, but the Holy Spirit as the "Word of God is active and living." The Word connects us to what they are saying. As we read the words, God is then actively and objectively inscribing in our hearts the gift of faith.

8. Many Christians, including protestants balk at this high view of the Bible held by Lutherans. True the Bible is historically and theologically correct, but surely God can't be present in paper and ink. One ought not to worship a book, so Lutherans can be charged with "Bibliolatry." And yet Lutherans insist that the Holy Spirit is present and works through the words of Scripture, they deny they are worshipping a book, but see the Bible as Sacramental, a means of grace.
9. The Bible is L and G. L can be devastating. The Bible reveals God's love and His grace and promises, how God rescued his children from their sin caused slavery, and how Christ offered Himself as the expiation of our sins. This is G.
10. The point of the Bible isn't to learn about God, or how to behave or principles for successful living, though the Bible communicates this. To read the Bible spiritually is to be confronted by God Himself and at times its terrifying. His judgment against the smallest infraction can fill the reader with guilt, panic and despair. The Bible can be healing, the reader can know that God is graceful and from the beginning He provided sacrificial blood to cover peoples' sins. He came in Jesus and His wrath is swallowed up on the cross. As we read the whole Bible, the history, letters, and poetry of the Scripture, we encounter L and G, through which the Holy Spirit changes our hearts and binds us to Christ.
11. When EV first read the Bible seriously, especially the OT, he was overcome with sublimity, later horrified as the Canaanites were to be slaughtered. God is something far above my comprehension. EV realized that he constructed God according to his preferences, and positing qualities he liked and ascribed them to the deity he believed. He was making God in his image. The God he read about that blasted unholy people who touched the Ark of the Covenant without the mediation blood was a different kind of God, holy and dangerous, yet it rang true.
12. EV probably never believed in the vague domesticated spirit of niceness that he constructed himself and found in liberal theology. The real universe with its hard edges, consequences, and things like cancer shows no trace of a sentimental theology. EV knew deep down inside that he was making up his own private religion to make myself feel better and that atheism made better sense. The God EV read about had hard edges. God is absolute, mysterious and radically righteous. EV began to see God in a new light, one of holiness! He saw himself as Israel, ungrateful, inconsistent and idolatrous.
13. EV saw as he read that the pagan cultures that God's children emulated, that one day they would eventually become absorbed and enslaved by them. Yet God sent them deliverers such as; Moses, judges, prophets, and good kings. He gave them temples and rituals and rites in which their sins could be covered by blood. By the time EV got to the NT, reading the life of Christ, it all came together and St. Paul's letters made the fact of his salvation vividly clear.
14. EV doesn't know the terminology or the time, but he experienced the L with reading the Bible. It awakened his knowledge of his lost condition, his sinfulness and then he had knowledge of the G which assured him of forgiveness in Christ. Later when EV became a Lutheran, he then understood the sense in which the Word of God, L and G, is the means by which the Holy Spirit bestows faith.
15. Next class, THE SACRAMENTS: BAPTISM.