



Christ and the Cross

The Meaning & Importance of Jesus' Crucifixion

Gary Henry

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WordPoints

12123 Shelbyville Road, Suite 100-247
Louisville KY 40243

(601) 490-0514

Website: *wordpoints.com*

Email: *garyhenry@wordpoints.com*



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PREFACE

It is no exaggeration to say that the execution of Jesus of Nazareth by crucifixion is the pivotal point in world history. *What is the meaning of that event as far as our relationship with God is concerned? What shall be our response to it?* These are “crucial” questions. Indeed they are the most important questions we can ask. If the preaching of the apostles of Jesus is true, the eternal destiny of every human being hinges on each individual’s decision about the cross of Jesus Christ. Will we believe what the apostles taught, commit to its truth, and “die with Christ” (Galatians 2:20) — or will we reject it? We will surely want to make an informed, deliberate choice in this matter.

Paul, one of the apostles, wrote to the Christians in Corinth, “I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Like his fellow apostles, Paul understood that Jesus’ sacrificial death to atone for our sins was the very heart of the gospel. It needs to be kept at the forefront of our attention today.

The lessons in this series focus on five specific truths about the cross. While these are “sermon outlines,” they can also be useful for personal Bible study or as the basis for small-group Bible discussions. May this study remind us that the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing!

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com

THE NECESSITY OF THE CROSS

Introduction

- A. Text: **Rom. 1:16,17.**
- B. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus explained to two disciples that the crucifixion of the Messiah was not an unexpected problem — it was a thing that “ought” to have happened - **Lk. 24:25,26.**
- C. Among many other things about the cross that we need to think about more carefully, we need to understand that our salvation could not have been made possible without the cross.
- D. If we were to be saved, it was necessary for Christ to die. Why so?

I. THE PROBLEM OF SIN AND DEATH

- A. “Death” is not only the penalty — it is the inevitable consequence of sin - **Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23.** Cf. **Gal. 6:7,8.**
- B. Every accountable person who has ever lived is involved in the problem of sin - **Rom. 5:12.** Cf. **Rom. 3:23; Gal. 3:22.**
- C. And what a terrible problem it is: to be dead in sin is to be in a wretched condition - **Rom. 7:22-24.**

II. GOD’S ANSWER TO THE PROBLEM OF SIN AND DEATH

- A. We can be thankful that God did not abandon us to our sin. He is “not willing that any should perish” (**2 Pt. 3:9**) — and, in love, He chose to make salvation possible for us.
- B. No sooner had sin entered the world than God announced His intention to conquer it through One who would bruise the head of Satan - **Gen. 3:15.**
 - 1. The plan for man’s redemption reflected in **Gen. 3:15** was a plan formulated by God before the foundation of the world - **Eph. 3:11.** Cf. **Rev. 13:8.**
 - 2. God’s eternal purpose came to fruition in the “fullness of the time” (**Gal. 4:4,5; Eph. 1:10**). Cf. **Rom. 5:6.**
- C. The plan God made to save us from sin and death involved giving His Son to die for us - **Hb. 2:9,10,14,15.** Cf. **Mt. 1:21-23; 1 Pt. 2:24.**

III. THE CROSS AS THE ONLY WAY FOR US TO BE SAVED

- A. The cross was necessary, first of all, in that it did for us what we could never have done for ourselves - **Rom. 5:6.**
- B. If we had never committed but one sin, not even a perfect life from that point forward could have atoned for our sin — we could never have earned our own salvation.
- C. But beyond that, the cross was the only way God could bring about our salvation and not violate His own character - **Rom. 3:25,26.**
- D. Jesus drank the cup of His suffering because it was not possible for it to be otherwise and our sins be forgiven - **Mt. 26:39,42; Hb. 5:7-9.** Cf. **Mk. 14:36; Jn. 18:11.**

Conclusion

- A. The cross was not merely an expedient means of salvation that God chose out of other alternatives — it was the only way we could have been redeemed.
- B. But as we consider the “necessity” of the cross, we should keep one thing clear: though the cross was the only way for us to be saved, Jesus did not have to save us at all - **Jn. 10:17,18; Hb. 5:8**. Cf. **Mt. 26:53,54; Phil. 2:5-8**.
- C. That it took the death of our Lord to deal with the problem of sin ought to tell us much about the seriousness of sin in general — and, more important, about the seriousness of our own sins personally. Cf. **Prov. 6:16-19**.
- D. In the message of the cross is revealed God’s “righteousness” (**Rom. 1:16,17**) — His righteous way of making us righteous, His just way of justifying us.

