

The Meaning of the Cross

by David Ravenhill

David Ravenhill's sermon explores the true meaning of the cross, emphasizing the need for self-denial and genuine discipleship in the Christian life.

Duration: 52:21

Scripture: Luke 2:23

Topics: "Cross of Christ", "Discipleship", "Lordship Of Christ"

Description

David Ravenhill emphasizes the true meaning of the cross, arguing that many believers misunderstand its significance, focusing on personal benefits rather than the call to discipleship and submission to Christ's lordship. He highlights that Jesus did not die merely to cleanse us from sin but to reclaim us for His purpose, urging believers to recognize their identity as His possession. Ravenhill critiques the modern gospel's tendency to present a self-serving view of salvation, advocating instead for a radical transformation that aligns with God's original intention for humanity. He calls for a return to the understanding that true discipleship begins with surrendering one's life to God's will, rather than merely seeking personal gain.

Transcript

Understanding or misunderstanding of what the cross is all about. There's an interesting verse of scripture in Luke, or in John rather, chapter 2, in verse 23 it says, Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast many believed on his name. If the sentence ended there we could rejoice, we could think that was a very successful time of ministry, that not just one or two that accepted Christ but many believed on his name.

It says they believed on his name, beholding the signs that he was doing. And then verse 24 gives us Jesus' reaction to that ministry if you like, or to those that came, and it says, Jesus on his part was not trusting himself or entrusting himself to any of them, for he knew all men. I don't want to get into the whole sort of theological debate on that, but here you've got many believers and yet Jesus sort of backing off and saying, well listen you may give yourself to me but I'm not giving myself to you.

And I think there's a lot of people today that have believed on his name and yet largely they have no intimacy, no real relationship, they don't really know what it is to be born again of the Spirit of God. There's no real transformation that has taken place in their lives. And over the years we have tried to sort of correct some of those deficiencies in the church.

I think one of those major moves, if you like, was the whole discipleship movement. The basis of that was that men looked at the church and saw a weakness and a lack of maturity, a lack of any real evidence of the new birth and they said what we really need is discipleship. And so they set about trying to make disciples out of Christians.

And when that teaching came into vogue, if you like, I remember checking it out in the Word of God and I came to a totally different conclusion than what they were coming to. My understanding of a disciple is that that is the first step towards becoming a Christian. Their understanding was that the, you become a Christian and then you take another step higher and you become a disciple.

I don't think the Bible substantiates that sort of philosophy. The Bible says a disciple, or Jesus said, a disciple is not to be above his teacher but when he is fully trained he will be like his teacher. In other words, the ultimate statement to be said about any disciple is that he has so closely followed his teacher that he has become like him.

Of course discipleship in the New Testament was very common. The Bible talks about the Pharisees having disciples, Moses having disciples or they were disciples of Moses, John the Baptist had his disciples, Jesus had his disciples. And a disciple basically was any student that followed a particular teacher with the one desire to become as great as he is.

Similar to maybe studying under some great pianist with the hope of someday attaining the techniques that they use and so on and having that same sort of ability that that person has. And so you sit under their teaching in order to become like them. And so again Jesus said that a disciple again when he is fully trained is like his master.

And in the book of Acts, I think it's the 11th chapter there, it says that in the church in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians. Why were they called Christians? Because they had so followed their master. They had become so like him in their action, in their lifestyle, in their conversation and so on that they said you are Christ-like, you are Christians.

And so they began as disciples, they ended up as Christians. I believe we need to begin as disciples, begin as followers, learners and end up like him. And not the reversal of that.

I understand of course what they were trying to do. The word Christian of course has become so sort of watered down. They thought maybe the word disciple seems to have that word discipline a little more punch to it.

And so they'd reverse the order. But scripturally speaking it's the other way around. That you become first of all a disciple and ultimately you become like your master.

I have used a number of illustrations from New Zealand, simply because we lived there for so long. But my wife and I first went there with our oldest girl in 1966. I've lived in New Zealand now three times, three separate occasions.

But when I first went there in 1966 I was impressed with the amount of old cars in that country. I don't mean old bombs. I'm talking about old vintage cars.

