



THE CROSS by Rod Parsley BACKGROUNDER

Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing: Behind the Writing of Rod Parsley's New Book "The Cross: One Man... One Tree... One Friday"

Early in his new book, "The Cross: One Man... One Tree... One Friday," pastor, author and television host Rod Parsley describes the confiscation of crosses in Soviet-dominated Poland in 1984. The action sparked massive protests, and contributed to the political climate change in the nation (within five years, Poland held its first free and fair elections since World War II).

America's public places are nearly as cross-less as 1984, Parsley contends, but without as much as a whimper from the Church. In fact, while the culture has both trivialized and marginalized Christianity's most important symbol, the cross has also largely disappeared from the nation's churches, inside and out.

A commitment to re-introduce the Church to the timeless message of the cross served as Parsley's motivation for writing "The Cross". "As a boy," he says, "I learned the truth of Calvary at an early age at the feet of some tremendous men of God at the Welch Avenue Free Will Baptist Church in Columbus, Ohio. That was a time when there were no self-imposed taboos about the preaching of the cross – it was truth that must be shared.

"As long as I have had the privilege to preach the Gospel, the cross has been at the center of my message. But the more I travel, the more I realize that isn't the case at many churches in America. This message is too important to be limited to a speaking tour. I wrote this book to bring some neglected truths back to the forefront of the Church's conversation."

The book isn't just about the events of the first Good Friday, however. It's also about how mankind has responded to Jesus Christ's suffering and death at Golgotha. Not surprisingly, the religious elites of the first century treated the story of the crucifixion with the same scornful and dismissive attitudes as today's self-appointed spiritual leaders.

"It's amazing to realize that Paul's words about the cross being a stumbling block to the Jews and an absurdity to the Greeks are absolutely relevant almost 2,000 years later," Parsley said. "Liberal theologians and the militant atheist movement are little different than the naysayers of Paul's day. And that shouldn't be surprising. The cross still has the power to offend. Maybe that's why so many of today's Christian leaders have downplayed the cross in their exterior and interior architecture."

For his part, Parsley has committed to building a permanent replica of Calvary on the campus of World Harvest Church, the congregation he founded in 1979. Set upon the relatively flat terrain of central Ohio, the familiar hill with three crosses will be as impossible for travelers to miss as the church building itself, which is nestled among cornfields in southeast Columbus.

"If this book can inspire others to make the cross central to the way they live their lives as Christians, I'll have fulfilled my assignment."

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