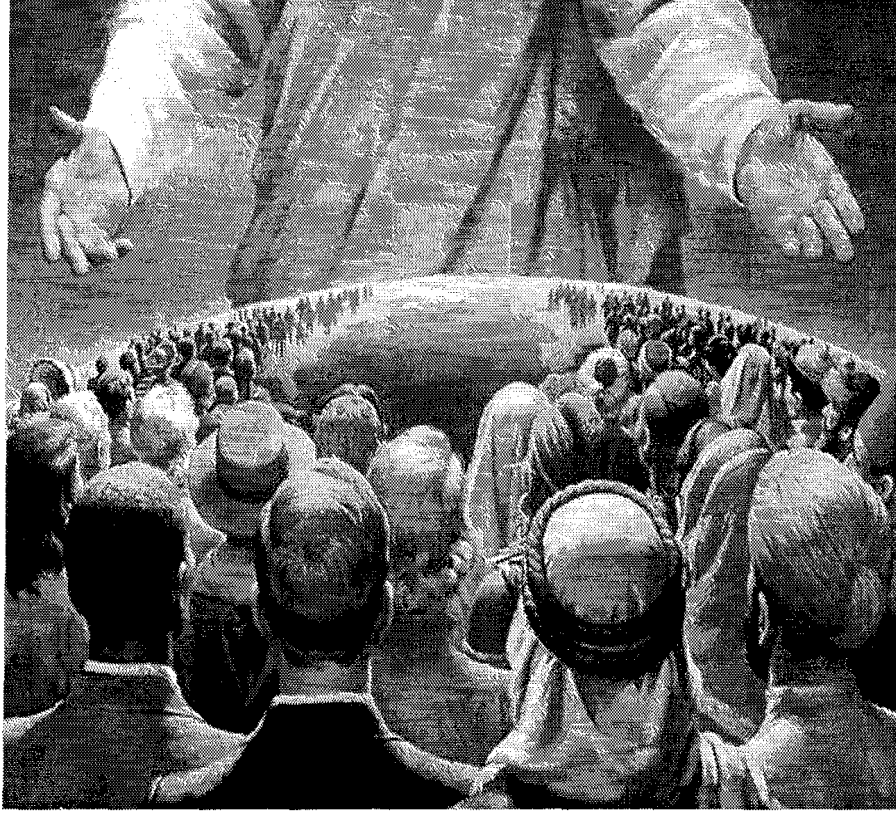


" CHRIST AND CULTURE "



GALATIANS 1:1-10

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CHRIST AND CULTURE**GALATIANS 1:1-10****INTRODUCTION**

ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE THIS MESSAGE TO YOU BY REITERATING TO YOU THE FACT THAT WE AS A PEOPLE, COME FROM A VERY RICH AND PRESTIGIOUS CULTURE.

THROUGHOUT THE ANNALS OF TIME, AND THROUGH MANY DANGERS TOILS AND SNARES, THROUGH UPS AND DOWNS, INS AND OUTS, WE AS A PEOPLE ARE BLESSED BEYOND MEASURE.

AS A CULTURE, WE HAVE SEEN BOTH TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY, SUCCESSES, AND FAILURES;

WE'VE GONE FROM THE OUT-HOUSE, ALL THE WAY TO THE WHITE HOUSE;

FROM THE SLAVE SHIP, TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP. AND IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF THE HAND OF THE LORD.

AS A MATTER OF FACT, IF IT HAD NOT BEEN, FOR THE LORD WHO WAS ON OUR SIDE;

- 1. IF HE HAD NOT BLESSED US;**
- 2. IF HE HAD NOT KEPT US;**
- 3. IF HE HAD NOT SUSTAINED US;**
- 4. IF HE HAD NOT MAINTAINED US;**
- 5. IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR THE LORD, WE WOULD NOT BE WHERE WE ARE NOR WHO WE ARE.**

AGAIN I SAY WE HAVE A RICH HERITAGE. AND EVEN AFTER THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY, WE HAVE MORE THAN ENOUGH REASONS TO CELEBRATE AND REJOICE.

BUT IN LIEU OF ALL OUR PROGRESS, AND IN LIEU OF ALL OF GOD'S BLESSINGS, IN SPITE OF HOW FAR WE'VE COME AS A PEOPLE, I SUBMIT THAT THERE MUST COME A TIME, WHEN YOUR CULTURE MEETS THE CHRIST.

