

# THE CROSS AND THE FLAG

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Founded by

*Herald L. K. Smith*

# BARREN OR FRUITFUL—WHICH

By Gerald L. K. Smith



II Peter 1:5-8.

Christianity is the perfect formula for existence on this earth. It was designed in Heaven and introduced to mankind by the Son of God, Jesus Christ. It is personified by the Man of Galilee, rendered miraculously dynamic by the presence of His Holy Spirit who came to this earth, following His ascension to the throne of

God and it is defined by what we refer to as the Word of God — the Holy Bible — the Scriptures.

This formula not only provides for the most constructive and satisfactory earthly existence, but it overwhelms the great impossibles which lie beyond the control of man. No human wisdom, no sophisticated intellect has ever been able to solve the problems of sin, guilt, spiritual emptiness and death.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ provides for the forgiveness of sin, the removal of guilt, the abundant life and the guarantee of the immortality of the human personality referred to as the soul.

The circumstance which makes man unique in the universe is defined in the creative story which reads in part, "God made man from the dust of the earth and he became a living soul."

Recognizing the background summarized above, I now turn to the Holy Scripture as it records the words of the Apostle Peter in his second general letter beginning with the fifth verse and closing with the eighth verse.

In this significant passage of Scripture we see the summary of the attributes of the Christian life. Salvation does not depend on these attributes. In salvation we are rewarded with these attributes. No man can save his soul by his own goodness, any more than he can grow a garden dependent on his own limited capacities. He can do his best. He can cultivate and till. He can harvest and preserve, but he must have those demonstrations of power that are beyond his finite limitations; namely, sunshine, climate, rain.

Thus it is with the Christian life. We cannot earn

salvation but we can subject ourselves as saved souls to the will of God in such a way as to produce the maximum of goodness in our personal life.

The apostle Peter gives us a formula for personal righteousness which, if fully developed, could create a book or a volume of books and in fact around this formula has been built thousands, if not millions, of sermons. This formula has met the acid test of the most unsympathetic critic because it has in it the full, complete formula for being a good man or a good woman.

It is up to us to bear fruit in the Kingdom of Heaven as an act of conscientious gratitude and great spiritual satisfaction.

Here are the eight attributes summarized in the apostle Peter's inspired letter.

1. Faith. The capacity to believe in divine power and divine destiny is one of the gifts of salvation. How can we expect rewards and inspirations and blessings from one in whom we do not believe? God does not limit the granting of His power to the high and mighty and to those who are considered spiritual giants. Jesus emphasizes this fact when He suggests that great things can be accomplished even if we have but the faith of a grain of mustard seed. The cynic who refuses to believe because he cannot see never offers a satisfactory explanation for the ether, the air, the electric currents and the instinctive impulses of all creatures, including man.

2. Virtue. Virtue grows out of the soul of the sincere believer just like fruit on a tree, or blossoms on a rose bush. Virtue builds the countenance in such a way that when strangers look upon the face of a good man or a good woman they are usually able to say, "His goodness shines on his countenance." Virtue embraces a wide range of behaviour. It not only involves the personal moral life of the individual but involves his mode of conduct in everything he does.

3. Knowledge. God does not require a college degree or a high school diploma or even a common school certificate in order to understand His love, His mercy, His forgiveness and His saving power, but there is something about Christianity that makes people want to learn. Concerning the early disciples that

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