

Your Conscience, the Cross, True Faith, False Religion

by David Cooper

David Cooper explores the significance of conscience in relation to true faith and the necessity of repentance for spiritual clarity.

Duration: 1:13:54

Scripture: Matthew 7:13-14, John 3:20, John 6:47, John 6:53, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, 2 Corinthians 3:5

Topics: "Conscience"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the profound significance of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on the hill of Calvary. The preacher emphasizes the selfless love and grace of God, as He willingly dies for the sins of mankind. The sermon describes the scene of Jesus being nailed to the cross and the immense love that compelled Him to bleed and die for humanity. The preacher also shares a personal experience of encountering the crucified Christ and being convicted of his own guilt, leading to repentance and a realization of the forgiveness offered through Jesus' sacrifice.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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Every time I hear a story like that, it just brings back so many memories. My wife and I were back there looking at one another knowingly. Oh, the grace and the wisdom of God.

How unsearchable are His ways and His paths past finding out. Amen. Well, welcome back here again tonight to all of you.

In the name of Jesus, I welcome you. Those of you that haven't been with us in nights past, I welcome you too. You visitors, I pray that God would give you all ears to hear.

Can we stand on our feet and just begin with a word of prayer tonight? Yes, Heavenly Father. Glorify Thy Son. Make Him known here tonight.

Lift up my prayer to You. I approach You in the blood of Jesus. Boldly, Lord, like You told me to.

I come asking You, Father, that You would grant to each one here tonight ears to hear. I pray that no one would go away from this place not having heard. I pray You'd open up some hearts here tonight, Lord.

That You would open hearts to hear and to believe and to be converted, to be saved. Thank You, Lord. We commit this message to You in the name of Jesus.

Amen. Thank you. You may be seated.

Well, I had three messages on my heart tonight. And then I only had one hour to preach. And I did ponder putting two messages together.

I would have liked to preach tonight on husbands love your wives. I felt like that would be a very fitting message for this congregation here tonight. And extremely important and warranting the hour.

Because the way you treat your wife can hinder your prayer life. And whatever hinders your prayer life can hinder your family life, hinder your spiritual life and hinder your eternal life. So, I would say I would love to preach for an hour on husbands love your wives.

I also would like to have preached tonight about gambling with your soul. Because some of you are gamblers. You are gambling with your soul.

You have placed your soul on the devil's roulette wheel in a cheap, thrilling hope to gain something you don't deserve. You want to gain the world before you surrender your lives to God. Deceived into thinking that you can have the thrill of this vain world and yet find favor with the king of kings in the day of judgment.

You are deluded. You are deceived. Deceived into thinking that you can have that thrill.

And you are in for a shock when the wheel of fortune comes to a stop and the devil rakes in your losses. And the loss is your eternal, never dying soul. I would love to spend an hour laying your vain hopes in the dust and bring you to some sober minded, straight thinking at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ.

But I have another message that eclipses those two. And I would like to preach tonight about your conscience. The cross, true faith and false religion.

I grew up in a Baptist home in Arlington, Washington. I asked Jesus into my heart when I was five years old and shortly after was baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost upon the profession of my five year old faith. I lived until I was almost 24 years old in the confusion of that religion.

I had so many rededications in my life. So many wonderments about what Christianity was all about. And I was searching for truth.

My doctrine didn't match my life. It didn't make sense. It created a confusion in my life.

And I was searching for the truth. It wasn't until I was about 24 years old that I really found the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ to be for David Cooper. When I fell in love with the Lord Jesus and I discovered that Jesus is the center of life and everything began to swirl around Him.

So I have an interest in this subject. Maybe that's why I think it's more important than those other two because I think there are those sitting in this room in that same state. Maybe you don't even know you're there.

I hope by the time I'm done you do. How many of you do have a conscience? Okay. Is a conscience a real thing? Is it real? Absolutely.

It's not a fictitious imagination of philosophy or something like that. You have a conscience. You know it.

How soon do you see a conscience begin to manifest in a child? Someone give me a year. How early have you seen your child manifest a conscience? First year? At least. At least by the first year.

Have you ever watched a child across the room and they're over there playing with something on the console or on the table and they don't know you're watching. You're maybe in the other room or something and they're playing with something and the knob comes off or something happens and they think, oh no, I broke it. And quickly they try to push it back in the hole that they got it from and then quickly what do they do? I think I'll go do something over here.

And then they go over there and immediately start a fight with their brother or sister or get busy about their cars and trucks and Zoom and make lots of noise. That's a conscience. The word for conscience is sunidasis.

It comes from the word sun which means with and ado which means to know. Webster's defines a conscience. It is from the French.