THE DEATH OF THE CROSS

Introduction

- A. Text: **1 Pt. 3:18**.
- B. It is irony of the highest order that Jesus gave us glory by submitting to shame and gave us victory by submitting to defeat — He gave us life by submitting to death! Cf. **Hb. 2:14,15**.
- C. The cross is the death of death by the death of Christ.

I. CHRIST CAME INTO THE WORLD TO DIE

- A. The prophets had spoken of the death of the Messiah - **Psa. 22:1-31; Isa. 52:13-53:12**. Cf. **Ac. 8:30-35**.
- B. When Jesus was born, Mary was told that “a sword will pierce through your own soul” (**Lk. 2:34,35**).
- C. It was intended by God that the author of our salvation would be made “perfect through sufferings” (**Hb. 2:10**).
- D. Jesus knew clearly what His mission was - **Mt. 20:17-19; Lk. 9:51; 12:50; Jn. 12:27**. Cf. **Mt. 16:21-23; Jn. 18:11**.
 - 1. He even spoke of the manner in which He would die - **Jn. 12:32,33**. Cf. **3:14; 8:28**.
 - 2. Whatever glories were to follow, Jesus knew they lay on the other side of the cross - **Hb. 12:2**.
- E. When the moment of His death finally came, Jesus could say, “It is finished” (**Jn. 19:30**).

II. BY HIS DEATH, CHRIST DEFEATED DEATH

- A. Death is the weapon of the devil - **Ezek. 18:4,20; Rom. 6:23**. Cf. **Rom. 7:9-11; 1 Cor. 15:56**.
- B. By dying and being resurrected, Jesus conquered the power of death - **Gen. 3:15; 1 Cor. 15:54-57; 2 Tim. 1:10**.
 - 1. Consider **Col. 2:14,15**.
 - 2. What was lost in Adam can be regained in Christ - **Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:20-23**.
- C. No one would have been more dismayed than Satan on the morning of Jesus’ resurrection. For a few hours he was allowed to think he had overthrown God’s purpose and thwarted the establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah — only to find out that by taking the life of God’s Son he had fulfilled God’s purpose and doomed himself to utter defeat in the process! Cf. **Jn. 12:31-33**.
- D. Christ having won the crucial battle, it is only a matter of time until death is completely subjugated - **1 Cor. 15:24-28**.

III. CHRIST DEFEATED DEATH BY DYING FOR US

- A. With no sins of His own (**Hb. 4:15**), Christ accepted the penalty of death for our sins — He substituted Himself for us - **2 Cor. 5:21; Hb. 2:9**. Cf. **Rom. 4:25; Hb. 9:27,28; 1 Pt. 3:18; 4:1**.
- B. Caiaphas spoke more truth than he realized when he said it was expedient that “one man should die for the people” (**Jn. 11:49-52**). Cf. **2 Cor. 5:14,15**.

- C. Christ “redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us” (**Gal. 3:13**). Cf. **Deut. 21:22,23**. Cf. **Mt. 27:46**.
 - 1. In addition to the physical torture of it, there was no more shameful and demeaning death than crucifixion.
 - 2. Roman citizens were exempt — it was normally reserved for enemies, slaves, and criminals.
- D. Jesus gave His life as a “ransom” for us - **Mt. 20:28**.
- E. Such an act is obviously a token of the highest love - **Jn. 15:13; 1 Jn. 3:16**. Cf. **Eph. 5:25**.
- F. By dying for us, Jesus made it possible for us to be reconciled to God - **Rom. 5:10,11**.

IV. TO BE SAVED FROM SIN, WE MUST DIE AND BE RAISED WITH CHRIST

- A. Christ commanded that we be baptized in order to be saved - **Mk. 16:16**.
- B. To be baptized into Christ is to be baptized into His death - **Rom. 6:2-4; Col. 2:12**.
- C. Having been “crucified with Christ,” we must then live as those who have died and had Christ come to life within us - **Gal. 2:20; 5:24,25**. Cf. **Rom. 6:5-7**.
- D. We must be willing to “partake of Christ’s sufferings” (**1 Pt. 4:12,13**). Cf. **Phil. 3:10,11**.