THE TEACHING THAT I'M ABOUT TO GIVE YOU IS CRITICAL. BECAUSE IT'S A VERY DANGEROUS THING WHEN THE VERY CULTURE YOU HOLD SO DEAR, COMES INTO DIRECT CONFLICT WITH THE GOD YOU CLAIM TO SERVE.

IN OTHER WORDS, PAUL WAS WRITING TO THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA. AND ACCORDING TO ACTS CHAPTER 16, THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS MOVING PAUL TO DIFFERENT REGIONS OF THE WORLD, IN ORDER TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL TO ALL NATIONS OF PEOPLE.

NOW, IF YOU REMEMBER, THIS WORKS IN CONCERT WITH WHAT JESUS SAID BEFORE HE WENT BACK TO BE WITH THE FATHER.

HE SAID THAT WHEN THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD COMES UPON YOU, YE SHALL BE MY WITNESSES IN JERUSALEM, IN JUDEA, IN SAMARIA, AND TO THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE WORLD!

DO I HAVE A BIBLE READER HERE?

SO WHAT PAUL WAS DOING, IN CONCERT WITH THE MOVE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WAS TAKING THE MESSAGE OF SALVATION TO AREAS AND TO PEOPLE WHO HAD NEVER HEARD THE GOSPEL BEFORE.

WELL, HERE'S WHERE THE PROBLEM COMES. THE PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN CONVERTED IN GALATIA, HAD NO CONCEPT OF JEWISH CULTURE AND PRACTICES.

THOSE WHO WERE OF THE ORIGINAL BLOODLINE OF ABRAHAM, THOSE SAVED JEWS WHO WERE BROUGHT OVER INTO THIS NEW THING CALLED CHRISTIANITY, WERE GIVING THE GALATIAN MEMBERS A HARD TIME BECAUSE THEY WEREN'T OBSERVING THE CUSTOMS OF THEIR CULTURE.

IN OTHER WORDS, “WE WERE HERE BEFORE THEM. AND IF THEY WANT US TO ACCEPT THEM, THEN THEY GOT TO KEEP THE LAW OF THE PROPHETS JUST LIKE WE DID.”

IN OTHER WORDS, THEY NEED TO SUBMIT TO OUR CULTURE. WHATEVER WE EAT, THEY NEED TO EAT.

- **WHATEVER WE DON’T EAT, THEY SHOULDN’T EAT.**
- **WHATEVER WE SING, THEY SHOULD SING;**
- **WHATEVER WE PRAY, THEY SHOULD PRAY.**
- **WHATEVER CULTURE THEY CAME WITH, THEY SHOULD ABANDON AND TAKE ON OUR CULTURE.**

AND THE PROBLEM WE HAVE IN THE CHURCH EVEN NOW, IS WHEN CULTURE BECOMES PARAMOUNT TO CHRIST.

LISTEN, THE BIBLE SAYS THAT; “ WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE, AND NOT OF WORKS, LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST.”

SO THE THINGS THAT THE JEWS USED TO JUSTIFY THEMSELVES, EVEN AFTER CALVARY, THEY DIDN’T SEE THEIR NEED FOR JESUS.

YES, EVEN THOUGH THEY ACCEPTED HIM AS THEIR LORD AND SAVIOR, THERE WERE STILL SOME BIASES THAT THEY HARBORED AGAINST PEOPLE WHO WERE DIFFERENT FROM THEM.

AND I’M HONEST ENOUGH TO TELL YOU TODAY, THAT A WHOLE LOT OF THAT IS STILL GOING ON IN THE WORLD, BECAUSE EVEN TODAY, WE AS A LOCAL CHURCH, HAVE A CULTURE.

AND THE PERSONALITIES OF OUR MAJORITY MEMBERSHIP, IS WHAT DICTATES OUR MODUS OPERANDI.

THE MAJORITY DETERMINE YOUR MUSIC, YOUR STYLE OF PREACHING, AND ALL THE OTHER THINGS THAT MAKE US UNIQUE.