It is French. From the Latin, consciencia. It is a joint knowledge or a feeling.

It comes from concierge which is from the word calm which means together and sierre which means to know. The conscience is a knowledge or a feeling of right and wrong. The faculty, power or principle of a person which decides on the lawfulness or unlawfulness of his actions with a compulsion to do right.

Moral judgment that prohibits or opposes the violation of a previously recognized ethical principle. So in other words, your conscience has a set of rules. It's like another person inside.

And he is watching your behavior. And he judges whether your behavior is according to the laws that are established in the conscience. And he either objects or approves your behavior.

Interesting, we have some words in English called conscience money. Do you know what conscience money is? Conscience money is the money paid to relieve one's conscience. As if to compensate for some previous fraud or theft.

That's conscience money. Because the conscience says you ought not to have that money. You ought not to have that money.

You ought not to have that money. And so when I give the money back, it appeases that person that I live with called my conscience. In as much as our conscience is the champion of right in our lives, the

conscience stands in the place of God.

As much as it represents right and good in our lives, the conscience stands in the place of God and represents God to us. Our conscience is the counselor and the advisor to the soul. The man's soul is the ruler.

The conscience is counselor to the king. And it is a blessed state when the ruler listens to the voice of wise counsel, and when crossing that counsel, he does it so with good reason. But when we sin against the counsel of our conscience, the conscience is offended, and the peaceful relationship becomes strained, and in some case becomes hostile, and the conscience cries loudly against the actions of the soul.

This unpleasant relationship manifests in obvious signs of inward strife, such as downcast eyes, fretful features, nervousness, constant activity, loud speech, laughter, and in general anything to divert the attention from the voice of the conscience. This is a real state of men and women. This is a real state.

I'm not making this up. This is a real state of men and women. They live in a relationship with their own conscience as with someone who was once a good friend, who they have deeply wounded, and now live in constant friction and strife to the misery of their lives and the discomfort of all who look on.

The driving need of men and women today is to have their conscience cleared, and to have a peaceful relationship restored between themselves and their conscience, and the God their conscience represents. This is only possible through the atonement for the sins against the conscience. Only by atoning for that sin, and hope of future victory over sin, then will the conscience be satisfied.

It is not the relationship that a man has with his own conscience reflected in real relationships with the people in his life. There are many who live in a cold war with their conscience. They live in a cold war.

I'm not talking to you. Don't talk to me. I'm not listening to you.

I'm going to do something else. You can keep talking. I'm not talking to you.

They're in a cold war with their conscience, and you know what? They're in a cold war with the people in their life too. The conscience is a biblical concept. It's very important.

It is a theme in the Bible. Acts 24.16 says, and herein do I exercise myself, Paul speaking, to have always a conscience void of offense towards God and towards men. In 1 Timothy 1.5 he says, now the end of this commandment, that's the commandment of the Gospel, that's the commandment of Paul's teaching, he says the end of that commandment is love from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and a faith unfeigned.

In 1 Timothy 1.19 he says, holding faith and a good conscience, which some have put away concerning faith, made shipwreck. 1 Timothy 3.9 says, elders should be those that are holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. Hebrews 10.11 says, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.

Hebrews 13.18 says, pray for us, for we trust that we have a good conscience. Paul thought the conscience was a big part of the Christian life. Maintaining, getting one first, then maintaining a Christian clear conscience.

In fact, he said to Timothy, those men that put that away, shipwreck. They shipwreck. I don't know how many of you have read the book, Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan.

I believe that John Bunyan understood what the conscience was. Mark, when Christian was at the cross of Jesus Christ, and he looked upon the cross, and it was strange to him how the sight of the cross made the burden fall off his back and roll into the tomb, and three shining ones came, and one of them gave him a new robe. One of them gave him, can't remember the other thing, but the other one gave him a little roll.

And he said that he should take it with him, and that he should read it to himself along the way, which would encourage him, and that he should be sure to keep it, because it would be his entrance into the celestial city. And that little roll, my friend, is your conscience. When he was going up the hill of difficulty, and got lax and fell asleep in the arbor, where he should not have been so sleepy, he should not have stayed there, he was out of order, and he got up and ran in his busyness to try to catch up and make himself right with God by all his own efforts, and he lost something there.

What did he lose? A clear conscience. And where did he have to go to get it? Back to his offense. Titus 1.15 says, Under the pure, all things are pure.

But unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled. Their conscience is defiled. The conscience can be made dirty.

It feels defiled. It's dirty. It's filthy.

The conscience itself has a filthiness about it, and it just doesn't feel good. It lives that way. The conscience is defiled.

And everything that the eyes of the man see are seen through that defiled conscience. I believe the cause for defiled conscience is the will. The will.