For a country of three million people it has some of the most beautiful old cars that have been beautifully restored of any place I've ever seen. And I have many times sort of drooled as I've seen them going by,

thinking boy I would love to have one of those. And let's suppose that I have an interest in that.

I really don't, but by way of illustration. And I stumble across an old car lying in the back of some farmer's yard. Maybe it's a 1920 Model T if they made them back then.

I can't remember what came first, the T or the A. But anyway I find this old car. It's missing the headlights. The wheels are missing.

Various bits and pieces are missing on the car. But basically the body is reasonably well intact. The engine is there.

And so I get together with a friend of mine. We share that common interest of restoring these old cars. And we start to restore that car.

He works on the engine and completely overhauls the engine. I start working on the body. I patch it up and sand it down.

Give it you know 20 coats of hand rubbed lacquer and so on and so forth. And then I say to my friend who has never done this before and I'm pretty green at it myself. I say you know if we're going to drive this car we're going to need some wheels and some tires.

And so he comes the next day with these great big mag tires, fat so wheels about you know 12 inches across. And with a great deal of difficulty we finally get them fitted to this Model T. And then I say well listen if we're going to drive this thing at nighttime we're going to need some headlights. And so again he goes down to the local you know Western Auto or whatever and comes back with some little square halogen headlights.

And we get those put on. And then again I say if we're going to protect our investment we're going to need some bumpers to in case somebody you know crashes into the rear end of us or whatever. And so again he goes out to some wreckers comes back with a great big rubber plated you know bumper that sticks out a mile in front and so on.

We get that placed on the car and so on. Finally after a lot of work we take it out on its sort of maiden voyage and here we are driving down the street very proud of our achievement. Thing is shining in the sun beautiful mag wheels and so on.

And there's an old man standing on the corner and he sees us going by and you know he looks somewhat amazed and bewildered and you know we think he's been overcome with nostalgia. And so we grind to a halt we back up and we say to the old man what do you think of it? And much to our chagrin he says to us well what is it? And of course we're a little taken back after all we've invested a lot of money a lot of time and effort and so on into restoring this car. We're convinced that we have an original 1920 Model T on our hands.

And he said well boys you know there's a lot of things that are wrong with that car. The wheels should not be you know that wide. The tires should not be that wide.

They should be a little narrow tires. The wheels should be wooden spoke wheels instead of mag wheels. The headlights should be great big headlights instead of little square halogen headlights.

The bumper should be just a little bit of chrome instead of that great big monstrosity you've got on it and so on. And he begins to point out all the things that are wrong in that process of restoration that we've sought to accomplish. And I'm convinced that if the Apostle Paul today met the average Christian like the old man he would stand there somewhat bewildered sort of scratching his head and say well what is it? And we would be somewhat appalled as we tried to you know show him our Jesus badges and one-way shirts and so on and so forth and say but but I'm a Christian.

And I think Paul then would begin to point out well listen this is wrong and that's wrong and this is wrong that's wrong. Why? Because I used to live back in the day when they produced Christians like the old man I used to live back in 1920. In fact I drove one of those cars and that's not the way it is supposed to be.

Now obviously if we are going to restore that car properly we need to contact the owner or the maker if you like of that car. We need to get the particulars. We need to get the various specifications.

We need to get the owner's manual maybe a photograph and then begin to restore that car according to the proper specifications according to the way in which the designer designed it to be. The engineers designed it to function and so on. And I believe that one of the mistakes that we've made in the presentation of the gospel is that we've tried to come up with a sort of what we think a Christian is supposed to be like.

We have not gone back really to the owner's manual. We have not really fully studied the Word of God and we've simply grown up in churches that have presented really a very distorted view of what it means to be born again of the Spirit of God. And we sort of put headlights on and tires on and wheels on and so on that God never really intended.

The gospel today really is to make people happy not to make people holy. And we've catered to that. Come to God and you'll get this and you'll get that and so on and so forth.

There's no real presentation of the cross. There's no real cost to being a believer. In fact it's a hard bargain to refuse the way the evangelist puts it across.

All your problems are solved if you'll just come forward. I want to take you back into the book of Genesis and I want you to see God's purpose for man and I want to deal just for a few minutes with God's intention for man when He created him. Now keep in mind this is before the wheels fell off so to speak.

