

**Scriptures and Doctrine :: Do we need to plead with God for revival?****Do we need to plead with God for revival? - posted by meetwes, on: 2008/4/11 3:59**

I have listened to lots of Leonard Ravenhill's sermons specific to Revival. I think I am in agreement with most of his thoughts except few like observing fourth commandment (sunday as "Christian Sabbath") etc.

Today I read this article which talks about revival in a different perspective and I am kind of confused. Will be glad to have clarity on this subject with Biblical reference.

Moses actually told God, "Repent!" What nerve! What is even more amazing is that God repented. From these and other stories in the Old Testament, modern-day "intercessors" believe we too must stand in the gap, or mediate, between God and man. Just as I did decades ago, they believe we must plead with God to save the lost, to withhold His wrath from those He is ready to judge, and to be merciful to those whose needs He is unwilling to meet because of their unworthiness.

That couldn't be further from the truth, but it is what's being taught in many churches today. It ignores the fact that Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Father (Heb. 10:12) ever making intercession for us (Heb. 7:25). If Moses or Abraham could persuade God, don't you think that Jesus could do at least as well?

For full text please visit http://www.awmi.net/extra/article/better_pray

Re: Do we need to plead with God for revival?, on: 2008/4/11 10:11

Interesting article, although no idea if it's right or wrong. Hopefully someone can help you!

Re:, on: 2008/4/11 10:20

I believe there are two kinds of revival....one for the saved, and one for the Lost.

The ONLY revival that will happen with the Saved is when Galatians is taught, setting people free from legalism or legalized Grace,

And for the Lost, introducing sinners to the Gospel of GRACE.

Katy

Re: Do we need to plead with God for revival? - posted by crsschk (), on: 2008/4/12 12:49

Hello meetwes,

Don't know that this article speaks at all to revival but what it does speak to is certainly confused and some really bad theology.

"First, we need to recognize that God isn't angry at mankind anymore. He is no longer imputing or holding our sins against us."

As he goes on with the rest of this, it is a parsing of truths at the expense of others. In other words, taking verses and attempting to make them stand on all fours.

Quote:
-----Before I understood this, I would say, "If God doesn't judge America, He will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah." Now I say, "If God judges America, He will have to apologize to Jesus." Understanding what Jesus did completely changes your perspective.

Curious he would ascribe Ravenhills quote to himself, but as it goes on it is also muddled and just nonsensical. It would take a great deal to go through all this piece by piece. The book of Romans, the Sermon on the mount, Revelations ... Even the oft quoted but context lacking ...

Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

... might be a good parallel to his attempts. If this be true and it certainly is, then the antithesis of it all expects that those who believe not will perish.

Joh 3:17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

This, taken in isolation might appeal to his notion as well, that "God is no longer angry with mankind" yet ...

Joh 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Joh 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Joh 3:20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

Condemnation
CONDEMNATION, n.

1. The act of condemning; the judicial act of declaring one guilty, and dooming him to punishment.

For the judgment was by one to condemnation. Rom 5.

2. The state of being condemned.

Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation. Luke 23.

3. The cause or reason of a sentence of condemnation. John 3.

He blurs the lines on mediation and intercession, so much so that it seems better to just ignore it all rather than attempt to unravel it. Over-stressing Moses' pleading back to God His own attributes still doesn't displace who is standing where. In other words, it is beyond the stretch of credulity to infer that the Lord was mistaken and in need of 'repentance' as this can be crafted to be understood.

Exo 32:13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.

Exo 32:14 And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

Again, context. All of this has to be taken in the context of the whole narrative, all that comes before it and all afterward.

"In the New Covenant, Jesus is the ONLY mediator needed to stand between God the Father and mankind. Sin is no longer a problem with God; it's been atoned for and we are now the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. That is how God sees us. If we understand that, it will change the way we pray."

He is deluded to think that sin is no longer a problem with God. This is a short step to universalism. Besides, he contradicts himself;

"Meanwhile, families, co-workers, and neighbors are going to hell and dying from disease."