WHATEVER YOUR MEMBERS HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO, IT BECOMES THE DOMINANT PART OF YOUR CULTURE

SO WHAT ENDS UP HAPPENING IS, WE HAVE THIS CULTURE OF HOW WE LIKE TO DO THINGS. AND ANYBODY WHO WANTS TO JOIN UP WITH US, THEY HAVE TO SUBMIT THEMSELVES TO BELIEFS, EVEN IF THOSE BELIEFS AREN'T BIBLICAL.

YOU KNOW HOW WE ARE. IF THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE WE LOOK, DRESS HOW WE DRESS, ACT LIKE WE ACT, WE TREAT THEM AS OUTSIDERS, BECAUSE THEIR MAKEUP DOESN'T FIT OUR MOLD.

WELL, THAT'S THE PROBLEM THEY WERE HAVING IN GALATIA, BECAUSE THE CULTURES WERE STANDING IN CONFLICT WITH THE CHRIST.

AND I'VE COME TO ANNOUNCE THAT *SOME* OF THE THINGS WE HOLD DEAR AS A CULTURE, REGARDLESS OF HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT IT, YOUR DEMOGRAPHICS AINT GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH GOD'S DOCTRINE.

THAT'S WHY PAUL WARNED THEM IN CHAPTER 1 ABOUT THESE FOLKS WHO WERE PREACHING ANOTHER GOSPEL.

BECAUSE THE GOSPEL THAT SOME FOLKS WERE THROWING OUT THERE, WAS THE GOSPEL OF CULTURE AND NOT CHRIST.

IN CHAPTER 1 VERSE 6 HE SAID, "MARVEL THAT YE ARE SO SOON REMOVED FROM HIM THAT CALLED YOU INTO THE GRACE OF CHRIST UNTO ANOTHER GOSPEL:⁷ WHICH IS NOT ANOTHER; BUT THERE BE SOME THAT TROUBLE YOU AND WOULD PERVERT THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST."

⁸ BUT THOUGH WE, OR AN ANGEL FROM HEAVEN, PREACH ANY OTHER GOSPEL UNTO YOU THAN THAT WHICH WE HAVE PREACHED UNTO YOU, LET HIM BE ACCURSED.⁹ AS WE SAID BEFORE, SO SAY I NOW AGAIN, IF ANY MAN PREACH ANY OTHER GOSPEL UNTO YOU THAN THAT YE HAVE RECEIVED, LET HIM BE ACCURSED.¹⁰ FOR DO I NOW PERSUADE MEN, OR GOD? OR DO I SEEK TO PLEASE MEN? FOR IF I YET PLEASED MEN, I SHOULD NOT BE THE SERVANT OF CHRIST.

I ASKED PAUL WHAT HE MEANT BY THAT, AND HERE'S WHAT HE TOLD ME TO TELL YOU. HE SAID, "TELL THE MEMBERSHIP OF ABYSSINIAN, THAT IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO THEY THINK THEY ARE. WHAT MATTERS MOST IS WHO GOD IS.

AND GOD IS NOT CONCERNED WITH YOUR PROGRAM. HE'S ONLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE PEOPLE THAT YOUR PROGRAM IS SUPPOSED TO SERVE."

- 1. IN OTHER WORDS, IF YOUR DEMOGRAPHICS, IS GETTING IN THE WAY OF DOCTRINE, THIS CHURCH IS IN TROUBLE.**
- 2. IF PEOPLE HAVE TO GO THROUGH A HAZING PROCESS JUST TO SIT ON YOUR ROW, WE ARE IN TROUBLE.**
- 3. IF FOLKS HAVE TO CATER TO YOU, IN ORDER TO BE ACCEPTED INTO THE FOLD, THEN THE CHURCH OF GOD IS IN TROUBLE, BECAUSE THE MINISTRY DOESN'T BELONG TO MAN, IT BELONGS TO THE MASTER!**

FOLKS IN THE CHURCH, MARKING TERRITORY. MARKING SEATS, MARKING MINISTRIES, MARKING THEIR CLIQUE MEMBERS.

LET ME TELL YOU AND YOUR CLIQUE SOMETHING:

- 1. THE CHURCH IS BIGGER THAN YOU ALL.**
- 2. THE CHURCH IS BIGGER THAN PASTOR SIMMONS.**
- 3. THE CHRIST IS GREATER THAN YOUR CULTURE.**
- 4. AND WHEN YOU LIFT JESUS UP, EVERYTHING ELSE HAS GOT TO COME DOWN!**

LISTEN... WE BETTER BE CAREFUL ABOUT LIFTING UP SO MUCH OF THE CULTURE, THAT WE FORGET TO LIFT UP CHRIST.