This is before rust or sin set in. This is man when he rolled off God's assembly line. And it says here in Genesis 2 and verse 15, then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to keep it.

Now notice there are three things that are mentioned in that verse. First of all submission. Secondly location and third vocation.

It says the Lord God took the man. It doesn't say simply God but the Lord God. In other words when God created him was under the submission or under the control or authority of the Lordship of God Himself.

And it says here that God had total control over man. It doesn't say that God tried to take the man and the man dug in his heels and said I don't want to do that. But we find that man was completely subservient.

Man was in total submission and yieldedness to the will and the purpose of God, to the Lordship of God Himself. And so God took him and it says and God placed him in the geographical place of God's choosing not man's choosing. And in that geographical place or that location if you like, God revealed his purpose in placing him there.

He said this is why I placed you there. I want you to do my will. I want you to cultivate and keep the garden.

Now I believe that what God is wanting to do in our life, in your life and my life, He is wanting to restore those three areas. He is wanting to bring us back into total submissiveness to His Lordship. So that at any given time God can reach into your life and my life without any objection on my part or your part.

Without digging in our heels and saying God I don't want to do that. But totally yielding ourselves to the will and the purpose of God so that He can place us wherever He chooses to place us. Whatever geographical place He may want us.

Whether it's here in Texas, whether it's in Africa, India, Indonesia, China, wherever it may be. And then in that place we can find the will and the purpose of God. I've placed you here for this reason, to do my will.

I want you to fulfill my purpose. Here in China, here in India, here in Texas or wherever it may be. You see that was the way God created man in the beginning.

Before sin came in, before rebellion came in, before independence came in. Let me share just some scriptures along that line in Colossians. Colossians chapter 1 and verse 16.

It says, For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things have been created by Him and for Him. Notice that last phrase there, all things were created by Him.

I trust you don't have any problems with that. I've never had a problem with believing that God created everything. But the second part or the latter part of that phrase is the part that sometimes we sort of buck against.

Not only were all things created by Him, but all things were created for Him. You see one of the things that we need to do, I believe, in the presentation of the gospel or the presentation of any teaching, we need to understand God's purpose from the beginning. I wish I had a little longer time this morning, but you'll notice that in John's epistle, he refers to three categories of believers or three stages.

He talks about, I write unto you children, talking about salvation in a sort of a limited sense. He said, because you know the Father and your sins are being forgiven you. And there's nothing greater than knowing the Father.

There's nothing greater than knowing that we've been cleansed and set free from sin. But that's just the babyhood stage, if you like. I write to you little children.

And then he says, I write unto you young men. And that speaks of not salvation only, but maturation, maturity. And he says, I write unto you young men because you are strong and the Word of God abides in you.

And you have overcome the evil one. You see after we've been saved for a period of time, we begin to grow and we begin to realize there is a warfare. The only way we can actively overcome that warfare is to be strong in the Word of God.

And then we can resist the devil and so on. And so he commends them again for the fact that they know the Word. They're strong in the Word and so on.

But then he says, I write unto you fathers. And the only thing he says about the fathers is, I write unto you fathers because you know him who has been from the beginning. And then it leaves it like that.

It doesn't give us any more detail. And I puzzled over that for years and I thought, well you know what's John really trying to get across? After all he said, I write unto you children because you know the Father. And I write unto you fathers because you know Him who is from the beginning.

What's the difference between knowing the Father and knowing Him that is from the beginning? I think knowing the Father is simply that relationship that a child has to a father that primarily is a very selfish relationship. The father exists basically for the sake of the child. Daddy do this and daddy do that.

Daddy buy me an ice cream. Daddy take me to the park. And daddy read me a book.

And daddy, you know whatever. And there's nothing wrong with that at least in our beginning stage of Christian life. But John says, I write unto you fathers because you know Him.

Meaning the sort of the whole spectrum of God Himself. Not just simply limited to His fatherhood, as good as that is. But I write unto you fathers because you know Him that is what? From the beginning.

If you've ever studied John's writings, he invariably goes back to the beginning. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and so on and so forth. There in Revelation, the one who is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending and so on.

