

THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS

by

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SERMON TWO

“THE PURPOSE OF THE CROSS”

Text: Galatians 1:4, “**Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.**”

On the great Day of Atonement the high priest slew the sacrifice and sprinkled with blood everything in the temple. The vessels of the temple were sprinkled with blood. The altar of the sacrifice, the altar of incense, the mercy seat over the Ark of the Covenant was sprinkled with blood.

Every vessel about the temple and everything that was to be used in the service of the temple was sprinkled with that blood.

The significance of it was that through the atonement of blood the way was opened for the enjoyment of all the blessings that were present.

The blood on the mercy seat meant atonement for sin and mercy and grace for the worshipper.

The blood over the broken law where the mercy seat rested meant that the demands of justice for a broken law had been satisfied, and God and the sinner have been reconciled, and the sinner could now come into the presence of God in peace.

Every blessing was available now through the blood of atonement, and the way was opened for the reception of them and the enjoyment of them.

And so it is in the cross of Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He not only made atonement for our sins, but a “**new and living way**” was dedicated to God.

The expression “**living way**” means, one that shall always be available; one that shall always be fresh; one that shall never be closed. So we can “**come boldly to the throne of grace**” as we travel the blood-sprinkled way.

All the blessings of God are made available in the cross to every believer. God will not do more for one of His children than He will do for another. Some will let Him do more than others will permit Him to do for them. Some will receive more than others will receive.

- God will make out of you exactly the kind of Christian you want to be.
- God will give you the power that you will use for His glory.
- God will give you all the fullness of joy that there is in the Holy Spirit if you will let the Holy Spirit possess and fill you.

You are exactly the kind of Christian you want to be. You may not be the kind you wish you were, but there is a vast difference between wishing and wanting. Christ said, **“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.”**

When you come to the place of soul hunger and soul thirst for the real things of God, you will find them in the cross and you will find them available to everyone that wants—really wants them. This is the purpose of the cross.

Let us look now at some of these blessings and privileges that have been purchased for us by the blood of the cross.

I. THE PURPOSE OF THE CROSS WAS TO REDEEM US FROM ALL INIQUITY

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14).

I love to think that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin, and as Paul said, by faith in Christ we are: **“Justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses.”**

But to be redeemed from all iniquity goes deeper than this for iniquity has a twofold meaning – a deeper meaning than sin.

Sin is transgression of the law, but iniquity includes that condition of the human heart, that inner condition that is wrong as well as the wicked works that proceed out of that condition of the heart. Paul describes the condition of the human heart in the third chapter of Romans.

There never was a darker picture drawn of the unregenerated human heart, and he climaxes that picture with this comparison: **“their throat is like an open sepulchre”**—like a grave where someone has laid a dead body and gone off and forgot to cover it, and there day and night that grave where that putrifying body lies, emits that odor continually, nauseating everyone that passes by.

The condition of the unregenerated human heart is so wicked, so depraved, so loathsome that out of that nature within us there comes a continuous stream of sin, wickedness, ungodliness, ungodly deeds, ungodly thoughts and actions.

Now the purpose of the death of Christ on the cross was to redeem us from all iniquity — to so completely change that nature within us that the stream that issues out shall never be the same again – so many of us think of salvation only as dealing with sins that we have committed.

And because we think of it that way, the average person thinks all he has to do to be saved is to quit his meanness, clean up, turn over a new leaf, join the church, behave himself and do right.

Now, if salvation dealt only with the sins one has committed, there would be some reason to that position. But since salvation is not dealing primarily with what men have done, but with what men are, it is altogether a different story.

A person who believes that he must live a certain kind of life after he is saved or he will fall away and be lost is basing his belief upon the same thing — that salvation deals only with his sins. So if he commits sin, then he is lost. If he lives a certain type of life that the world calls Christian he is alright, but if he doesn't maintain a certain standard of living then he is lost again.

Hear me! Salvation doesn't deal primarily with the sins that one has committed or shall commit. But the purpose of the cross was to redeem us from all iniquity, and stop the pollution of the stream by healing it at its source, as Elisha did when he healed the water. He didn't take out a few buckets of the water and purify it, but took a bag full of salt and went to the spring, the source from which the water came, and at its fountain head poured in the healing salt that changed the fountain from which the stream was issuing. When you can change the fountain, you have changed the stream.