BECAUSE PAUL TELLS US VERY CLEARLY, THAT WE ARE THE VERY ONES WHO ARE CAUSING THE MOST TROUBLE IN THE COMMUNITY.

IN OTHER WORDS, ALL THESE DENOMINATIONS WE GOT, THAT'S TROUBLING TO GOD.

- **CHURCH'S IN NEWARK ACTING LIKE SOCIAL CLUBS.**
- **BIG I'S AND LITTLE YOU'S**
- **IMPORTANT PEOPLE USING THE CHURCH TO THEIR ADVANTAGE.**
- **POLITICIANS WITH THE PREACHERS IN THEIR HIP POCKET.**
- **PASTORS TRYING TO BE FAMOUS INSTEAD OF FAITHFUL**

AND THE DEVIL AINT GOT TO MESS WITH US BECAUSE WE DO A GOOD ENOUGH JOB ON OURSELVES!

I'LL BE DONE WHEN I TELL YOU THIS. AND I TELL YOU NO LIES. THE HARDEST THING TO DO IN THIS TOWN, IS TO GET CHURCHES TOGETHER FOR THE COMMON CAUSE OF HELPING HURTING PEOPLE.

I MEAN, YOU WOULD THINK SOMEBODY ASKED FOR A KIDNEY DONATION.

BUT BECAUSE PASTOR SIMMONS ISN'T IN THE CLIQUE;

BECAUSE I HAVEN'T KISSED THE RIGHT BEHIND, I GUESS THAT MEANS WE CAN'T WORK TOGETHER, BECAUSE ABYSSINIAN DON'T FIT THEIR CULTURE.

I HEAR WHAT SOME FOLKS ARE SAYING. SIMMONS, YOU AINT GOT TO TAKE IT THERE, IT AINT THAT SERIOUS.

YES IT IS, AND PAUL AGREES WITH ME. BECAUSE THE LAST POINT I WANNA MAKE TO YOU, IS THAT JUST BECAUSE SOMETHING OR SOMEONE IS DIFFERENT FROM WHAT YOU'RE USED TO, DIFFERENT DOESN'T ALWAYS MEAN DEMONIC.

GET [LUKE 9:49-50] AND LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. THIS IS PROOF THAT CHRISTIANS CAN BE CLICKISH...

“AND JOHN ANSWERED AND SAID, MASTER, WE SAW ONE CASTING OUT DEVILS IN THY NAME; AND WE FORBAD HIM, BECAUSE HE FOLLOWETH NOT WITH US. ⁵⁰AND JESUS SAID UNTO HIM, FORBID HIM NOT: FOR HE THAT IS NOT AGAINST US IS FOR US.”

YOU SEE, IN THEIR MINDS, ANYBODY WHO WAS DOING STUFF IN JESUS NAME, THEY HAD TO BE APART OF THEIR GROUP.

BUT JESUS IS SAYING TO THEM AND TO US, EVERYTHING THAT'S DIFFERENT, ISN'T NECESSARILY DEMONIC. AND AS LONG AS THEY'RE DOING RIGHT BY THE WORD, WE REALLY SHOULDN'T HAVE NOTHING TO SAY.

LISTEN, THERE ARE A WHOLE LOT OF FOLK WHO ARE DIFFERENT FROM US.

- 1. DIFFERENT STYLE;**
- 2. DIFFERENT APPROACH;**
- 3. DIFFERENT IDEOLOGY.**

BUT WHENEVER I HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER TO FOOL WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE, IF IT'S BIBLICAL, I AINT GOT NO BEEF.

I DON'T CARE WHICH SIDE OF TOWN YOU DO IT ON. I JUST WANNA KNOW, IS IT BIBLICAL?