And John has this amazing ability to relate things back to the beginning. And I think that's important. You see Jesus did that when the Pharisees came to Him trying to get Him to side with two views on divorce.

One very liberal, the other very conservative. And He said, well Moses said we could you know divorce our wives. He gave us permission and you know what's your opinion? And Jesus took that thing out of its present context and He took it back to the beginning.

He says in the beginning God never had any intention that man divorce his wife. You see and it says we see things from the eternal perspective that we gain insight and understanding into the mind and the purpose of God. And so when God created man we need to understand what was in the mind of God when He created you and I. All things were created by Him and for Him.

You and I exist this morning for one very simple reason, for the will and the purpose of God. That's why we were created, for no other reason. Now Revelation chapter 4 says the same thing.

It says worthy art thou, verse 11, our Lord and our God to receive glory and honor and power. For thou didst create all things and because of thy will they existed and were created. See why did He create all things? They were created for His will and His purpose.

Hebrews chapter 2 brings out the same thought again. And verse 10, for it was fitting for Him for whom are all things and through whom are all things. But notice what He says first, for whom are all things.

In other words when God created man He never intended man to live independently. He created man for His will and His purpose, for His pleasure. You see one of the problems in the Christian life is that because we are selfish individuals when we hear about the cross we interpret the cross selfishly.

You see when God created man and there came a period of time, how long it was we're not sure, when man chose to rebel against God. Isaiah 53 verse 6 sums it up very clearly where it says, all we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to His own way.

You see the essence of all sin really is selfishness. The reason I steal or cheat or gamble or commit adultery or whatever it's to gratify self. The essence, the basis or the root of all sin is self.

And when Jesus challenged people to follow Him He did not simply say you know if you are prepared to give up this sin and that sin and so on and sort of list off 20 or 30 sins then you can be my disciple. He said if any man come after me let him deny himself. In other words He dealt with the root.

He says I know if I can get a man to die to selfishness, to die to self then I've got that man totally and completely. But the problem is because all of us are born with that selfish desire within us then when we look at the cross we look at the cross from a selfish point of view. And we look at the cross and we say what can I get out of the cross? What has Jesus Christ done for me? How can I benefit? And out of that has come a whole sort of philosophy, a whole teaching that Jesus Christ died on the cross to take away my sin that so one day I'll go to heaven.

I'll have a mansion over the hilltop and so on and so forth. You see in other words Jesus Christ is serving my purpose. This is a good deal.

I can't refuse it. You see things A.W. Tozer in one of his books it talks about Jesus being reduced down to nothing more than a sort of a bellboy. And he stands there as a sort of a waiter or a bellboy sort of you know with a sort of towel over his hand there and standing at attention and say well what can I do for you today? You know what are your wishes? And basically that's the way we view Christianity.

That God is there sort of you know now what can I, how can I help you today? What do you need today? Rather than us saying I must be about my father's business. We've somehow reversed the process and it's God catering to my needs, catering to my whims and my fancies and so on and so forth. And instead of us standing there and saying Lord what will you have me to do? It's Lord I want you to do this and I want you to do that.

I want you to provide. I want you to heal. I want you you know and somehow we've been successful at least we think we have in reversing the order.

But again we look at the cross and we say what has Jesus Christ done for me? How can I benefit? I can benefit because Jesus Christ died to take away my sins so that one day I'll go to heaven. Now fasten your seat belt this morning because I let me say this, that I don't believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sin. Well let me just qualify that a little bit and say that was not the main reason that Jesus Christ died on the cross.

Now that may shock you. I hope to prove it from scripture so don't you know throw your eggs yet. But I have asked that question numerous times around the world in camps that I've taken and so on.

I said to the young people why did Jesus Christ die on the cross? And 99% of the time they have one answer, Jesus Christ died for the sin of man. He died to take away our sin or my sin. And while there is obviously truth in that, it is not the whole truth.

And I think because it is not the whole truth, we have erred exceedingly. We have got again believers today that are having very little impact on the world. Because we have failed to understand the real meaning behind the cross.

Why Jesus Christ died on the cross. You see there's two aspects to the cross which I'll deal with in a minute. There is God's side and there is man's side.