How so, if sin is no longer a problem? Maybe there is some idea of difference between the saved and unsaved, but it is not stated just blurred.

"And we are not told to pray for the sick, but to heal the sick by commanding healing into their broken bodies (Matt. 10:8)."

"We no longer need to beg or plead; we need to exercise the authority He has given us and receive His blessings."

So it's really up to us after all, just 'command' and 'exercise' ... This has the earmarks and language of present day Charismatic constructs. There is a real problem with things of his sort. Even the attempt to correct it is lacking and difficult ...

Satan is behind much of the wrong teaching on "prayer" in the body of Christ today. Consider how crafty his plan is and the fruit it produces. He has convinced believers to stay in their closets taking the place of Jesus in intercession. There, they spend hours pleading with God to turn from His wrath, to pour out His Spirit, and to meet the needs of the people.

This is a self-indicting statement. I do not know that in large part anyone is under some disillusionment that they are "taking the place of Jesus" short of popes and some who deem themselves prophets. To believe all this one would have to ignore everything spoken about prayer in the New Testament. This is all very, very poor. I wouldn't pay any heed to it at all.

(http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?viewmode=flat&order=0&topic_id=20793&forum=34&post_id=&refresh=Go) LORD, TEACH US To Pray By ALEXANDER WHYTE

Re: - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2008/4/12 13:28

Thanks for your insight on this article Mike, I wanted to comment on it yesterday but didn't have the time.

This article is indeed confused. Right from the start the author makes a confused statement about his own prayers in saying, "Did I really believe I loved these people more than God?" I don't know of anyone who thinks that way in prayer. The burden for a lost soul pours forth from the compassion and love that God has placed in our hearts and we bring that burden back to Him in faith, trusting that He is the only possible supply for the great need pressing upon us.

I agree that the article smacks of universalism and ignores the sin problem that must be dealt with. I think this guy might have upbraided Daniel for confessing and repenting for the sins of Israel after he read and understood from Jeremiah that at the days of captivity in Babylon were accomplished. Daniel didn't just sit back with the understanding he was given and say, 'OK God, you're not angry with us anymore, we're going back home.' No, instead he cried out to God in confession and repentance seeking for God to fulfill all His will, and his prayer was heard.

Meetwes, you'd do well to stick with Ravenhill's advice over this other man's.

In Christ,

Ron

Re: Do we need to plead with God for revival? - posted by sojourner7 (), on: 2008/4/12 15:03

Abraham did indeed plead with God over the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Moses did indeed plead with God when His wrath was against the children of Israel. It is our part to intercede for those who are without God and without hope; that God would send mercy!!

Re: Do we need to plead with God for revival? - posted by FireinmyBones1 (), on: 2008/4/12 15:33

I have to go out on a limb as an advocate for the seeming "wrong side" here and say that I believe there is MUCH truth in the article in question. I must also say that I believe there is much over emphasis and imbalance in the message. The truth that there is no condemnation or charges against the believer due to the fact that justice has been fully satisfied in Jesus, is a great truth that many in the "revival", deeper life, "keswick" style schools of thought need to embrace and realize.

However, we are also clearly taught and warned in passages such as Hebrews 10:26-31 and Hebrews 12:24-25 that refusing this grace and "trampling the son of God underfoot...insulting the spirit of Grace" greater judgment and wrath is actually due to the guilty party.

I think, as is the case on both sides, this man has seen and experienced a truth which he was painfully deprived of at critical times in his Christian experience. Therefore, when he discovered truth that set him free he feels obligated to publish it abroad. Unfortunately, many times radical voices of reformation tend to over emphasize and become unbalanced. The same can be said (no offense) for many on this site who take the truths of God's judgment, anger and wrath to an unhealthy and imbalanced extreme. The truth is, your understanding of God's judgment and wrath is absolutely deficient (beyond question or argument) without having a proper view of satisfied justice through Jesus Christ. Likewise your view of grace and the friendly countenance of God will be deficient and ultimately lead you into lasciviousness without a real, gut-wrenching revelation of what satisfied justice truly looked like. In other words a revelation of the sufferings of Christ.