- I DON'T CARE WHAT THE NAME OF YOUR CHURCH IS;**
- I DON'T CARE WHAT LETTERS YOU HAVE BEHIND YOUR NAME;**

- I DON'T CARE WHICH CHOIR OR PRAISE TEAM YOU SING ON;
- I DON'T CARE IF YOU ARE A PASTOR, ELDER, BISHOP OR OVERSEER;
- I DON'T CARE IF YOU ARE A DEACON OR A TRUSTEE;
- I DON'T CARE IF YOU ARE BAPTIST OR METHODIST;

BECAUSE EVERY THING BLACK AINT BIBLICAL, AND EVERYTHING WHITE AINT WORD!

JUST LIKE THOSE DISCIPLES HAD A PROBLEM WITH PEOPLES WHO WERE DIFFERENT, THOSE VERY SAME DISCIPLES HAD A PROBLEM WITH PAUL BECAUSE PAUL WASN'T IN THE ORIGINAL NUMBER.

1. "WHERE HE COME FROM"?
2. HE WASN'T THERE WITH US IN THE UPPER ROOM.
3. HE DIDN'T WALK WITH JESUS LIKE WE DID.
4. BUT PAUL SAYS, JUST BECAUSE I'M NOT ON THE LIST, DOESN'T MEAN I'M NOT LEGIT.

VERSE ¹¹. "BUT I MAKE KNOWN TO YOU, BRETHREN, THAT THE GOSPEL WHICH WAS PREACHED BY ME IS NOT ACCORDING TO MAN."¹² FOR I NEITHER RECEIVED IT FROM MAN, NOR WAS I TAUGHT *IT*, BUT *IT CAME* THROUGH THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST."¹³ FOR YOU HAVE HEARD OF MY FORMER CONDUCT IN JUDAISM, HOW I PERSECUTED THE CHURCH OF GOD BEYOND MEASURE AND *TRIED TO DESTROY IT.*"¹⁴ AND I ADVANCED IN JUDAISM BEYOND MANY OF MY CONTEMPORARIES IN MY OWN NATION, BEING MORE EXCEEDINGLY ZEALOUS FOR THE TRADITIONS OF MY FATHERS.

15 BUT WHEN IT PLEASSED GOD, WHO SEPARATED ME FROM MY MOTHER'S WOMB AND CALLED ME THROUGH HIS GRACE, 16 TO REVEAL HIS SON IN ME, THAT I MIGHT PREACH HIM AMONG THE GENTILES, I DID NOT IMMEDIATELY CONFER WITH FLESH AND BLOOD, 17 NOR DID I GO UP TO JERUSALEM TO THOSE WHO WERE APOSTLES BEFORE ME; BUT I WENT TO ARABIA, AND RETURNED AGAIN TO DAMASCUS."

IN OTHER WORDS, JUST BECAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW ME, DOESN'T MEAN GOD DON'T KNOW ME.

AND JUST BECAUSE I DIDN'T COME THROUGH YOU, DON'T MEAN YOU GOT MORE JESUS THAN ME.

I WISH I HAD A FEW BELIEVERS IN HERE, THAT KNOW WHO YOU ARE, AND WHAT GOD CALLED YOU TO DO.

I DON'T NEED TO GROUP, BECAUSE I'VE GOT GOD.

- **I DON'T NEED A CLIQUE BECAUSE I HAVE CHRIST.**
- **I DON'T NEED PHONIES BECAUSE I HAVE FAITH.**
- **I DON'T NEED RELIGION BECAUSE I HAVE A RELATIONSHIP.**
- **I DON'T NEED YOUR MONEY BECAUSE I HAVE THE MASTER.**
- **I DON'T NEED YOUR POSITION BECAUSE I HAVE THE PROVIDER.**
- **I DON'T NEED YOUR HOOKUP BECAUSE I HAVE THE HOLY GHOST.**
- **I DON'T NEED YOUR APPROVAL BECAUSE I HAVE MY OWN EXPERIENCE!**

AND THIS MORNING, YOU OUGHTA THANK GOD FOR PAUL'S EXPERIENCE BECAUSE, IF IT WERE NOT FOR HIS EXPERIENCE WE WOULDN'T HAVE 3 FOURTHS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

YES, HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR PAUL, THERE WOULD BE NO TEACHING ABOUT GRACE AND MERCY;

THERE WOULD BE NOTHING ABOUT JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

THERE WOULD BE NOTHING ABOUT THE GIFT OF GOD WHICH IS ETERNAL LIFE.