Man does benefit, thank God for that. Thank God for cleansing, for peace of mind and for joy and so on and so forth. But you see there is God's side of the cross and that is the side that so often we don't emphasize.

Again excuse me if I use an illustration of a car. But let's say that my wife and I have been married for a number of years. And during that period of time we have not had our own transport and we have saved up very hard.

We've both been working, we've put aside two thousand dollars. Now two thousand dollars especially in New Zealand doesn't buy much of a car. It may in America but not in New Zealand.

And let's say that I say to my wife, honey we cannot be dependent any longer upon people picking us up. I'm embarrassed and so on. We need our own car and I'm prepared to invest that two thousand dollars that represents three or four years of hard work and labor and and just you know frugal living and so on.

But we need to invest that in a car. And that money really in a sense represents my life. It represents my wife's life.

It's everything that we've done over the last two or three years is represented in that two thousand dollars. And so I say listen honey pray I'm going to go looking for a car. I take the two thousand dollars and I go through the various car lots looking for a car.

And finally you know I come across a car for two thousand dollars. I'm assured that the engine has just been you know completely redone and so on. But the car itself as you can imagine for two thousand dollars got a few dents in it.

It's covered in dirt and so on. And so I take that car home and I spend the rest of the day cleaning that car. Let's also say that I'm known in that particular part of town where I live as Mr. Clean.

Our house is immaculate. The thing you know our reputation has sort of gone before us. Everybody knows that I'm known for my cleanliness.

Everything's in order. And that is true if you know my wife. You know as soon as my feet touch the bed in the ground in the morning we have to make the bed.

And I mean not just make the bed but it has to be within a quarter of an inch all the way around you know and so on. But anyway I won't get into that right now. So there's a there's a sense in which there's a perfection there.

And of course God is like that isn't he. Be you perfect as I am perfect. Not that he worries about bedspreads but anyway.

But try and convince my wife about that. No. But anyway I take that car and again I clean it.

Why? Because that car is ultimately going to represent me. It's going to be an extension if you like of my makeup, my character, my nature and so I wash that car. I mean I spend hours washing that car.

I cut and I polish it. I remove all the tar and bits and pieces. I go take the vacuum cleaner, remove all the seats, go through it.

You know bring out all the gum wrappers and all the other things. And you know after about four or five hours I take that the contents of the vacuum cleaner, the contents of this bucket of filthy muddy water. I take it into the house.

I put it down on the table. I call my wife and I say honey look what we got for \$2,000. Now obviously my wife is going to think you know that I've gone crazy.

I've been out in the sun too long. Something's happened that you know I can imagine her reaction. What do you mean we got that for \$2,000? You know.

Now obviously I did not spend \$2,000 of my life if you like. I did not give my life for the dirt. The last thing I wanted was dirt.

Why? Because my whole nature rebels against dirt. I'm known for my cleanliness. I'm known for my purity, my holiness, my perfection if you like.

And the one thing I'm not known for is dirt. I can't stand dirt. Why then would I spend my life, my life savings if you like to buy a pile of dirt? It doesn't make sense and certainly wouldn't make sense to my wife.

And yet some of us have got this strange idea that when Jesus Christ died on the cross the thing that He was really interested in was you or your dirt rather. That really He wanted to you know to get all the dirt He could. As though somehow God has got a dirt collection or a sin collection.

You know I've told people God does not collect sin. The Bible says as far as the east is from the west so far what? Has He removed our transgressions from us? Is it Zephaniah one of those minor prophets there that says he's buried our sins in the depths of the sea? I think it was Corrie ten Boom that wrote the hiding place that said he's put up a little sign no fishing and thank God for that. But he's buried our sin in the depths of the sea.

You see God hates sin. God will not tolerate sin. There is no sin in heaven.

God is a God of cleansing and perfection. God of purity. So why then did He die on the cross? Was it simply for sin? No.

Again God does not store up sin in heaven. He doesn't sort of you know when it's snowing outside. He's nothing else to do and he's had a hard day.

He doesn't gather around a few cherubims and say hey you know have you ever seen my sin collection? And he reaches up into the you know the library there of heaven. Pulls down some big letter volume and he says listen I guess I haven't shown you guys this have I? And this is my pride and joy. You know I've been collecting sin since the Garden of Eden.