Will, sin, and then unrepentant. The will rises, sins against his conscience, and unrepentantly continues not to repent of it. The effect of a defiled conscience is guilt, withdrawal.

Withdrawal from others. That's why the downcast eyes. Bondage.

You feel like you're in a cage. Oh, there's things I just can't do. Because me and my conscience aren't talking.

There's things I can't talk about. There's things I can't say. Because me and my conscience aren't at war there.

And there's a lack of freedom. The remedy is repentance. The remedy is repentance.

The remedy is confession. We'll talk more about that. And the remedy is faith.

1 Corinthians. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 8. I want to just elaborate a little bit on your conscience. I'm going to move right along here for my time's sake.

A lot to say. 1 Corinthians 8. 7 Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge, for some with conscience of the idol at this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to God.

For neither if we eat are we better, neither if we eat not are we the worse. But take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hath knowledge, sit at meat in an idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols? And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish.

Do you think it's important to maintain a clean conscience? You know what you get at the cross of Jesus Christ is a clear conscience. And the Christian life is the maintenance of a clear conscience. This says that when you influence a brother to defile his conscience and embolden him against his conscience to do that which his conscience is telling him, don't do it, I don't feel good about it, you actually kill your brother.

And through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died. But when ye sin this way or so against thy brother and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat makes my brother to offend, if my meat is going to kill my brother, I will not eat meat as long as the world stands, lest I make my brother to offend.

Now that talks about a weak conscience and notice that a weak conscience is one that does not have knowledge. Knowledge guides the conscience. We are not at our conscience whim and beck and call.

We are the rulers of our conscience. Our conscience is Him that represents God in counsel to our soul. It gets really lopsided when the conscience becomes the ruler.

The Word of God says, Thy Word is a lamp to my feet. 1 Corinthians 8.6, right before that, notice it says, We know that there is only one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we are in Him, and there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things. Howbeit, not every man has this knowledge.

Not every man's conscience has been trained by that understanding. And therein comes the weakness of his conscience. It doesn't mean that he should stay there.

The conscience can be guided and trained by the Word of God. I remember when I was in my journey with my conscience, I made a vow not to drink coffee. I gave up my coffee to God.

And my conscience took that thing and ran with it. I don't know what kind of a conscience you have, but mine has glasses that sit about right here on his nose, and he's always looking over his nose at it. And, I mean, I couldn't eat ice cream that had coffee.

I couldn't swallow it if I put it in my mouth, and, oh, this is coffee! Ice cream! I had to spit it out, because my conscience wouldn't bear it. But that's bondage. That's out of order.

That is bondage. But, that's where I was at. I was a man of a weak conscience.

Legalism binds the conscience. If the conscience believes that the law is for me, your conscience is going to tie you in a knot. Continuing Jesus' life is an example that sets the conscience free and guides it.

In my own life, I got that teaching that goes around about how God created all the animals in the beginning. They were our friends. They were not our food.

And, you know, in the end, when Jesus comes back, they're going to be our friends and not our food, and you shouldn't eat those friends of yours. You know, that teaching came to me, and, you know, my heart's being enlightened, and you know how it is, it's kind of naive, and, well, you know, it's true. A chicken's a

chicken.

It's a person or an animal. You know, we're in the same kingdom together, and, well, maybe it's not right to steal a chicken's egg and eat their babies. And if you let your conscience go and it's not framed by knowledge, you're in trouble.

I was in trouble until I read the Word of Jesus Christ. You know what I read? I read Jesus said, if you fathers, your son comes asking you for an egg, you won't give him a stone, will you? What will you give him? An egg. And I said, Lord Jesus, it's okay to eat eggs.

And if it's okay to eat eggs, it's okay to eat fish. And if it's okay to eat fish, it's okay to eat a cow. Praise God.

Praise God for knowledge. And if you don't have that knowledge, I'm not trying to step on your toes or whatever tonight. I'd be glad to talk to you about it.

Continuing in prayer is the foundation of maintaining a good conscience. You need to talk to Jesus about those things. Ask Him about the things that trouble your conscience.

Lord, my conscience is telling me this. What do I do with it? You need to be in constant prayer. And if you have a sensitive conscience, an extra one, praise God.

But you need to be in constant prayer about that thing. Don't be ashamed of a sensitive conscience. Bless God for it, and then pray all the more for direction.

But you must stay very near the cross. If you have one of those exceptionally sensitive conscience, you need to stay very close to the cross. Stay very close to the cross.

Or it will drive you to some very funny places. Clearing the conscience is very important. Repentance is a turning of the heart.

In a man who has defiled his conscience, it's like two people standing back to back. You know, I'm not talking to him. We are not on talking terms.