Conclusion

- A. Jesus Christ is the “Lamb who was slain” (**Rev. 5:6-14**). Cf. **13:8**.
- B. If we are willing to die with Christ, “we shall also live with Him” (**2 Tim. 2:11-13**).
- C. But in order to be identified with Him, we must “go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach” (**Hb. 13:11-13**).
- D. Identifying ourselves with Jesus involves the doing of things that are not “easy” — but, of course, if Jesus had looked for an “easy” way to save us, we would still be lost.
- E. If we would be the disciples of the Lord, we will have to take up our cross and follow Him - **Mt. 16:24-26**. Cf. **Mt. 10:38,39; Mk. 10:21**.
- F. He died for us that we might live for Him - **2 Cor. 5:14,15**.

THE BLOOD OF THE CROSS

Introduction

- A. Text: **1 Pt. 1:17-19**.
- B. Sin is described in the Scriptures as the soiling of a soul that was once pure and clean - **Ac. 22:16; 2 Cor. 7:1**.
- C. It is the blood of Christ (**Jn. 19:34**) that makes “cleansing” from sin possible.

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

- A. It is a principle as old as the earth that “the life is in the blood” - **Gen. 4:10; 9:4; Lev. 17:10-14**. Cf. **Deut. 12:23**.
- B. The requirement that “the wages of sin is death” (**Rom. 6:23**) means that when sin has been committed, death must occur to satisfy the demands of justice — *life must be taken to atone for sin*.
- C. To say that *life must be taken* is to say that *blood must be shed* to atone for sin.
- D. In the OT, animal sacrifices were a reminder of God’s requirement of life for sin (although the shedding of animal blood could not itself atone for sin) - **Gen. 4:4; 8:20**; etc.
- E. In the Law of Moses, the Day of Atonement was a once-a-year occasion when the blood of animal sacrifices was brought into the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle - **Lev. 16:1-34**.
- F. All of these sacrifices were pointing forward to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ, who by the shedding of His blood truly atoned for the sins of mankind - **Hb. 9:6-15**.

II. THE EFFICACY OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

- A. As we have seen, the blood of the Lord atones for our sins - **Hb. 9:22,23,27,28; 10:1-4,10,18**. Cf. **Hb. 9:6-10:29**.
 - 1. It is a *propitiation* for our sins - **Rom. 3:25,26**. Cf. **1 Jn. 2:2**.
 - 2. It *justifies* us - **Rom. 5:9**. Cf. **1 Pt. 3:18**.
 - 3. It *reconciles* us to God - **Col. 1:19-22**.
 - 4. It makes us *near* to God and His people - **Eph. 2:13,16**.
 - 5. It *sanctifies* us - **Hb. 13:12**.
 - 6. It *cleanses* us from sin - **1 Jn. 1:7; Rev. 1:5**.
 - 7. It *redeems* us - **Eph. 1:7**. Cf. **Col. 1:14; 1 Pt. 1:18,19; Rev. 5:9**.
- B. The blood of Christ dedicated the new covenant, in which there is the forgiveness of sins - **Mt. 26:28; Hb. 9:15-18**. Cf. **Hb. 12:24; 13:20**.
- C. By the blood of Christ we have access to God’s presence - **Hb. 10:19-22**. Cf. **1 Pt. 3:18**.

III. BAPTISM, THE CHURCH, AND THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

- A. The blood of Christ, and only the blood of Christ, can cleanse the stain of sin from a soul - **Rev. 1:5**. (“What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”)

- B. It is in the act of baptism (into His death) that we receive the benefit of the cleansing blood of Christ - **Rom. 6:3,4; Col. 2:12**. Cf. **Gal. 3:27**.
- C. In baptism, we are “washed” from our sins - **Ac. 22:16; Eph. 5:26**.
- D. The church of the Lord consists of those who have been cleansed by His blood.
- E. Christ’s death is what it cost for sins to be forgiven and the Lord to have a redeemed people — hence, the church has been “purchased” with Christ’s blood - **Ac. 20:28; Eph. 5:25-27**.
 - 1. Each Lord’s Day, those who have been bought by the Lord’s blood commemorate His death in the Lord’s Supper.
 - 2. In the Lord’s Supper, Christians commune with the body and blood of the Lord and proclaim His death until He comes - **1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23-26**.
- F. As Christians, we ought to live each day as those whose salvation was bought by the blood of Christ - **1 Cor. 6:19,20**.