And you know this is the, this is the world's rarest sin. You know he's got it on a page all by itself. And he said this sin there's not another one like it.

It was committed back in the 15th century up in the mountains of Tibet by an old man. And I'm so proud of this sin. You know nobody's got one like it.

Now obviously God does not collect sin. He's not interested in sin. He hates sin.

There's no sin in heaven. So then why did He die on the cross? He died on the cross because He was interested in the car, not the dirt. He was interested in you, not your sin.

You see when I bought that car I had need of that car. My wife and I had been walking. We'd been dependent on other people and so on and so forth.

I was getting frustrated. I needed a vehicle if you like to express myself through, to take my, to fulfill my purpose through. I needed a car.

And I was prepared in order to get by that car. I was prepared to deal with the dirt on that car. You see but the thing that I was really after was not the dirt.

That was not what I paid two thousand dollars of hard-earned money for. The thing that I paid my money for was the car. And you see where we have failed in the presentation of the gospel is that we have presented the fact that Jesus Christ died simply to clean you up and then let you go your way.

He didn't. He died in order to redeem you for His purpose. In other words the claims of Christ on your life this morning.

You belong to Him whether you like it or not. You belong to Him first of all by creation, secondly by redemption. You see God has two rights to your life.

All things were created by Him and for Him. Let's look at some scriptures just to substantiate that. Because for a number of years now I have tried at least to study the cross.

And I realize there are various facets to the cross. But this particular one Romans chapter 14 and verses 7 through 9. And I'll challenge you this morning that as you come across references to the cross, whether the cross is used directly or indirectly, that you'll study it and see why the cross is mentioned. What was the, what was in the mind of God concerning the cross.

Here is one of those verses Romans 14 verses 7 to 9. Not one of us lives for himself and no one dies for himself. If we live we live for the Lord, if we die we die for the Lord. Therefore whether we live or die we are the Lord's.

Notice we belong to Him. Whether we live, whether we die. I think most of you are alive, some sleeping, but we are the Lord's.

Verse 9, for to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord of the dead and of the living. Why did he die? To this end he died that he might be Lord, not Savior. He might be Lord.

In fact the word Savior I think is used something like 24 times in the New Testament. Jesus is referred to something like 300 times as the Lord Jesus Christ, or Jesus Christ the Lord. You see the overwhelming emphasis on the Scripture is that He is Lord.

According to the Word of God you cannot be saved without having Him as Lord of your life. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Savior, no. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

If we confess with our mouth Jesus Christ as Savior, no. As Lord and believe in our heart that God has raised Him from the dead we'll be saved. You see somehow we've been able again successfully we think to divide Lordship from believing.

We've sort of presented the Gospel in this way. You can accept Jesus Christ tonight. You can know joy and peace and cleansing.

You can know forgiveness of sins. And then a few weeks later we present a real sort of heavy message on Lordship and say, you know some of you Christians have never made Him Lord and Master of your life. Tonight you need to take that second step and so on.

Lordship is never presented in the Word of God as an optional discipleship or as an optional package. It's not like buying a car and you can buy it with or without air conditioning or with or without a stereo or with or without automatic and so on. He is Lord and you come to Him on the basis of His Lordship.

And so it says, to this end Christ died that He might be Lord of the dead and of the living. All right over into Titus, Titus chapter 2 and verse 14. Let me backtrack a little bit to verse 11.

For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires to live sensibly, righteously, godly in this present age. Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed. Now let's just stop there.

Now notice this is the side of the gospel that we are so familiar with. Jesus Christ, it says, gave Himself for us. See that's the emphasis that we've had over the last number of years, that Jesus Christ gave Himself for us.

Why? That He might redeem us or if you like set us free or cleanse us from every lawless deed or every sinful thing that we've ever done. Now if we were to put a period there, that would be fine. But it goes on to say, and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works.

You see here are the two facets to the cross. There is man's side. God gave Himself for us to set us free, to cleanse us, to heal us, to renew us.

That's man's side. But then God's side is that He might redeem for Himself a people, not sin, a people. You and I. What? As His possession.

In other words, He wants to take ownership. He wants to have lordship. He wants to have control over your life.

