

Living In View of the Cross Part 2

This is Palm Sunday, the day of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. All four of the gospels record Jesus' arrival into the city of Jerusalem this final time. It was so important because once again it fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures concerning the coming of the Messiah. It was a glorious day for the people. John's gospel tells us, **"The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took, palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!' Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, 'Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt.'" John 12:12-15**

It was a glorious day as the crowds greeted Jesus with enthusiasm. John quotes Jesus' opponents as saying, "Look how the whole world has gone after him!" John 12:19. It must have seemed that way to some. But in spite of the joyous entrance and the size and exuberance of the crowd, for Jesus the cross was looming large before him. This would be the week of his death. He had lived his life with the cross always in view, but now this was the week it would become an excruciating reality. This was the week of the cross.

We began two weeks ago talking about living our lives in view of the cross. We talked specifically about the reason for the cross – that someone had to die upon the cross – that it was actually our cross that was in view. We were all sinners, responsible for our sinful choices and by our own admission we were guilty and justly sentenced to die. To satisfy God's justice someone had to die, but because of God's love for us, he was willing to give his only begotten son to die in our place on that cross. Our lives have been forever changed by his love and his sacrifice. His cross, (and when I say that, I'm referring to his sacrifice, his life that was given for us, his blood that was spilled for us, the awareness of his gift of grace to us), His cross and all that it means should forever be before us. It should effect and impact everything we do. You see, when Jesus said from the cross "It is finished", He didn't just mean his earthly life was finished. He meant that God's redemption plan was complete, that he had fulfilled the mission and purpose for which he had been sent. When heaven's redemption plan

was finished, so much was accomplished, the doors of mercy and grace were opened for us, heaven's blessing and help was secured for us. When you start to realize what was accomplished through the cross of Jesus Christ, you begin to realize what it really means to live your life in view of the cross, touched by the cross, changed by the cross of Christ.

What does the cross mean to you? We see it everywhere. It is probably the most popular jewelry design in the western world and is worn by everyone. It is tattooed on people, it is posted on roadside memorials, it decorates homes and even businesses. Priest and preachers, celebrities and rock stars wear them, but what does the cross mean? We make them of gold and silver, adorn them with rubies and diamonds, but what does the cross mean?

The one you wear may be a precious gift from someone, a keep-safe or heirloom from a family member, but what does the cross mean? It was an horrific means of execution. It was a terrible place of suffering. How did that symbol of such suffering and pain become a cherished emblem, something to be worn without thought or meaning? I imagine most of the people wearing a cross in America today would say it is only a piece of jewelry, or it is in honor of some friend or family member that died. If people only knew, the cross means so much more.

I wrote down some of the things the cross means for us, some of the things Christ's death upon the cross accomplished for us. I wrote down salvation, redemption, justification, forgiveness, deliverance, freedom, victory. I compiled a list of my own and then I found a little book written by John Piper entitled *The Passion of Jesus Christ*. In the book he compiled a list of fifty reasons why Jesus came to die. I won't try to list the fifty this morning, but I do want to reference Piper's book and I want you to begin to see what the Bible has to say about the grand accomplishment of the cross. We live our lives in view of the cross as we realize what Jesus accomplished for us by his death on the cross.

1. Through the cross, Jesus bore the wrath of God for us. We spoke about this in the first message in the series, that God's justice and holiness demanded someone's death upon the cross to settle the account of our sins. The bible says the soul that sins must die. We were condemned and under the curse of God's judgment.

The bible says, **“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’”**

Galatians 3:13 Jesus became cursed for us and took our sins upon himself. Then he willingly suffered the judgment and wrath of God against sin in his own body, dying upon the cross in our place and letting us go free.

Piper wrote, **“If God were not just, there would be no demand for his Son to suffer and die. And if God were not loving, there would be no willingness for his Son to suffer and die. But God is both just and loving. Therefore his love is willing to meet the demands of his justice.” – John Piper**

At the cross, God’s love met the demands of his justice. At the cross Jesus took our place and absorbed all the wrath of God against sin – our sin. Remember what that means when you see a cross. Jesus spared your life and suffered the wrath of God that was intended for you on a cross.