Just my two cents . . .

God bless,
Jeff

Re: the great falling away has begun in earnest,beware false teachers! - posted by destynsweet (), on: 2008/4/12 23:51

If you are in Christ,you are one with Him..He is the Anointed One and in Him we live and move(in prayer) and have our being..if Christ is not living in you..and you see Him as separate from you..you can do nothing..your prayer not being anointed or full of the Spirit will not be effective and will not avail much..it is the Holy Spirit within us that teaches us how to pray as we ought..The Holy Spirit is part of the manifold grace of God, the Spirit of grace,God's will being done on earth,us praying,As one with His will..Without this infilling empowering Presence ,you can do nothing but your own works..because to deny this is to deny Christ's very words spoken ,His promise given to the first apostles and to us who believe who are of the same body as they..the body of Christ..if you are not one with the head, you are still on the throne of your own life..you may have thought you were interceding..but you were praying out of your own understanding..not in the spirit..pray in the spirit always..which does not mean only in tongues,then you will pray aright and pray not of your fleshly zeal which amounts to nothing.I'm not even going to go into the prayers of some that are nothing more than spells,wretched evil witchcraft,under the guise of righteous prayer.

Jesus whom we are made one with(John17)who lives ever interceding for the saints,His intercession on the cross(action) enabled us to be saved,all to be saved,he is ever interceding through us who are filled with the Holy Spirit..there is no separating the reality of this is my life in Christ.He does it all through the day..I don't even have to think about it with my natural mind..like,oh..I think I'll pray for so and so..no.. He is there moving me in prayer..it is of the Spirit..I am made aware consciously when He shows me,We are praying for this one and/or that..I am the vessel He is using to pray and while we are praying together..He is teaching me how to pray for whatever,whomever..He is the treasure in this vessel..He is one with the Father and one with the Spirit of God..these are all one..it is the same for us, one Spirit,one Lord,one mind and one heart..one body..we are one with Him or we are not ..what is described in this man's teaching grieves my spirit when I read it..it twists and turns around..it is not the straight and narrow path..it horrifies me to think some may believe him..Lord have mercy!

This kind of teaching is just the very thing that the Spirit of Truth has been warning me about that has put a stranglehold on revival..the lack of love to pray for one another..and for your neighbor/even your enemy as well.It's almost unbelievable that he is actually giving everyone the very excuse so many are looking for,so if it appeals to you.beware!..the hearts of many will wax cold,preceding the great falling away..one way for this to happen for a surety is not to pray for those who need to know Jesus..whether they are fallen and need to be restored,revived,returned to a healthy state of vitality in their faith,apathetic and lifeless,powerless or have never had saving faith..they are both on dangerous ground.Jesus said He would even remove the lampstand from it's place of those who were believers, full of knowledge,able to point out false apostles,but disqualified because of their lack of love,unconditional,God's kind of love.These are those who have lost t

their first love. These are those left in darkness with no light in them. Beware lest the light in you is darkness.

Who is the First and the Last? Jesus! Who's love is first? Who do we become like because He is being formed in us? Jesus! Who intercedes? Jesus in us..we need to return to do the first works..we must hold fast to His works..He said so. Those have not this selfless and all encompassing love need to repent according to His word! He will also blot out the names of those whose works do not measure up, who have been beggarly in love and in faith..prayer is a work of faith..blot them out He says from the Book of Life who do not have the Life, Himself living in them..who have a name of being Christian as though they were alive..they ought to be, what with calling themselves by His name and all..but they are dead. Both these types of believers and the unbelievers need repentance..this is what happens at revival..returning to God in full surrender and repentance..deep and real..conviction brought about by the Holy Spirit to cause people to become aligned with God's perfect will. Surrender! So Jesus can come into them and sup with them and they with Him.