Well, repentance is... Okay, would you tell me about that again? I'm ready to listen. Would you... Okay, what did you say I did wrong? That's repentance. It's a turning back to the conscience.

And it's turning back to God as you turn back to your conscience. Say, God, speak to me. What was that you said I did wrong? It's interesting.

The word confession in the Greek means to speak the same thing. Well, who are you agreeing with when you confess? Your conscience. Your conscience has been saying, I don't feel good about that.

Don't say that. I don't feel good about it. Don't say it, please.

I'm going to say it anyway. Okay, oh, you shouldn't have said that. Oh, you shouldn't have said that.

Am I... When you laugh, is that because you understand what I'm talking about? Okay. Oh, you shouldn't have said that. Why did you say that? Would you go make that right right away? I'm not talking to you about it.

I'm not sorry I said that. I needed to say that. I'm not talking to you.

Well, repentance is just saying, I shouldn't have said that. That's confession. It's agreeing and saying, you know, you're right, stubborn me.

I shouldn't have said that. I don't want to minimize, at this point, the power of public confession. I don't know about you.

Maybe some of you have done this. But if you've played games with your conscience, I can guarantee you, your conscience won't let you off easy. Some of you wonder, how come it's so hard to get a clear conscience anymore? Well, how many times have you tried to fool your conscience and say, oh, I'm sorry? And then you do it again.

Oh, I'm sorry. Oh, this works out good. I'm sorry.

And then you do it again. Well, just say, I'm sorry. And pretty soon the conscience says, you're playing games with me.

I'm not talking to you about it anymore. And when you come talking to me, I'm not talking to you. And no, I don't believe that anymore.

When you say, I'm sorry, I don't believe you. Your conscience will say that. Anybody experienced that before? I tell you, I don't think there's a more dangerous mind game that men play than the games they play with their conscience.

Woe is the man whose conscience will not clear him. Woe is that man. There is no hope for that man.

So I would like to lift up here the power of public confession. When the man who is the king, who is the proud one, says, I'm going to stand up and humble myself, I'll tell you what it does to your conscience. Your conscience says, wow, I've never seen you do that before.

You're serious. I think you're serious. When a man fasts for a week and groans and says, my heart is so hard, I just want to break it.

And he starts talking to brothers and saying, my heart is just hard. I'm seeking the Lord. I'm so discouraged.

The conscience is in there saying, who is this man? I've never seen you do that before. Are you really serious? And the conscience begins to believe you. Now maybe I'm, what do you call that? Anthropomorphism or whatever.

Maybe I'm making it seem different than it is. But I think you'll all agree that I'm not telling a story. It's life with your conscience.

Proverbs 28 says, He that covereth his sin shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them will have mercy. And the first one to have mercy will be your conscience. Notice when Jesus meets Zacchaeus.

Now, I don't know how you take that story, but I think Zacchaeus was in the tree and Jesus looked up at him and said, Zacchaeus, come down. I want to go to your house today. And Zacchaeus' conscience is

saying, Zacchaeus, this is your opportunity.

This man is showing you mercy. Pass it up. Don't miss it.

I think, it doesn't say in the Scripture, but I almost get the feeling like Zacchaeus was on his way to his house when he said those things to Jesus. It doesn't say in there that he was sitting at meat with him or that Jesus had had any other discourse with him. But his reaction was, Lord, all my swindled money I'm going to return.

I'm going to give them back four times. And all my money I give to the poor. And I repent of all I'm going to do.

And in the intention of his heart, he said, I'm done with this life that I've been living. And I think his conscience cleared him. I don't know, but Jesus did.

I guess that's what really matters. Jesus said what? Well, good, when you pay back the last penny, then salvation will have come to your house. No.

Jesus said today. Today. Salvation has come to your house.

I'm taking you at your word. How gracious God is. Well, I'd like to talk about the cross and your conscience.

Turn with me to Hebrews 10. Time is flying here. I hope I can finish this.

For the law having a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the things can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then they would have ceased to be offered because the worshipers once purged should have no more conscience of sin. But if in those sacrifices there was a remembrance again made of sin every year.

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin. When those men brought those gifts and said, here's a lamb for my sin. Do you think their consciences said, oh, good exchange.

Your sin for this innocent animal's life. No. I believe what the Bible is saying that these men in the Old Testament lived by faith that it took away sin.

But in their conscience, their conscience said, I know the law of God. I'm trained by the law of God. But how does that take away what you did to God? I mean, that man is going to suffer the rest of his life with what you did to him.

How does that take care of that? And the conscience was not cleared by that blood. Never. It can't take away sin.

