

REALITY and the CROSS

Reality can, at times, be a bit too... well... REAL! A sanitized version of life is often easier to bear. Our mental gymnastics are well-honed and we find our PERSONAL version of daily truth much sweeter than stark reality.

Ambulance drivers know the routine. Blood becomes just "red stuff" and bodies are "broken parts." One wreck on the highway, one run to the hospital, then out to lunch. The scenes that stole their appetites the first month don't warrant a wince today.

You are that ambulance driver! Over the years the cross has become a bit too familiar. Remember taking the Lord's Supper when you were first converted, when you first realized what it means? Tears, reflections, apologies. The grape juice was almost too red, the crucifixion almost too real.

Today? The Lord's Supper is often spent grabbing the kids or wondering about the roast in the oven, or writing the contribution check. For many, Lord's supper has lost its impact, its meaning, its importance, its "do this in remembrance of Me."

The ambulance driver syndrome has attacked worship. Like a Roman soldier with a sharpened sword, familiarity threatens our faithfulness... worldliness attacks our worship. The discomfort of picturing Jesus on the cross had disconnected the needs of our heart from nails in His hand.

WHAM! Reality strikes! The first time I saw *The Passion of the Christ*, Mel Gibson's movie, it rushed my muted mind back to the Christ of the Cross. No sanitized version here. No politically correct numbing of the neurons. No "kinder, gentler" cross for a genteel generation.

The ambulance driver in me was stunned, sickened - startled back to reality. Even battle-scarred soldiers are shocked and shaken. The streetwise stare and the atheists wonder. The curious ask, "Why" and the faithful simply cry.

As Jody Dean, CBS news anchor in Dallas Texas, put it in his original review of the film, "Throughout the entire film, I found myself apologizing" *The Passion of the Christ* was hard to watch, impossible for some. For many, it will be the first time they have actually *visualized* the realities of that day. For most, the Lord's supper will never be the same. It is not a movie for young children!

A whole generation of movie goers have cut their visual teeth on the special effects of Star Wars and Terminator Two. Many have lost the time-honored ability to "see" through the *printed* page the scenes described in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. This movie will show them what they had not seen in the theater of the mind.

This movie gave real *visual* meaning to the words, "scourged Him," (John 19:1). It burned indelible tracks into my mind that will always return when I read, "they crucified Him," (Luke 23:33).

Let us never take communion lightly. May we always, as Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Let us never forget that, "...God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Romans 5:8. And may we always remember, "There's Power in the Blood!"

Ray Wallace