Anyone who has been used to genuinely intercede, in the Holy Spirit, will see the deception in this man's teaching..oh by the way, he is saying, don't bother praying. Woe!

Re:, on: 2008/4/14 5:47

Fireinmybones said

Quote:
-----I have to go out on a limb as an advocate for the seeming "wrong side" here and say that I believe there is MUCH truth in the article in question.

I agree, because his thesis is angled to contradict the false doctrine he had believed, which is basically an Old Covenant mindset retained in New Covenant era.

I believe though, that those old prophets were doing something Isaiah expresses here, which later Jesus fulfills, and as He is in us, so also do we.

Isaiah 45:11

Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, *Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.*

Luke 13

32 And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third *day* I shall be perfected.

33 Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the *day* following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

We must make our own Jerusalem journey, without ceasing to fulfil what He was commanded, which command He gave His disciples:

Matthew 10:8

Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

(Acts 26:8

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?)

It is true that we are to ask our Father for His will and according to His will; the gift of the Holy Spirit both enables and leads us to do this spontaneously.

Luke 4

And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

18 The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

Re:, on: 2008/4/14 6:52

Hello Ron. In speaking of confusion, I am confused by your website and how you can reconcile the writings of McArthur and the other writers, especially Fromke. There is no doubt McArthur speaks some truth, mingled with human reasoning however, the others do also to some degree and never the twain shall meet in their human reasoning and understanding, some more so than others, if you get my drift? Why promote confusion-mixed message of the gospel. All you have to do is read Fromke's "Ultimate Intention" and you will know exactly what I am driving at. McArthur would never agree with that book. He is too wrapped up in the redemption issues.

Regards,

Orm

Re: Do we need to plead with God for revival? - posted by running2win (), on: 2008/4/14 8:36

I didn't read the article simply because the internet filter here at work won't allow me to go the site since they've never reviewed it. (I could submit it for review but I still wouldn't be able to read it until tomorrow.)

What comes to mind is James 3:1

Quote:

-----My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

He's spreading his view (seemingly dogmatically judging by the quotes given) and therefore is responsible for the imbalance that's there.

Now, I don't have much to say other than that I know each one of us hasn't even begun to scratch the surface as far as what we could be as Christians and that the command is to...

Quote:

-----sow to ourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord until He come and rain righteousness upon you.
Hosea 10:12

God loves us... hallelujah for that! There is therefore NO condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus! But we have each been given a few 'talents' to put to the changers that He might receive of His own with usury. Let's not bury our talents. Let's not be concerned about what we "don't have to do" and be concerned about what we *can* do and *get* to do to see God come and rain righteousness upon us.

Sorry for seeming so off track concerning the topic of the thread...

that's just where my mind goes in the matter.

Re: - posted by Ruach34 (), on: 2008/4/14 10:55

This is an interesting dialogue and don't have 'my two cents' to put in here.

I did appreciate Mike Balog's input and that confirms more with my soul than Wommacks article. There is a great danger to pulling out a scripture and making it 'stand on all fours.' So, we need to know the whole scripture, reading it daily, yearly and all the days of our life so we will have a full concept of Christ and His work.

I am trying to understand the complexity, intricacies and nuances of Christ's atonement and full work; but it simply is nothing more than, "light has come into the world..."

"and men love darkness rather than light."

Re:, on: 2008/4/14 12:03

A bit of a long read but well worth it if it will allow us to make better distinctions about what we believe and why. I pray many here will take the time necessary to read and ponder.