Because if it had took away sin, the conscience would have said, oh, done. But as it was, the conscience continued and remembered. I remember that sin that I'm not convinced is taken away.

And that one too. And then there was this one. And these men stacked up in their consciousness.

And they lived by faith, those that offered those sacrifices. And they were saved by the blood of the Lamb, as it says in Revelations there. But in those sacrifices, every time they made sacrifices, they remembered, I'm a sinner.

Oh yes, that's the one. And the conscience just kept track of it all. For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He said, Sacrifices and offerings Thou wouldest not, but a body Thou hast prepared for me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sins, Thou hast no pleasure, God. They don't even take away sins.

Then I said, Jesus Christ speaking, I said, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. You have prepared for me a body that I might do Thy will. And this is the will of God.

When He said, Sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein, which were offered by the law. Then He said, Lo, I have come to do Thy will. The first was not God's will.

Though He commanded in the law, He knew it could not take away sin. It was not His will. But when He gave a body to Jesus Christ, it was His will.

Now this is what I want. Then He said, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He takes away the first.

That's the law. The blood of bulls and goats. That He may establish the second.

That's the body of Jesus Christ. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. That was a sacrifice according to the will of God.

And the conscience can smile and say, Enough. That's enough. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sin.

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made a footstool for his feet. For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us.

For after that He had said before, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, sayeth the Lord, I will put My laws in their heart and in their minds will I write them. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where there is remission of these, there is no more offering for sin.

And what that means is it's foolhardy to think you're going to offer something for your sin when Jesus gave His blood for it. That's nonsense. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He consecrated for us through the veil that is His flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in a full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from that evil conscience.

Well, what was it sprinkled by? It was sprinkled by the blood of Jesus. And when the blood of Jesus was applied to my sin at Calvary, my conscience stood by weeping and said, I have nothing to say. The cross is the apex of salvation's history.

It is the summit of God's mercy. It is the climax of His goodness. And it is the eternal evidence of His love.

1 John 3.16 says, Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us. The cross is the manifestation of the kindness of God toward us. Titus 3.4 says, But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, well, where did the kindness and the mercy of God towards man

appear? Galatians says, O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you.

How is it that you turn to other worthless things when Jesus Christ was a portrait to you? A portrait of God's love. When the Apostle John stops his narrative, I don't know if you know this, but in John 19. Let's read that.

Stop clock. John 19.34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced Jesus' side and forthwith came out there blood and water. Stop the narrative.

Then whoever is writing this book, I think it's John, and he that saw it bear record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he sayeth true, that you might believe. This is the center of your Bible. This is the center of your Bible.

Between 34 and 35 is not only the center of your Bible, it is the apex of human history. It is the apex of eternal history. This moment, when the blood of God flowed upon sinful earth, the narrator of the story has to stop everything and say, he who saw these things is bearing witness to you so that you might believe.

Because this is the apex of everything. When the blood of Jesus Christ was shed, and it fell on this guilty earth, and paid the sins. Done.

One offering for all times. When the soul stands upon the hill of Calvary, in believing the Gospel, and the realization of what is truly happening there dawns upon the heart, God is dying for man. And the heart of man, dominated by selfish ambition and disregard for others, beholds the kindness and grace of the Son of God.

The soul tastes that the Lord is gracious. 'Tis mystery all, the immortal dies. Who can explore his strange design? In vain the firstborn seraph tries to sound the depth of love divine.

Behold the Savior of mankind nailed to the cursed tree. How great the love that Him inclined to bleed and die for thee. Lo, how He groans as nature shakes and earth's strong pillars bend.

The temple veil in thunder breaks. The solid marbles rend. Well might the sun in darkness hide and shut His glories in when Christ, the mighty Maker, died for man the creature's sin.

In evil long I took delight, unawed by shame or fear, till a new object struck my sight and stopped my wild career. I saw one hanging on a tree in agony and blood. He fixed His languid eye on me as near His cross I stood.

Sure, never till my latest breath can I forget that look. It seemed to charge me with His death, though not a word He spoke. My conscience felt and owned the guilt and plunged me in despair.

I saw my sins. His blood had spilt and helped to nail Him there. Alas, I knew not what I did, but now my tears are vain.

Where shall my trembling soul be hid? For I the Lord have slain. A second look He gave, which said, I freely all forgive. This blood is for Thy ransom shed.

I die that Thou might live. O can it be, upon a tree the Savior died for me? My soul is thrilled, my heart is filled to think He died for me. Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me? The

Apostle Paul never lost the wonder of the cross.

For he wrote to the Galatians, he said, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world. Now, if he never wanted to glory in anything else, never meant at least the rest of his life. That means no matter how much Paul matured in his Christian life, he says, it all flows out of the cross.