The cross deals not with the symptoms of the disease of sin, but with the disease itself. What is the use of doctoring the breaking out of smallpox by putting salve and arnica on those terrible sores? That isn't where the trouble is — those are only the symptoms of the disease. Take an antitoxin that will kill that disease and inject that antitoxin into the blood stream and kill the germ of the disease, then the eruption will heal up immediately. But you can put all the ointment you please on the eruptions and you have not done them any good.

When God deals with the sin problem in the cross of Jesus Christ, He goes straight to the seat of the disease, the human heart, and there redeems us from all iniquity.

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE CROSS IS THAT HE MIGHT BRING US TO GOD

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (I Peter 3:18).

That He might bring us to God, not as criminals, to the bar of justice, but as blood-bought, blood-washed sons and daughters of God; to bring us into the family of God. That is what Paul meant in Romans 8:29 when he said, **“For whom He did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”**

In other words, “That he might be the elder brother in a great family of children.”

So many people get such a low conception of salvation, such a small conception of what Christ has to offer. They think if they live thus and so and hold out faithful and do this that and the other, that God will love them and accept them.

No! No! No! God isn't seeking hired servants, God wants a family of children, **“translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son,”** that He might bring us to God and present us to the Father as a family of dear children. **“Christ suffered for sins, that He might bring us to God.”**

The cross brings us to a proper knowledge of God.

None of us would ever have had any adequate conception of God had it not been for the cross of Jesus Christ. If you should go over this poor, war-torn world with all of its suffering, sin, heartbreak and heartache and tell men who have never heard the name of Jesus that God loves them, it would sound like mockery in their ears. The fact is, the heathen think that God hates them and is angry with them.

Not knowing Christ, you could not blame them. If you know how dark it is in heathen lands, if you only knew the poverty and suffering there, you could understand.

One of the things that touched my heart most when I heard one of our returned missionaries from China was the way he pictured the tragedy of their lives over there. Every time he drew one of those sad tragic pictures he would stop and say, “Christian friends, it is mighty dark where they do not know Jesus.”

If I should go into this dark, suffering, sin-cursed world tonight and say, “God loves you”, it would sound like hollow mockery amidst all of its suffering. But when I can take poor, broken, suffering, bleeding humanity, groping in the darkness of sin, and lead them to the cross and show them God dying there for their sins, then they know that God loves them and it grips their hearts.

That is what Jesus meant when He said, **“And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.”**

I tell you friends, if the cross of Christ won't break the heart of a sinner, there is nothing else on earth that will bring him to God. You may scare him with hell and the judgment but I believe that before anybody is saved, he must get a vision of the cross that will draw him to God.

Before anybody is saved he must fall in love with God through Jesus Christ. When you fall in love with Christ you fall out with sin then and there. He died that He might bring us to God — to bring us to the knowledge of God in His mercy, grace, longsuffering and compassion.

He died that He might bring us into favor with God. That all the enmity that had been caused by sin might be slain and the middle wall of partition broken down, and that we might come into favor and blessings of God.

It is not that God isn't ready to bestow His blessings, but God must be just in justifying the ungodly. God has to have some ground on which to stand without compromising with sin. So Christ died that through the blood of the cross, the blood-sprinkled way, He might bring us to God and into peace with God and favor with God.

III. THE PURPOSE OF THE CROSS IS TO BRING US INTO SONSHIP WITH GOD

Paul said in Galatians, **“But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”**

Let us study a moment that word, adoption. It has a different significance than the new birth. All of us understand the meaning of adoption in human relationships.

If you go to an orphan’s home and find a motherless and fatherless child and you adopt that child into your family, it means that you accept as your very own a child who has no natural claim whatever on you; who by nature has no right in your home.

- By nature I have no claim on God.
- By nature I have no right to expect anything of God.

For, **“all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way.”**

We were rebels, strangers to His grace, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, foreigners as far as the family of God is concerned, without God and without hope. But a sinner, who has forfeited all right to any favor at the hand of God, is adopted into the family of God.

When you adopt a child, immediately it takes the same legal standing as a child born in your own home — flesh of your flesh and bone of your bone. I tell you beloved, when I think of that word adoption in the plan of God it overwhelms my soul.

I cannot comprehend how God could take a sinner like me with all my sin, filth and shame and depraved nature; with no claim on God, no right even to ask for mercy, and pick me up and lift me out of darkness and adopt me, make me an **“heir of God, and joint heir with Jesus Christ.”**

But, blessed be God, His Word tells us that this was the purpose of the cross.

IV. THE PURPOSE OF THE CROSS WAS THAT HE MIGHT DELIVER US FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD

“He gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world”
(Galatians 1:4.)