2. Through the cross we see God’s love for the sinner. Although he hates sin, God loves the sinner and does not want to see anyone perish but desires that all of us come to repentance and faith in Christ as our Savior and Lord. The bible makes it plain for us. **“Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:6-8**

Through the cross we see not only God’s great love and grace shown to us, we also see our unworthiness. There was nothing good about us. We were sinners, ungodly, but he loved us and gave himself for us as an atoning sacrifice while we were still sinners! We were guilty and deserved our sentence but through the sacrifice of his cross we received salvation. When you live in view of the cross you see his love displayed, even for the sinners. There is hope!

3. Through the cross the debt we owed for our sins has been canceled. We used to sing this chorus, “He paid a debt he did not owe I owed a debt I could not pay, I needed someone to wash my sins away and now I sing a brand new song, Amazing Grace, Christ Jesus paid the debt that I could never pay.” The English Standard Version of Colossians 2:13 reads, **“And you, who were dead in your**

trespasses...God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.” Colossians 2:13.

Take all of your bad deeds: the sins of a lifetime, the lack of faith we've expressed, the lack of faithfulness and loyalty to God and his word, the broken promises and broken relationships, and then weigh them against the good deeds. Some folks are hoping their good deeds will outweigh the bad deeds when they die and stand before God. I have to tell you, it won't happen. And even if it did, even if your good deeds outweighed all the sins and bad deeds, that isn't how God's salvation works. None of our good works can save us. Our good deeds won't balance the records because **God doesn't save us by balancing the records. God saves us by canceling the records!** At the cross all the records of my bad deeds, all the broken laws and the penalties for those sins, all of that - it wasn't balanced, it was blotted out and forgiven and forgotten. It was canceled out. It was nailed to the cross.

Remember the great hymn that declares, “My sins, O the bliss of that glorious thought, my sins, not in part but the whole have been nailed to the cross and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord O my soul.” That's what Jesus accomplished through his sacrifice. Through the cross the great debt of our sins has been canceled.

4. Through the cross we are no longer condemned. I don't always remember dreams, but I can recall a couple of times when I dreamed I had committed a crime. I had been caught and was going to jail. I remember waking up and you know that moment, just before you are fully awake and conscious, you are still between asleep and awake - I remember having such a feeling of remorse and regret. What have I done? It was the terrible burden and weight of being guilty and condemned. How grateful I was to fully awaken and realize it was all a bad dream.

But my guilt is not all a dream. We are guilty and we bear the burden of guilt until we come to the cross of Christ in repentance and in faith. And it is there at the cross, through the sacrifice of Christ, we are saved, redeemed, justified. It is through the cross that the Scripture can declare, **“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Romans 8:1**

For us to be “in Christ” means that we have come to him on the merits of his

sacrifice and we are now in relationship with him by faith. Being “in Christ” by faith means his death becomes our death and his righteousness becomes our righteousness. John Piper writes, “Christ becomes our punishment (which we don’t have to bear) and our perfection (which we cannot perform).”

In Christ, Romans 8 tells us we are no longer condemned, but rather called and justified and glorified. The apostle Paul writes, **“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” Romans 8:31-34**

Paul is telling us that there is no one left to condemn us. The cross assures us that we have been justified before God through Christ. If we are “in Christ” we will not be condemned for sins for which Jesus has already died! He has already paid the price. There is no double jeopardy in heaven’s court. Piper writes, **“Condemnation is gone not because there isn’t any, but because it has already happened.” ...John Piper**

Jesus bore it so we don’t have to. We are in Christ. Through the cross we are no longer condemned. Living in view of the cross we realize this is only part of what Jesus accomplished for us at Calvary. This is what the cross means for us. Condemnation isn’t there because he was condemned in our place.

5. Through the cross we have a clear conscience. From the opening chapters of Genesis to this moment human beings have struggled with the problems of a guilty conscience. Adam and Eve sinned and immediately their conscience was defiled. Their guilty conscience made them try to hide from God, it made them try to pass off the blame, it made them for the first time to feel guilty and ashamed. What could they do about a guilty conscience?