God help us teach us how to glory in the cross. I'd like to talk about true faith. We are living in a confusing age.

The name of Jesus is being claimed by so many of every stripe of faith. To call into question a man's conversion is almost a universal offense. And yet the testimonies of those calling themselves Christians vary to such a degree as to make the unlearned believe that there is no standard to the means of salvation.

I believe that many sincere souls give up the search for truth because of this confusion. I have found it in my interest in the last thirty years in my reoccurring study. I'd like to talk just a little bit about the fear of examination.

Now, what do you suppose would happen if I took a \$100 bill out at the grocery store down here across the way and I filled my van up and I took a \$100 bill in there and I laid my \$100 bill on that countertop and they got out their black pen to mark my \$100 bill to see if it would turn black to say it was legitimate. And I objected. And said, that's a good bill.

You don't have to test it. Don't test that bill. No.

What are you going to do with that pen? What's the matter? Don't you trust me? Are you staying on my feet or something? What do you think their reaction would be? Oh, I think I better check it. Not? No. If the bill's not good, I'll just go back to the bank where I got it and get a good one.

I hope you understand that. I don't want a wallet full of counterfeit trying to push it off as the real genuine thing. Fearing to be examined.

And it's the same with our faith. We should not be afraid to have our faith examined. Let me ask you a question.

Do you want a counterfeit faith? Do you want a faith that you're so afraid someone's going to look closely at it and it's not going to stand examination? Is that the kind of faith you want to have in your wallet when it comes time to pay your entrance into the celestial city? John 3.20 says, For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. 2 Corinthians 3.5 says, Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith.

Prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves? How that Jesus is in you, except ye be reprobates. I'd like to turn to John 6, please.

Verse 47. John 6, verse 47 and verse 53. Verily I say unto you, verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

Verse 53 says, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. These two verses are very important verses to me. These were the answer to so much confusion in my life.

Notice, Jesus promises with an imperative. He says, Verily, verily, mark ye My words. This is truer than anything I've said.

Mark My words. He that believeth in Me hath everlasting life. And many today say, I believe in Him.

Therefore, I have eternal life. But that's not all Jesus said. He also said, Verily, verily, mark My words.

This is more important than the other things that I'm saying. Except, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and you drink His blood, you have no life in you. Those are both words spoken from the mouth of Jesus Christ.

You will not escape them. Now, I think we all agree that you cannot have eternal life in verse 47 and have no life in verse 53. And therefore, whatever Jesus means by eating and drinking, He also means by believing.

They are defining one another. That's why eating and drinking is not communion. Communion does not give you life.

Communion commemorates the giving of life. Because eating and drinking is defined by believing. And believing is defined by eating and drinking.

This is why Jesus said what He did in Luke 2, verse 15. He said to them, With desire, I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. Because this Passover, this meal that I am going to initiate here, is the representation of the center of history.

I do not understand how any soul can avoid the words of Jesus spoken in these two verses. He is speaking to the heart of every man and woman. He begins them with the most solemn words.

And He speaks pointedly as ever He spoke. He is dividing His disciples, the religious from the true. And they were religious.

They had just been fed, the five thousands had just been fed because they followed Him for three days without food. They loved Him. They would fast three days and walk across the country and actually be in danger of fainting if He sent them away.

They were very religious people. They were followers of Jesus. But Jesus is dividing those people right here.

Open your heart and look into the Word of God from the lips of His Son, Jesus Christ. See how these words offended the hearers in Jesus' day? You read this account. Remember, they were offended and many did not walk with Him anymore.

They said, this is a hard saying. Who can accept it? And the only ones who were left were those that said, where else shall I go? You have the words of eternal life. They offend us today.

Where is the tolerance? What about all my good deeds? What about my prayers? What about my sweet affections towards God? What about all my kindnesses towards the lowly? Is the way as narrow as all that? Most often the most painful question is what about my dear relatives? What about my old pastor? What about the people that God has used in my life to influence me to be where I am today? But my friend, you will not escape these verses with any of those reasonings. These words bring the soul to a bottleneck in his experience with Jesus. He must turn back and go his own way or he must lay down every other thing that he has been clinging to for security with God.

This is the narrow gate. This is the narrow gate. Every other way is false religion.

These two verses are the pillars of Solomon's temple. They are the Jachin on the right and the Boaz on the left. Every soul that would enter into the holy place and know the presence of God must pass between these two words of Jesus, Believe and eat my flesh and drink my blood.

Now I have to give credit, pride and religion do have their glory. They have their joys and their bright moments. They also have their purity, which all seem like life.

And even the dawning of the gospel upon the dark soul seems to be life in comparison to the darkness he has lived in. But we are comparing to the wrong thing. When you compare your life today and say, I must be good with God.