On being a Theologian of the Cross . . .

by Gerhard O. Forde

Preface

I have three reasons for writing this little book. First, to fill a need. Talk about the theology of the cross seems to be growing in church circles, and I am often asked what a theology of the cross is and what makes it so different from other kinds of theology. After I try to give as helpful a reply as I can, which under the circumstances of casual conversation is usually sketchy and superficial, the next question is whether there is something to read that would enlighten further. Then, alas, I am even more at a loss. Even though there is some literature available in German, there isn't much of anything in English one can recommend enthusiastically to the ordinary reader. To be sure, there are works like Walther von Loewenich's *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976), the classic treatment of the subject that first appeared in German in 1929. It is still essential reading for anyone who wishes to delve deeply into the theology of the cross. However, it is heavy going for

1. There has been a recent burgeoning of articles and books concerned with the theology of the cross, but most of it is related to questions surrounding liberation theology or problems of victimization, speculation about the "vulnerability" of God, and so forth, which doesn't get at the central issue of being a theologian of the cross as I attempt to set that forth here.

one not aware of some of the scholarly debates of the time, and it was written as much to make a case about Luther's theological development as it was to expound the theology of the cross per se. More recently, Alister McGrath has also written a book with the same title, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), but that too, even though well worth reading and helpful, is rather an interpretation of Luther's development than a treatment of the theology of the cross. We thus find ourselves in a situation where there is increasing talk about the theology of the cross but little specific knowledge of what exactly it is. Although this treatise cannot pretend to exhaust the subject, it does hope to make a modest addition to the understanding of the theology of the cross.

The second reason I have for writing follows from the first. In the absence of clear understanding, the theology of the cross tends to become sentimentalized, especially in an age that is so concerned about victimization. Jesus is spoken of as the one who "identifies with us in our suffering," or the one who "enters into solidarity with us" in our misery. "The suffering of God," or the "vulnerability of God," and such platitudes become the stock-in-trade of preachers and theologians who want to stroke the psyche of today's religionists. But this results in rather blatant and suffocating sentimentality. God is supposed to be more attractive to us because he identifies with us in our pain and suffering. "Misery loves company" becomes the unspoken motif of such theology.

*This might help explain why the "pep rally" mentality of today's church.

A theology of the cross, however, is not sentimentalism. To be sure, it speaks much about suffering. A theologian of the cross, Luther says, looks at all things through suffering and the cross. It is also certainly true that in Christ God enters into our suffering and death. But in a theology of the cross it is soon apparent that we cannot ignore the fact that suffering comes about because we are at odds with God and are trying to rush headlong into some sort of cozy identification with him. God and his Christ, Luther will be concerned to point out, are the operators in the matter, not the ones operated upon (thesis 27, Heidelberg Disputation). In the gospel of John, Jesus is concerned to point out that no one takes his life from him but that he lays it down of his own accord (John 10:18). In the end, Jesus suffers and dies because nobody identified with him. The people cried, "Crucify him!" One of his disciples betrayed him, another denied him and the rest forsook him and fled. He died alone, forsaken even by God.

Now we in turn suffer the absolute and unconditional working of God upon us. It is a suffering because as old beings we

cannot abide such working. We are rendered passive the divine activity.

“Passive,” it should be remembered here, comes from the same root as “passion,” which is, of course, “to suffer.” And so we look on the world anew in the light of Christ’s Passion, “through suffering and the cross” (thesis 20), as ones who suffer the sovereign working of God. A sentimentalized theology gives the impression that God in Christ comes to join us in our battle against some unknown enemy, is victimized, and suffers just like us. *Like the daughters of Jerusalem we sympathize with him.

*and are manipulated into some emotion state of guilt by teachers who see things this way and that we might be sustained by it.

A true theology of the cross places radical question marks over against sentimentality of that sort. “Weep not for me,” Jesus said, “but for yourselves and for your children.”

My third reason for writing is related to the second. It is evident that there is a serious erosion or slippage in the language of theology today. Sentimentality leads to a shift in focus, and the language slips out of place. To take a common example, we apparently are no longer sinners, but rather victims, oppressed by sinister victimizers whom we relentlessly seek to track down and accuse. Of course, there are indeed victims and victimizers in our culture—all too many of them. But the kind of collective paranoia that allows us to become preoccupied with such a picture of our plight cannot help but nudge the language just enough to cause it to slip and fall out of place. The slippage is often very slight and subtle and hardly noticeable; that is what makes it so deceptive.

