

Lesson 25

THE CENTRALITY OF THE CROSS

“We owe all to Jesus crucified. What is your life, my brethren, but the cross? Whence comes the bread of your soul but from the cross? What is your joy but the cross? What is your delight, what is your heaven, but the Blessed One, once crucified for you, who ever liveth to make intercession for you? Cling to the cross, then, put both arms around it! Hold to the Crucified, and never let Him go. Come afresh to the cross at this moment, and rest there now and for ever!” - Charles H. Spurgeon

So the Cross does not merely tell us that God forgives, it tells us that that is God’s way of making forgiveness possible. It is the way in which we understand how God forgives. I will go further: How can God forgive and still remain God? – That is the question. The Cross is the vindication of God. The Cross is the vindication of the character of God. The Cross not only shows the love of God more gloriously than anything else, it shows His righteousness, His justice, His holiness, and all the glory of His eternal attributes. They are all to be seen shining together there. If you do not see them all you have not seen the Cross. - Martin Lloyd-Jones

It is at the cross where God’s Law and God’s grace are both most brilliantly displayed, where His justice and His mercy are both glorified. But it is also at the cross where we are most humbled. It is at the cross where we admit to God and to ourselves that there is absolutely nothing we can do to earn or merit our salvation. - Jerry Bridges

I fear that the cross, without ever being disowned, is constantly in danger of being dismissed from the central place it must enjoy, by relatively peripheral insights that take on far too much weight. Whenever the periphery is in danger of displacing the center, we are not far removed for idolatry. - D.A. Carson

Whenever the true message of the cross is abolished, the anger of hypocrites and heretics eases...and all things are in peace. This is a sure token that the devil is guarding the entry of that house, and that the pure doctrine of God’s Word has been taken away. The church, then, is in the BEST state when Satan assaileth it on every side...both with subtle sleights, and outright violence. And (likewise) it is in the WORST state, when it is most at peace! - Martin Luther

Nothing else is of equal importance. The message of the cross is the Christian’s hope, confidence, and assurance. Heaven will be spent marveling at the work of Christ, the God-Man who suffered in the place of us sinners. - C.J. Mahaney

1) Through Christ’s resurrection, all mankind has been given a **declaration** of his deity.

- Rom 1:3-4

2) Believers are **justified** through Christ’s death and resurrection.

Justification - the action of declaring or making righteous in the sight of God

- Rom 4:22-25

- Rom 5:15-16

- 1 Cor 15:3-5
- 2 Cor 5:21
- Eph 1:7
- 1 Pet 3:21

To be justified means more than to be declared "not guilty." It actually means to be declared righteous before God. It means God has imputed or charged the guilt of our sin to His Son, Jesus Christ, and has imputed or credited Christ's righteousness to us. - Jerry Bridges

3) Christ **redeemed** believers through His death on the cross.

Redemption - the action of gaining or regaining possession of something in exchange for payment; clearing of a debt

- Col 2:13-14
- Gal 3:13
- Titus 2:14
- Heb 9:12

4) Believers have been **regenerated** into new life in Christ.

Regeneration - to create again; process of renewal, restoration, and growth; spiritual renewal

- Rom 6:4
- 2 Cor 5:14-17
- Eph 2:4-5
- 1 Pet 1:3-4

There can be no repentance or faith until the heart has been re-created. But in the moment of regeneration, the Holy Spirit imparts the gift of repentant faith to sinners – bringing them to saving faith in Christ and enabling them to turn away from sin. The result is a dramatic conversion. - John MacArthur

5) Christ's death was the **propitiation** of God's wrath towards believers.

Propitiate - to appease; to satisfy

- Rom 3:25
- Rom 5:9
- 1 Jn 4:10
- 1 Jn 2:2

- Heb 2:17

6) Christ's death **reconciled** believers to God.

Reconciliation - the act of restoring a relationship

- Rom 5:10-11

- 2 Cor 5:18-19

- Eph 2:14-16

- Col 1:19-22

There can be no peace between you and Christ while there is peace between you and sin. - C.H. Spurgeon

7) Through Christ, believers have been **adopted** as children of God.

Adoption - provides legal status to sons and daughters who otherwise have no status within a family; a position of great blessing

- Rom 8:15-17

- Gal 4:4-5

- Eph 1:4-5

- Eph 2:19-20

Adoption is a greater mercy than Adam had in paradise. - Thomas Watson

8) Christ's resurrection enables Him to be the **mediator** between God and man.

Mediate - To intervene between people in a dispute in order to bring about an agreement or reconciliation.

- 1 Tim 2:5

- Heb 9:15

God, apart from Christ, is an angry, offended Sovereign. Unless we behold Him in and through Christ, the Mediator, the terrors of His Majesty would overwhelm us. We dare not approach the Father except in Christ because of our sins. We first fasten our eyes upon Christ, then upon the Father. If Christ does not bear our guilt and reconcile us unto God, we perish! Before any man can think to stand before the face of God's justice or be admitted to the secret chamber of God's mercy or partake of the riches of His grace, he must look to the Mediator, Christ Jesus. - Stephen Charnock

9) Christ has **sanctified** believers through the shedding of His blood.

Sanctification - to make holy

- Eph 1:18-21

- Heb 13:12

- Titus 2:14

10) Christ's resurrection has assured believers of future **resurrection** and **glorification**.

- Lk 20:35-36

- Rom 8:11

- Rom 8:30

- Phil 3:10-11

- 1 Thes 4:13-17

- Col 3:1-4

11) Christ crucified has given believers **victory** over death.

- Rom 6:5-9

- 2 Tim 1:9-10

- Heb 2:14-15

- Rev 1:17-18

- 1 Cor 15:55-57

This is noble encouragement to all the saints; die they must, but rise they shall, and though in their case they shall see corruption, yet they shall rise to everlasting life. Christ's resurrection is the cause, the earnest, the guarantee, and the emblem of the rising of all His people. Let them, therefore, go to their graves as to their beds, resting their flesh among the clods as they now do upon their couches. - C.H. Spurgeon

12) Christ's crucifixion gives **motivation** to believers to submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

- Rom 6:10-14

- Gal 2:20

- Gal 6:14

The Centrality of the Cross - Without it, nothing else matters.

- 1 Cor 1:18, 22-24

¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God... ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

- 1 Cor 15:16-21

¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

If Christ did not rise from the dead, we would still be in our sins and condemned to God's holy wrath against sin.

- Rom 10:9

Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

True faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is essential to our salvation.

Now, read Gal 6:14 and discern what Paul is saying here:

What does he mean "boast"?

What is meant by the "cross"?

What is meant by "crucified"?

How does this help you from getting a full head and a frozen heart?

Come, and see the victories of the cross. Christ's wounds are thy healings, His agonies thy repose, His conflicts thy conquests, His groans thy songs, His pains thine ease, His shame thy glory, His death thy life, His sufferings thy salvation. - Matthew Henry