Conclusion

- A. Do we find the cross of Christ scandalous? Do we find a message which teaches blood atonement for sin either a “stumbling block” or “foolishness” (**1 Cor. 1:23**)?
- B. Christ died and shed His blood at Passover - **Jn. 13:1**. Cf. **Exo. 12:5-7,12,13,21-23**.
- C. He is the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (**Jn. 1:29**).
- D. As we struggle against the devil, may we be among those who “overcame him by the blood of the Lamb” (**Rev. 12:11**).
- E. And may we be grateful to be among those who have “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (**Rev. 7:14**).

THE LOVE OF THE CROSS

Introduction

- A. Text: **Rom. 8:31,32**.
- B. If our familiarity with the story of the cross ever made it commonplace to us, that would be unfortunate — if the “old, old story” were to become tiresome, we would be in danger of losing our souls. Cf. **Hb. 2:1**.
- C. The cross is, quite literally, the most “moving” demonstration of love known to mankind.
- D. God’s love for us is shown by the gift of His Son.
- E. We can consider the “love of the cross” in two directions.

I. THE LOVE OF GOD FOR US SHOWN IN THE CROSS

- A. The most obvious fact of the NT is that God gave His Son for us because He loved us - **Jn. 3:14-17; Rom. 5:6-8**. Cf. **1 Jn. 3:1,16; 4:7-11**.
 - 1. Having gone so far as to give His Son for us, how could any injustice or suffering in the world cause us to doubt God’s goodness and love?
 - 2. The cross is the answer to the “problem of suffering” — the question of how there can be a good, all-powerful God when there is so much suffering in the world. Cf. **Job 13:15; 19:25,26**.
- B. God’s love for His Son (**Mt. 3:17; Jn. 3:35; 5:20**) was not inconsistent with allowing Him to suffer — a greater good was accomplished by permitting His death than by preventing it.
- C. Going to the cross required love on Jesus’ part as well as God’s - **Jn. 15:13**. Cf. **10:11**.
- D. Even as He hung upon the cross, Jesus remained lovingly concerned about others - **Lk. 23:34; Jn. 19:25-27**.
- E. Jesus’ act of love was voluntary - **Jn. 10:17,18**.

II. THE LOVE OF GOD EVOKED IN US BY THE CROSS

- A. We can’t think seriously about the cross without being “constrained” to give ourselves to God in love - **2 Cor. 5:14,15**. Cf. **1 Jn. 4:19**.
 - 1. The cross will cause us to love both the Lord and His people - **1 Jn. 4:10,11**. Cf. **Jn. 13:34,35; 1 Jn. 4:20-5:1**.
 - 2. The cross will cause us to be more forgiving toward our brethren - **Eph. 4:31,32; Col. 3:12-15**.
 - 3. The cross will cause us to be more unified as brethren - **1 Cor. 10:16,17**. (It was Christ who was crucified for us. Hence, we belong to Him and only to Him - **1 Cor. 1:13**).
 - 4. The cross will cause us to love all men as He did — impartially and as a servant to even the lowly and despised. (Seeing others as Jesus sees them, we will “regard” men differently and treat them accordingly - **2 Cor. 5:16**).
 - 5. The cross will cause us to be faithful in our obedience to the Lord - **Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 5:3**. Cf. **Tit. 2:11-14**. (Christ died for us that we might live for Him.)
 - 6. The cross will make us zealous and steadfast in the service of the Lord’s work - **1 Cor. 15:57,58**. Cf. **Mk. 5:19**.
 - 7. The cross will cause us to endure persecution if necessary. Those who would refuse to suffer for the Lord are

avoiding “persecution for the cross of Christ” (**Gal. 6:12**).

8. The cross will keep us from unfaithfulness and apostasy - **Gal. 3:1**; **Hb. 10:26-29**. Cf. **1 Cor. 11:27-29**; **Phil. 3:18**; **Hb. 6:4-6**.
9. The cross will make a difference in how we view ourselves. (How can we judge ourselves to be “worthless” if we understand ourselves to be the objects of the love of God shown at the cross? Cf. **Psa. 8:3-5**; **Hb. 2:5-9,10-18**).

B. How could we be anything less than *grateful* and *humble* in view of the cross?

Conclusion

- A. God’s love for us is a *demonstrated* love. But what is the evidence of our love for Him — does our love amount to anything more than words? Cf. **1 Jn. 3:18**.
- B. In reality, there is no adequate way for us to return the love of God. “Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small; love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all.”
- C. But however humbled we may be by God’s love and however moved to obedience and service, we need to be encouraged by the knowledge that God loved us and gave His Son for us - **Rom. 8:28-39**.
- D. The love of God — from which we cannot be separated — is the love of God “which is in Christ Jesus” (**Rom. 8:39**), who was given for us at the cross.
- E. Are you “in Christ”? “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (**Gal. 3:27**).

THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS

Introduction

- A. Text: **1 Cor. 2:1,2**.
- B. It should go without saying that we ought to share the message of the cross with everyone.
- C. We are not “ambassadors for Christ” in the same sense the apostles were, but the appeal we make to those around us must be exactly the same: “be reconciled to God” (**2 Cor. 5:18-21**).
- D. The salvation that was procured by the cross of Christ must be *communicated* so that it can be *appropriated*.

I. THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL IS THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS

- A. The cross of Christ is the “cruz” of the gospel.
 - 1. The cross stands at the very center of our salvation.
 - 2. Nothing in the scheme of redemption is more fundamental or important - **1 Cor. 15:1-8**.
- B. The cross is God’s remedy for the problem of sin — without the cross “Christianity” would be worth little to mankind.
- C. To the extent we take sin seriously, the preaching of the cross becomes “good news.”
- D. The message of the cross is the power of God to salvation and in it is revealed the righteousness of God - **Rom. 1:16,17**. Cf. **Rom. 10:1-3**; **Phil. 3:7-11**.
- E. The hearing of the gospel — the story of the cross — is what produces obedient, saving faith - **Rom. 10:17**.
- F. The preaching of the cross is a proclamation that Jesus is *Lord* as well as *Christ* — and it announces the conditions of acceptance of the gospel - **Ac. 2:36-39**.
- G. Those who “gladly receive” the message of the cross will have no objection to being baptized for the remission of their sins - **Ac. 2:40,41**. Cf. **Ac. 8:30-38**; **Hb. 5:9**.
- H. Like Paul, we need to be “determined” not to preach anything “except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (**1 Cor. 2:1,2**).

II. TO DETRACT FROM THE CROSS IS TO PERVERT THE GOSPEL

- A. We need to be careful to give the cross its proper emphasis in our presentation of the gospel.
- B. We may be guilty of “innocently” neglecting the cross: because of its familiarity, because it is “accepted as being accepted,” because of the time spent explaining the conditions of salvation (“steps of obedience”), etc.
- C. But there may be even more dangerous ways we detract from the cross.
 - 1. What is it about “our church” that we promote and advertise? How do we “sell” ourselves to the community?
 - 2. Are we guilty of preaching ourselves? Cf. **2 Cor. 4:5**.
 - 3. Do we substitute carnal incentives, “relevant” preaching, or social programs for the story of the cross? Cf. **Jer. 2:13**.
 - 4. Are we “ashamed” of the gospel? Are we tempted to remove the “offense” of the cross? Cf. **Rom. 1:16**; **Gal. 5:11**.

- 5. Do we feel somehow that our new age calls for a new message? Cf. **2 Tim. 4:3,4**.
- D. To “please men,” might we alter the emphasis of the gospel so that we turn it into “different” gospel? Cf. **Gal. 1:6-10**.
- E. Is the result of our preaching and practice such that the cross of Christ is “made of no effect”? Cf. **1 Cor. 1:17-25**.
- F. Whether we are doing the preaching or listening to preaching, we need to make sure it is the cross that is being preached — and that we are truly converted by that *to the Lord himself*.
- G. It is the *gospel* by which God calls men to Himself - **2 Thess. 2:14**.
- H. Jesus taught that it would be His cross that would “draw” men to Him - **Jn. 12:32-34**. When all is said and done, we are bound to fail if we seek any other drawing and transforming power than the cross.

III. BEING A DISCIPLE OF THE LORD MEANS TELLING OTHERS ABOUT THE CROSS

- A. The Great Commission applies, at least indirectly, to every one of the Lord’s people - **Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15,16**.
- B. We each have been taught so that we might teach others - **2 Tim. 2:2**. Cf. **2 Cor. 1:3,4**.
- C. There are important ways each of us can be involved in the preaching of the cross.
- D. “Into our hands the gospel is given” (Mrs. Roy Carruth).

Conclusion

- A. We need to “hide ourselves behind the cross” and find our glory only in the cross. Cf. **Gal. 6:14**.
- B. The Lord’s Supper needs to become more meaningful to us as a proclamation of the Lord’s death until He comes — and a motivation to greater service (and endurance) in preaching the cross to those around us - **1 Cor. 11:23-29**.
- C. Ultimately, it is *gratitude* that will cause us to preach the cross. Cf. **Mk. 5:19**.