A people for His own possession, zealous for good works. See, right in Revelation 5 and verse 9. Revelation chapter 5 and verse 9. They sang a new song saying, worthy art thou to take the book and to break its seals for thou was slain. And it's purchased for God with thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and nation and people.

Notice what He redeemed. Speaking again about the cross. Worthy art thou to take the book to break its seals for thou was slain.

Obviously referring to the death of Christ, the cross. And it's purchased for God with thy blood sin. No, men.

You see, in other words, in the mind of God, what Jesus Christ did, He redeemed for Himself a people. He purchased for Himself what? Men, not sin. God is not interested in your sin or my sin.

He is interested in your life and my life. He wants to reclaim it. He wants to possess it.

He wants to own it. He wants to rule over it. He wants to be master of our lives.

Verse 10, and thou hast made them to be a kingdom of priests to our God and they will reign upon the earth. Now there are many, many Scriptures along that particular line. Let me give you another one.

1 Corinthians chapter 6. Paul, you recall as you're turning to this, said, He loved me and gave Himself for what? For me. Gave Himself for me or my sin? Well, both, really. But He loved me and He gave Himself for me.

You see, Paul understood what God was after was not simply my sin. That was the means to an end. Because He is holy, because He is pure, He had to cleanse me.

He had to wash me. But what He was after, He was after me, Paul said. He loved me and gave Himself for me.

I was the object of His love. Not my sin. I was.

1 Corinthians 6, verse 19 and 20. Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you? Whom you have from God and that you are not your own. For you have been bought with a price.

Therefore glorify God in your body. You are not your own. You have been bought with a price.

Again, speaking of the cross. Why did Jesus Christ die? What was He after? Was He after sin? Your sin has been bought with a price? No. You have been bought with a price.

You see the failure in the presentation of the gospel is that we have let people be cleansed and then we just turn them loose to go their own way. And Jesus Christ has never really received the reward of His suffering. Isaiah 53 is at verse 11 there where it says that He will see the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

Do you honestly think that when Jesus Christ travailed, if you like, and died on the cross that He was satisfied simply in return by receiving, you know, all the sins of the world in that sense? The very thing that

placed Him on the cross in the beginning. Do you think that was a satisfactory reward? Can you imagine somebody that hates sin, detests sin, his whole character is opposed to sin and then he suffers and all that he gets in reward is sin? I can't. You see Isaiah says that He might see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

What is it that satisfies God? The fact that He's redeemed you once again for Himself. That you belong to Him. And so he says you're not your own.

You've been bought with a price. Paul many times as you are familiar I'm sure refers to himself in the scriptures as a bond slave of Jesus Christ. And he is referring here obviously to the fact that he was a slave.

We no longer have slavery. In those days of course it was common. You could go down to any given marketplace.

They had their open-air markets, not supermarkets like we do. And you could go to a particular area of that marketplace and after buying your vegetables and meat and so on and so forth, if your slave died during the week or you know you beat him to death or starved him to death or whatever, you could replace him. And you would go into a particular area of the marketplace and you would bid.

And if you bid high enough then you could purchase yourself a slave and he became your property. Again you could love him to death, starve him to death, work him to death. Do whatever you wanted with him.

He was yours. He was no longer his own. He was bought with a price.

And the law upheld that. Paul even upheld it when Onesimus ran away from his master. Onesimus ran away from Philemon.

And he returned him because he recognized that order. That he didn't have a right to him. And Paul says here, you are not your own.

You've been bought. You belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now there are numerous other scriptures that I could substantiate to prove that Jesus Christ did not simply die for sin.

The Bible says he loved the church and gave himself what? Up for her. Again referring to the cross. Why did he die? Because he loved the church.

Loved the sin? No. Loved the people. What is the church? A building? No.

It's you and I. There are numerous scriptures. Acts 20 verse 28. Take heed to yourself and the whole flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers which he has purchased with his blood.

What did he purchase? The church. In other words we need again to have this balanced view of the cross. Man does benefit.

There is man's side. But there is God's side. And we need to see from the mind of God from eternity what his purpose was for your life and my life.

To have us as his own possession. That you and I might fulfill his eternal purpose. Let me give you an illustration and I've used it for years.