BUT I THANK GOD, FOR A PREACHER LIKE PAUL, BECAUSE THE MESSAGE HE BROUGHT, WAS FOR A SINNER LIKE ME. I NEED SOMEBODY UP IN HERE WHO KNOWS THAT YOU WERE A SINNER.

I NEED SOMEBODY UP IN HERE WHO KNOWS THAT YOU WERE A GENTILE.

WHERE ARE THE FOLKS UP IN HERE WHO HAVEN'T DONE EVERYTHING RIGHT?

- **MADE SOME MISTAKES,**
- **DISAPPOINTED GOD SOMETIMES,**
- **HAVEN'T KEPT ALL THE COMMANDMENTS,**
- **BROKEN SOME LAWS,**
- **DON'T KNOW ALL THE CHURCH TALK,**
- **DIDN'T ALWAYS DRESS RIGHT,**
- **TALK RIGHT,**
- **CURSE SOMETIMES,**
- **LIED SOMETIMES,**
- **WENT TOO FAR,**
- **GOT IN TOO DEEP**
- **STAYED TOO LONG**

I LOVE MY PEOPLE. AND I LOVE MY CULTURE. BUT CULTURE, CAN'T HELP MY CONDITION.

AND WHEN MY CULTURE, LEAVES ME LACKING, I THANK GOD, FOR JESUS CHRIST!

WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO YOUR SOUL'S SALVATION, YOU NEED MORE THAN A CULTURE TO GET YOU INTO THE KINGDOM.

YOUR BLACKNESS WON'T BLESS YOU. AND YOUR WHITENESS WON'T MAKE YOU WORTHY.

- **RELIGION CAN'T MAKE YOU RIGHTEOUSNESS.**
- **MONEY CAN'T BUY YOU MERCY.**
- **HOUSES CAN'T KEEP YOU HEALTHY.**
- **POSITION CAN'T GIVE YOU PEACE.**
- **SORORITY CAN'T GIVE YOU SANITY.**
- **FRATERNITY CAN'T GIVE YOU FAITH.**
- **JOB WON'T GIVE YOU JOY.**
- **GRADES CAN'T GIVE YOU GRACE.**
- **DEGREE WON'T KEEP YOU FROM DANGER.**
- **TRAINING WON'T KEEP YOU FROM TROUBLE.**

**WHAT CAN WASH, AWAY MY SINS?
NOTHING BUT THE BLOOD OF JESUS;
WHAT CAN MAKE ME WHOLE AGAIN?
NOTHING BUT THE BLOOD OF JESUS.”**

HE WAS BORN, IN BETHLEHEM, AND BETHLEHEM, HAD A CULTURE.

- **HE WAS REARED IN NAZARETH, AND NAZARETH HAD A CULTURE;**
- **HE PERFORMED MIRACLES IN GALILEE, AND GALILEE HAD CULTURE;**
- **PREACHED IN THE TEMPLE;**
- **BUT WHEN I THINK ABOUT HOW MUCH HE LOVED US, WHEN I THINK ABOUT THE REASON WHY HE CAME, IT DIDN'T MATTER, WHAT THE CULTURE SAID.**
- **HE KEPT HIS EYES, ON THE OLD RUGGED CROSS.**
- **AND RIGHT EARLY, ONE FRIDAY, THEY LED HIM UP CALVARY'S HILL;**
- **THEY STRETCHED HIM WIDE, AND THEY HUNG HIM HIGH;**
- **HE DIED FOR YOU AND FOR ME;**
- **THEY BURIED HIM IN A BORROWED TOMB;**
- **HE STAYED RIGHT THERE ALL NIGHT FRIDAY NIGHT; ALL DAY SATURDAY; ALL NIGHT SATURDAY NIGHT; BUT EARLY SUNDAY MORNING, HE GOT UP WITH ALL POWER IN HIS HAND.**

I KNOW THAT THIS IS FIRST SUNDAY, AND SOME OF US IN HERE CAME FROM A DIGNIFIED CULTURE,

BUT WHEN I THINK OF THE GOODNESS OF JESUS, AND ALL HE HAS DONE FOR ME;

WHEN I THINK OF HIS GOODNESS, AND HOW HE SET ME FREE,

I CAN DANCE, DANCE, DANCE, ALL NIGHT.