



THE CROSS *and* CROWN

"No Cross, No Crown"

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"Brothers and sisters, pray for us." I Thessalonians 5:25



How can you tell that someone is a Christian? Christians might answer that you can recognize them by the fruit of the Spirit (Matthew 7:20); most notably, by their love (John 13:35).

Sadly, people outside of the church are liable to give a strikingly different answer. Christians might not like to hear this and might not think it's true, but much of the country views Christians as bullies and peddlers of hatred, especially towards the usual subjects – Muslims, atheists, homosexuals and even immigrants. The church could spend time arguing that this impression isn't valid, but I believe that it would be more constructive for Christians to take an honest look in the mirror and try to figure out why we are perceived that way.

It should not take much self-awareness to recognize that much of what comes out of the church in America is hatred, fear and divisiveness. Not only that, but the church does not contradict or distance itself from those in the media and in public office who invoke the Bible to promote these un-Christian values – and who often do so while living openly immoral lives.

Paul makes it clear (Please see I Corinthians 5.) that we have no business judging those outside the church. In the same breath, he writes that we are to "judge those inside," and "anyone who claims to be a brother or sister." Somehow, we've gotten it backwards.

Please understand me. This is not an easy thing for me to write, and, believe me, I'm not calling for the church to turn a blind eye towards sin or to compromise on biblical principles. I only want us to remember that unbelievers are not our enemy but our mission field; – the ones being deceived and held captive by our actual enemy.

We are called to be "Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." (II Corinthians 5:20) Christ's appeal, when he was on the earth in human form, was love, not condemnation. May we be so full of his Spirit that we see the world the way he does, and that the world sees only his love and righteousness when they see his church.

*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,
but to save the world through him. (John 3:17)*

Brothers and Sisters, Pray for Us!

Thank you for loving and praying for our mission field in North Philadelphia! Please continue agreeing with us for:

- more of God's Spirit, likeness, mission and vision,
- our upcoming summer ministry opportunities (and the challenges they bring),
- God's continued provision for the financial needs of the academy and church, and
- more people to be called to and excited about ministry in Tioga/Nicetown.







Our Spring Garden Academy Youth Choir performing at a multi-church benefit concert

We're praying with you!

If you're on our mailing list*, you're on our prayer list! If there's anything specific that we can join with you in praying for, please let us know. (We will only publish your requests in this newsletter with your permission.)

Please do keep in touch! We're always delighted to hear from you and to pray with you!

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* **Important:** If you'd rather not be on our mailing list, we won't be offended! Just call or write us, and we'll remove you. (We'll still keep you on our prayer list!)

If you'd rather receive this letter via e-mail, please let us know, or subscribe to it at crossandcrown.online/subscribe !

Did You Know?

Although cocoa beans are not native to Africa, four West African countries (Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon) grow about 70% of the world's supply of them.

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Psalm 119:103)



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