It's so much better. When you're comparing with the dead darkness you were living in, you're comparing to the wrong thing. Life is not defined by contrast to darkness and sin and death.

But it is defined by comparison to God, to Heaven, to the cross of Jesus, and eternal life. I think we can thank God for His kindness to us, His workings to bring us to eternal life. All those things that God has done in our lives, praise God for those things.

I don't think we have to step on them or discredit them or despise them in any way. They are the kindness of God to us. We can rejoice in the improvements of repentance, in confession, in prayer, and so on.

But these are not yet life. I stand on the Word of God tonight and tell you, that is not life. In Matthew 12, 32, a sincere man asked Jesus a question and said, what is the great commandment? And Jesus told him and said, this is the first commandment, the great commandment.

Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and mind. And love thy neighbors yourself. And the man was a lawyer.

He said, you have answered well, Teacher. You have answered well. I have realized also that all burnt offerings and that don't mean anything to God.

And that really what God wants is the love of the heart. And we would be tempted, I think, He seems to have a lot of light there. We might be tempted to accept Him as born again, would we not? But Jesus says, you're not far from the Kingdom of God, my friend.

Well, now, not far means that some are far. Some are far from the Kingdom of God. But, mark the Word of Jesus Christ to that man, that sincere soul, who was realizing some of the deepest truth in the Bible, that God is after the heart of man.

And yet when Jesus answered him, He said, my friend, you're outside the Kingdom. Oh, you're not far outside, but you are outside. Faith at the cross is the narrow gate into the Kingdom of God.

True faith is exercised at the cross. We must believe that God is good and He will do good to me. We must believe that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

When the conscience watches as the soul gets serious with the sins that it has been refusing to agree about, as the soul is humbled at the cross of Jesus, seeing hope for the remission of sins and the restored relationship with God, He confesses His sins. He owns His guilt. He turns away from those sins with all His heart.

And the man's conscience is satisfied that the soul is being true. Then, that man is not alive. That man is not alive.

You see, Jesus said it very plainly. He that believeth hath everlasting life. He that eateth and drinketh hath everlasting life.

Not he that repenteth. Not he that confesseth. Those things are only preparatory.

Then, as the man looks at the cross, and he realizes that God loves him and is willing to forgive him all his sins, then he hears, as it were, Jesus say, I freely all forgive. And that man is not alive yet. Because Jesus said, he that believeth, Jesus said, he that eateth and drinketh, it is not enough for you to come to the cross.

It is not enough for you to repent and confess. That is not the first step of salvation. Then, he believes God.

Then, the man believes God. And peace, and joy, and gratitude, and love fill his heart. Believing.

I'm sorry if that makes a real straight gate. But here is the Word of God. This is the Word of God.

Let the confusion of our day be done. I'm so tired of the confusion that's all wrapped around conversion. A new birth.

Souls trying to find their way into the kingdom of God. Oh, that God would raise a big bench, point to the wicked gate, and say, you go there. You go there.

And you'll find a gate there. See yonder light. If you can't see the gate, see yonder light.

Pilgrim, go there. And when you get there, there's a gate. You can enter upon the way.

That's the right way. You climb in on some other way, yeah, you'll look like you're on your way to the celestial city, but if you didn't come into the wicked gate, you'll be turned away because you don't have a scroll. You don't have a roll.

You weren't given a garment. What is the burden of my heart that rolled away that we sang about tonight? What was John Bunyan's Christian's burden that he lost as he stood looking at the cross? He believed it. It was strange to him how the sight of the cross persuaded his conscience that it is enough.

And he heard the Word of God say, if you believe Me, I'll freely forgive you all. And he believed. And the burden rolled away.

Strange to him! Strange to him how the sight of the cross should make the burden go away. This is the narrow gate of faith. This is what Jesus meant when He promised eternal life to everyone that believed it, eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

If you did not receive a measure of joy and peace and love at the cross, when you came to the cross, my friend, you are not alive in Christ yet. Now, you may argue with me that, with that in your heart, I don't blame you. I mean this is a straight gate.

But I stand with the Bible in my hand and the celestial city in my eye. And I'm telling you, if you want to get there, you better listen to me. I think there's a lot of people that have been turned away from that gate because they haven't heard the Word of God.

I realize that different ones express it differently. Some laugh and shout. Some weep for joy and then just softly praise the name of the Lord Jesus.

But all receive the Holy Ghost by faith and are given joy and peace and love and gratitude at the cross if they believe. How then did you receive the Holy Ghost? Was it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? In light of all these words, I'm asking you tonight, can a man be alive in Christ? Born again? Converted? And have no assurance of salvation? I'm asking you. I know it's straight is the gate.