God established a sacrificial system in the Old Testament that would foreshadow the ultimate sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The sacrifices of animals could only do so much, cleansing from ceremonial uncleanness, because the bible says “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” If the animal sacrifices had worked,

the writer of Hebrews suggests, the people “would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.” But he says “those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins” (Heb. 10:3) and **“...the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper.” Hebrews 9:9.**

So what happened? The bible says a new High Priest (Jesus) came on the scene to offer a better sacrifice – Himself. What those daily sacrifices could not do, Jesus did once and for all. The Scripture says, **“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God?” Hebrews 9:14**

All of our best efforts, our best philanthropic acts, all our good deeds can't take away the guilt and shame, can't give us a clean conscience. Our sins still haunt us. But Christ can cleanse our conscience and take away the guilt and shame. Through the cross, our conscience is clean and we are free to serve the living God with confidence and joy.

6. Through the cross our needs are met. That's a bold statement isn't it? “Through the cross our needs are met? Do you know what all I need?” But the truth is every good thing God desires for us to have has been secured for us through the cross. Reading again from Romans 8, the bible says, **“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” Romans 8:32**

Understand what he is saying. God has already done the hardest thing – he gave up his Son to die on the cross as our substitute – and that being done, we can rest assured that he will do the easy thing and that is give us every good thing we need in living for him.

Does “give us all things” mean we will never have problems or trouble, just an easy comfortable existence? No. Read the rest of Romans 8. Four verses later he quotes from Psalm 44 in saying, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” He mentions trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, danger, sword. But through the cross he assures us that “we are more than conquerors” and none of these things, nothing in life can separate us from

the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Instead, through the cross God has supplied for us all things we need to live a victorious life – all things we need to live a life of joy and peace in the Holy Spirit – all things we need to remain more than conquerors, doing all things through the one who gives us the strength, who leads us in triumph and who assures us of the victory.

7. Through the cross we are set free from fatalism and determinism. Let me explain what I mean by this. In his book, Piper made the observation that secular, non-believers in the West have this in common with some primitive tribes in other parts of the world: they both believe in the power of ancestral bondage. The primitive tribesmen believe in ancestral spirits and curses being handed down. The Westerners are far too sophisticated to believe in such things. They would call it genetic influence or the consequences of growing up in a dysfunctional home with abusive, emotionally distant parents. The bottom line is they are all bound by a sense of fatalism or determinism that robs them of hope.

The dictionary defines fatalism as **“The doctrine that all things are determined by fate, or take place by inevitable necessity; a disposition to accept everything as inevitable and predetermined by fate.”** Determinism is defined as **“The doctrine that everything is entirely determined by a sequence of causes. The doctrine that one’s choice of action is not free, but is determined by a sequence of causes independent of his will.”**

What does the cross have to do with fatalism and determinism? Look at what the word of God says. **“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect.” 1 Peter 1:18-19**

The passage literally says we have been redeemed from a profitless way of behaving that was passed down from our ancestors, our forefathers. Those primitive tribes I mentioned may live in fear of some curse or hex that has been passed down from their fathers. The business man may be afraid that he will be just as driven as his father was and become an abusive alcoholic, just like dad. You may be afraid that you will have the same illness as your parents did; afraid you will die at 55 of heart disease

the way your mom did, or suffer from diabetes the way your father did.

You may be afraid you will become a victim of the same addictions, the same struggles the same problems as your parents or grandparents. But the bible says through the cross we have been redeemed from those profitless, unproductive, destructive choices and behaviors and maladies and dysfunctions of our parents or grandparents or any ancestor.

We are not subject to fatalism or determinism. Not every outcome is inevitable. Not every event is beyond our choice or determined in some fashion beyond our free will. You can examine all the contributing factors in your life, negative and positive, but if you will bring them all to the cross of Jesus Christ, his mercy and grace will set you free. The outcome of your life won't be based on what Mother said or Daddy did; it won't be determined by the abuses of a father or the neglect of a mother. The outcome of your life will be determined by the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

Jesus died to redeem us from the curse. Piper wrote, "When Jesus died, all the blessings of heaven were purchased for those who trust him. And when God blesses, none can curse."

I want you to know that if you come to the cross and surrender your life to Christ in every way, then the outcome of your life and your choices will be sanctified and set apart unto God and I can assure you he has prepared you for eternal glory, eternal blessing, eternal joy in his presence.

The wounds that a parent inflicted on you can't determine your life. The brutal events of your past when submitted to Christ no longer control your destiny. You belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. Through his sacrifice on the cross you are free. Now live your life in view of his cross and never forget the blessings and benefits he purchased for you on Calvary.

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