We no longer live in a guilt culture but have been thrown into meaninglessness—all so we are told. Then the language slips out of place. Guilt puts the blame on us as sinners, but who is responsible for meaninglessness? Surely not we! Sin, if it enters our consciousness at all, is generally something that “they” did to us. As Alan Jones, Dean of the Episcopal Cathedral of San Francisco, put it once, “We live in an age in which everything is permitted and nothing is forgiven.”

Since we are victims and not really sinners, what we need is affirmation and support, and so on. The language slips and falls out of place. It becomes therapeutic rather than evangelical. It must be trimmed more and more so as not to give offense. In thesis 21 of the Heidelberg Disputation Luther says that a theologian of the cross “says what a thing is,” whereas a theologian of glory calls the bad good and the good bad. This stakes out the claim that language and its proper use in matters theological is a fundamental concern of the theologian of the cross. Luther’s words suggest that the misuse or slippage of language in this regard has a theological root. When we operate on the assumption that our language must constantly be trimmed so as not to give offense, to stroke the psyche rather than to place it under attack, it will of course gradually decline to the level of greeting-card sentimentality. The language of sin, law, accusation, repentance, judgment, wrath, punishment, perishing, death, devil, damnation, and even the cross itself—virtually one-half of the vocabulary—simply disappears. It has lost its theological legitimacy and therefore its viability as communication.

A theologian of the cross says what a thing is. In modern parlance: a theologian of the cross calls a spade a spade. One who “looks on all things through suffering and the cross” is constrained to speak the truth. The theology of the cross, that is to say, provides the theological courage and the conceptual framework to hold the language in place. It will, no doubt, also involve critical appraisal of the language and its use. It will recognize indeed that the half of the vocabulary that has disappeared can be frightening and offensive.

But it will see precisely that the cross and the resurrection itself is the only answer to that problem, not erasure or neglect. So this study hopes to make some small contribution to holding the language in place.

It is curious that in spite of attempts to avoid offense, matters don’t actually seem to improve. We seek affirmation, but we seem to experience less and less of it. We look for support, but others are too busy looking for it themselves to pay us much mind. Preachers try to prop up our self-esteem with optimistic blandishments, but more and more people seem to suffer from a deteriorating sense of self-worth. Perhaps a return to calling a spade a spade has its place. At least that is one of the hopes behind this treatise.

This is not to say, however, that the language of affirmation, comfort, support, building self-esteem, and so forth does not have its place. On the level of human relations it can be quite necessary and beneficial. It has its place, however, among that which is penultimate, in caring for the well-being of persons in this age. The danger and misuse comes when such language displaces or obscures the ultimate. It would be as though an alcoholic were to confuse breaking the habit with salvation. Penultimate cures are mistaken for ultimate redemption. When that happens the church becomes predominant

antly a support group rather than the gathering of the body of Christ where the word of the cross and resurrection is proclaimed and heard. This temptation is abroad in the land and must be resisted.

How true this is and that it explains much we have wondered about and not had answers for; being unwilling to judge the situation.

Even though the reasons for wanting to write a treatise on the theology of the cross may be stated, we soon run into the difficult question of how to do it. We discover why there is not much literature available. It is a hard thing, indeed a risky thing, to write about. That will no doubt become clear to the reader here. "What is, after all, the subject matter of a theology of the cross? Is it simply a repetition of the Passion story? Hardly. Is it then perhaps just another treatment of the doctrine of atonement? Not really. Is it just an account of an unusual sort of religious experience, a kind of spirituality; as we might say today? That may be closer to the truth, but still not exactly. It is rather a particular perception of the world and our destiny, what Luther came to call looking at all things through suffering and the cross. It has to do with what he referred to often as the question of *usus*, the way the cross is put to use in our lives.