But I'm asking you, you tell me how a man can walk through what I'm describing and have no assurance that his sins are forgiven and he's right with God. It's false. Can you believe under the saving of your soul and yet not know that your sins are forgiven you for Jesus' sake? No, you cannot.

You are deceiving yourself. Jesus says if you don't believe it, no life. He didn't say when you come to My cross, you get life.

He said, except you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, you have no life. And I will stand with My Bible. That's the Word of Jesus Christ.

Where else can I stand? When I look at that celestial city and I will hope to get there someday and hope to have entrance there someday. Where else do you want to stand? Throw my family out. Throw out my life.

Throw out my reasoning. And hear the Word of God. Jesus says, believe under the saving of your soul.

It's not enough to repent, to confess, and to quit your sinning, which you cannot do, my friend. You may think you're quitting your sinning, but the Word of God says if it's not of faith, it is sin. If all your good is done not of faith, if it doesn't flow from Calvary's mountain, your very good work is sin.

The plowing of the wicked is sin. You must first believe at the cross the outworkings of this experience very greatly. But I believe that the experience at the heart level is the same.

Yeah, maybe it's different in different countries. Maybe it's different elsewhere. But at the heart, Jesus said, anyone, that gate is for everyone.

No man has life except he has experienced the eating of my flesh and drinking my blood. There is a communion, unity of the saints around the world. And this is it.

Ah, I sense that here is one who has also been to the cross. He talks different. He accepts different things in his life.

He doesn't sing the same songs as I do. He doesn't even use the same religious jargon I do. But I sense in him the love and the joy and the peace that flows from an experience at the cross of Jesus, just like me.

That is the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. I'd like to talk just briefly about religion. I'm sorry.

Here, religion is defined. If it does not flow from this faith at the cross, if all that you are doing does not flow from this faith at the cross, it is a self-made false religion. And it will leave your soul helpless on the day of judgment.

Religion is not just before new birth either. The Galatians began in the Spirit by faith. And Paul said, now will you perfect it in the flesh.

They were deceived into perfecting it in the flesh. And their faith and their Christian experience was not flowing from the cross of Jesus Christ. Like Paul said, let me never boast of anything, but only the cross of Jesus Christ.

It's the center of my life. It's the fountain from which all flows out of my life. God help us.

If the workings of your life are not flowing from the faith that you found at the cross of Jesus, it is a religion. You know, I believe it would be good for us as brothers to meet one another this way. Brother, do I find you walking in the faith that you found at the cross today? It makes me feel like starting all over.

Well, I want to give you a word of encouragement. You can leave here tonight with a clear conscience, knowing that your sins are forgiven you for Jesus' sake. But honestly, maybe you won't get that far.

I'm just being honest. I want to say, you could. You could respond tonight and leave this place with a perfectly clear conscience, walking in this faith I'm talking about.

But many of you may not even get that far. There may be some days of agonizing for you. It's not hard.

It's not easy, I mean, to change your thinking. And think about all those things you've been thinking were in Christ, which weren't in Christ. And maybe there's days of agonizing, and examination, and counting the cost for you.

But I'd ask you, when are you going to take the first step? John 6 will be in your Bible till eternity. You will never get around them. They are the pillars of Solomon's temple by which every soul who wants to enter into the presence of God must pass between.

You must believe, eating and drinking the flesh of Jesus Christ. And it may be a long journey for you, but I'm just asking you, when are you going to take the first step of that journey? Don't be discouraged if it seems like a long way. I would say, take the first step tonight.

A public confession of your need is a good place to start. Humble yourself at this altar. Come and ask for help.

God is calling you. Can we stand at our feet for prayer? My Lord Jesus, I have done what I can. I pray you take your word.

Establish it, Lord, in the hearts of each sinner in this room. Every Christian that is out of the way. Every sinner that has never known the cross of Jesus.

Father, I pray that tonight, I am praying and asking you, Lord, make it a starting place for many tonight. Let the word of Jesus go to the hearts. Thank you, Lord.

Oh, I thank you for the cross. I thank you for your word. I thank you for your plain teachings.

Thank you, Jesus. If you could turn in your hymnals to page 506. I'd like to invite you, as we sing this song, to come.

Come front here and kneel. Begin tonight to ask the Lord, where do I start? Lord, I'm the man that is in that state. I'd encourage you to take a step of faith tonight and start dealing with where you are with God.

Where are you, brother? You want to start that? Jesus whispers to you, Come, sinner, come. While we are praying for you, Come, sinner, come. Come, sinner, come.

Jesus will bear your burden. Jesus will love you, Come, sinner, come.

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