As long as we are in the body, we are going to be beset by the pull, by the temptations, by the heart aches and hardships of this hostile world. For the world hates a Christian. The world has always hated God’s people from Cain and Abel until now.

Why did Cain slay Abel? Because the unregenerated heart hates the child of God.

The world despises a real Christian.

That is the reason Paul said, **“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”**

That is the reason the Lord said,

“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” Jesus prayed, **“Father, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one.”**

Here is where the “holding out” as Christians comes in. So many have said to me, “If I thought I could hold out, I would be a Christian—would start right now if I felt that I could hold out.”

You will never hold out in your own strength. You will never meet the forces of evil in your own power, but Christ died **“that He might deliver us from this present evil world,”**—not out of it, but from it.

- God didn’t save the three Hebrew children out of the fiery furnace, but He saved them from the fire in the furnace—brought them out without even the smell of smoke on their garments.

- God didn’t save Daniel from the lions’ den, but He shut the mouths of the lions and Daniel was able next morning to look up and say, **“O king, live forever. My God hath sent His angel and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me.”**

- God didn’t save Paul from persecution and suffering and temptation. But God gave him victory and grace in the midst of it all.

You will meet the tempter and so will I. The battle rages fiercely, the forces of evil besiege on every hand. And you will go down if you try to meet them in your own strength and power.

But read the seventh chapter of Romans and see a man who has been through the heat of the battle and the very fires of the devil.

Hear him as he tells us about that same struggle that you and I have had many times. He says,

“I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

Then Paul looks away from himself and looks to the cross and we hear his shout of **“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

There is the victory. **“Christ died for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world.”**

That is how you can hold out.

V. THE PURPOSE OF THE CROSS WAS THAT HE MIGHT BE LORD BOTH OF THE DEAD AND LIVING

The death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection from the dead was for the purpose that He might be Lord of our lives.

Most of us think of the Lordship of Jesus only as an obligation resting upon us to do His will, to obey Him. Now, to be sure, that is included in the Lordship of Jesus, but if that is as far as your conception of the Lordship of Jesus goes, you have a most inadequate conception of it.

I am persuaded more and more as I study God's Book that few Christians have ever lifted up their eyes beyond the things of the earth and set their affections on things above sufficiently to get a real vision of what Christ has for us. The Lordship of Jesus does mean that I am bought with a price and belong to God and am under obligation to do His will at whatever cost. That ought to be enough to constrain me to do His will in perfect obedience.

But the Lordship of Jesus means a great deal more than that. It means that I am his peculiar treasure.

"For the husband is the head of the wife," not to rule over her, but to him the real treasure on earth. **"For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh."** That is the way with Christ and His own.

The lordship of Christ—, listen to it in Malachi. **"In that day said the Lord, they shall be mine when I make up my jewels."**

As precious, yes more precious, than the crown jewels of all kings and queens of the earth. His peculiar treasure, bought with the price of His blood. What does it mean? It means that He will guard them with His life.

I want you to get this phase of the Lordship of Jesus. We are His precious Jewels, guarded by His mighty power, by Jesus Himself.

"But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep and fleeth, . . . I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine, and I lay down my life for the sheep."

The good shepherd puts himself between His sheep and all danger and guards them with his life.

"These are mine," said He, **"I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gaveth them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."**

They are His peculiar treasure. **"For to this end Christ both died and rose, and revived that he might be Lord, both of the dead and the living."**

They are guarded by Him and led into green pastures. “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” We are the sheep of His pasture.

Then we are not only, led but we are fed by Him. “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst”—“bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.”

- He satisfies every longing of the human soul,
- He satisfies every thirst of human life,
- He satisfies every hunger of the human heart.

He died and rose again that He might be Lord of our lives, and that we might be His purchased possession—His peculiar treasure. For, **“we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time . . . To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”**

I tell you it is great to be a Christian!

Isn’t it wonderful to be bought with the blood of Christ, held in His mighty hand, guided through shadows and storms. Over the stormy deep He will guide my little bark until at last He brings His treasure home into the treasure house—that house He had in mind when He said, **“In my Father’s house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”**

We will be guided safely home without the loss of a single one, where God himself shall **“wipe away all tears from their eyes . . . And He shall be their God and they shall be His people . . . and there shall be no night there; they shall need no candle, neither light or the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign with Him for ever and ever.”**

Thank God for the cross of Jesus Christ, **“that He might deliver us from this present evil world.”**

And one day He will present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy . . . in the likeness of the glorified Son of God. That is the meaning of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

That is the purpose of the Cross.

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