Yet that is rather difficult to write about. Indeed, as I shall maintain later, "a" or "the" theology of the cross cannot really be written. Luther himself does not write a theology of the cross. Rather, particularly in the Heidelberg Disputation, he gives an account of what those who have been smitten and raised up through the event of the cross do. In casting about for a way to proceed, therefore, it gradually became clear to me first of all that I should give the work the title *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*. Second, I found that the more I worked with the sources, the more I was drawn to the Heidelberg Disputation itself as an account of what a theologian of the cross does. That is, the Disputation itself is the doing of a theologian of the cross. It is, we might say, what the theologian of the cross puts up for "dispute" before the world. The more I studied that ancient dispute, the more it became evident to me that, in spite of the fact that it is couched in the language and problematic of the 16th century, it is so radical and deep for its time that it is still vital for our time. Because of this radicalness, it anticipates and answers the questions that are with us yet, and no doubt always will be. However, the Disputation in the end needs no apology; not even in. appeals to contemporary relevance. Its theology is of such consequence as to command our attention for its own sake. Contemplating it with some care is a theological experience in itself. It leads us to see theological matters in a new light what Luther meant when he said a theologian of the cross "says what a thing is." So it became clear to me in the end that the form my work should take would be simply some reflections on the Disputation itself, probing the theses and their proofs as a beginning attempt at opening up the text. It is by no means an exhaustive treatment, but an attempt.

If I have reasons for wanting to write of being a theologian of the cross, I also have some apprehensions. It might well be asked whether there is need or place for theologians of the cross today. They, as we shall see, cannot but appear very critical and negative over against the optimism of a theology of glory. *Is it not cruel to attack what little optimism we are able to muster these days?

*Do we not see great defenses go up when we do?

Would not the attack already be too late? The attack in the Heidelberg Disputation begins by ruthlessly shredding all ideas of the place of good works in the scheme of salvation. Yet, as the oft-repeated remark has it, who is trying to do good works any more? Is the theology of the cross a magnificent attack on a nonexistent enemy, a marvelous cure for a disease that no one has? Could it be perhaps, as with smallpox vaccine, that finally the vaccination causes more illness than the disease? Is a theologian of the cross a curious historical relic spreading pessimism where desperate people are hanging on by their fingertips?

We should hesitate, no doubt, to be drawn too easily into arguments about the worth or usefulness of our own efforts. The treatise itself will have to argue its own case.

Nevertheless, some preliminary indication of how my apprehensions were set aside long enough to risk writing may be of interest to the reader. In the first place, anyone who gets some glimpse of what it means to be a theologian of the cross immediately realizes that the bane of a theology of glory never vanishes. It is the perennial theology of the fallen race. We have to persist in a theology of the cross in order precisely to expose that fact. In the second place, I laid my apprehension aside because I have come to wonder if the very theology of glory is not in a state of severe crisis. If it is true that no one is trying anymore, what does that portend? Does it mean, as a post-modernist might say, that the "Holy Words" no longer signify a meaningful destiny? Have we lost the thread of the story? Is the "official optimism of North America," as Douglas John Hall spoke of it, finally running off into sand? Could that be one of the reasons for the despair and chaos in our homes and in our streets? Has the thirst for glory finally issued in the despair that Luther foresaw? This tr

eatise is written with the suspicion that the malaise of the theology of glory is the ultimate source of contemporary despair, not the theology of the cross. My writing proceeds on the assumption that a theology of the cross brings hope, indeed, the only ultimate hope.

Re: - posted by meetwes, on: 2008/4/28 9:30

Thank you brothers and sisters for all your comments! I found it really edifying. What I have realized is that sometimes our theology might be wrong but when a man stands for God in true God-given righteousness and holiness, God works through him mightily. God worked through Finney in mighty ways yet his theology doesn't agree with most of us (AW Tozer talked about this but I don't remember the exact quote).

From what I have understood from all your comments, the danger with this article seems to be that it appears to present a God who doesn't care about sin. While the person who wrote this may be a man of high integrity, it is difficult to produce men of conviction to the calling if a man holds to this.

Thank you...