But I'll use it again. Let's assume that we have a little boy here. His name is Johnny.

And Johnny simply represents all of us. Because somewhere between the age. Let's say Johnny is 12 years of age.

Somewhere between the age of 10 and 20. Hopefully we've got some sort of idea what we'll do with our life. We make plans.

We have goals and so on. And Johnny is just representative of that sort of you and I. And Johnny's got one goal in life. He's already settled the issue.

He wants to become a surgeon one day. Johnny is fascinated with dissecting frogs and worms and so on. Can't wait to get a hold of his first human.

See what's inside and so on. And Johnny goes to school and he takes all the various appropriate classes. He goes to his counselor.

He says, listen I want to be a surgeon one day. I want to go into the medical field. What do you suggest I take? And the counselor says, well you need this and that and so on.

Johnny studies hard and eventually the day comes. He goes off to college and starts preparing for that one goal that he's had all his life to become a medical doctor. The day comes when you know he's in school.

Maybe let's say he's done three years of a five-year course and somebody invites him to a meeting. Johnny accepts Christ. He comes forward.

Somebody leads him to the Lord. Takes him through the Romans road if you like and shakes him by the hand. Says, well Johnny you're a Christian now.

You know you've confessed your sin and that's what God said. You know if we confess our sin he's faithful and just and so on. Johnny says, well I feel great.

And they remind him that there's some new Christian classes. And of course make sure that he's tithing and understands that. That's very important.

And then you know Johnny settles down in that particular church. But you see his plans never really change. Johnny goes off you know back to school.

He graduates another couple of years from then. And Johnny's really no different than anybody else except everybody knows now Johnny is a Christian. He's a Christian surgeon.

Now what was wrong with that? And I realize I'm going fast this morning to try and save time. But really the failure was that Johnny failed to understand that the moment that he received Christ he gave up his rights. The moment he received Christ he was bought with a price.

The moment he received Christ God says you are now my possession. Now it may be that God wants him to be a doctor. But it also may be that God has got other plans for his life.

Remember the Apostle Paul when he first got saved. The very first words that came out of his mouth were Lord not Savior. Lord what would you have me to do? Not Savior it feels tremendous to have that load of

sin lifted off me.

I'm sure that was true obviously. But he recognized that there was somebody that had rulership or ownership over his life. Lord what are your plans for my life? The Lord said arise and go into such and such a city and I'll tell you exactly what I want you to do.

I'm going to send you to the Gentiles to open their eyes to turn them from darkness to light from the power of Satan to God. God had it all mapped out. He was simply waiting for a vessel that would respond and say Lord I'm yours.

What are your plans? You see and we fail to present that sort of that gospel. Why? Because it's too hard. We don't get the altar call that way.

See Jesus never made it easy to follow him. In fact his own disciples said Lord who then can be saved? And somehow we've again had people that believe but they've had no impact on the world. Let me give you one other scripture and I failed to give it and it's a very clear one in 2nd Corinthians chapter 5, 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 15.

I think we have one of the clearest verses in the Word of God concerning the reason why Christ died. It's a verse that I've used many times in counseling. Those of you who are involved in street ministry or whatever or any sort of evangelism I suggest that you underline it.

Verse 15, he died for all but they who live should no longer live for themselves. And notice again why he died. He died for everybody and the reason he died is that they who live, you and I this morning, should no longer live for ourselves.

If we're not living for ourselves who do we live for? It goes on to say but for him who died and rose again on our behalf. You see the purpose of the cross is to totally and radically change your outlook and your purpose in life. It's to redirect you so that no longer are you living for self but you're now sold out to the purpose of God.

Now that's where the cost comes in in the Christian life. Am I prepared to surrender everything in order to follow Christ? I did not become a Christian until I was 18 years of age. I was raised in a Christian home.

Some of you have read my father's writings. Knew what it was to know very clearly there was a hell to avoid at all cost. He made that very real to me.

And yet I was raised again putting off accepting Christ until I was 18. Not because I didn't want to go to heaven. I knew there was a heaven.

Not because I didn't believe that Jesus Christ could cleanse me from sin. I knew that he could do that. But you see I had one supreme goal in life that was to go into the field of graphics.

To go into the field of commercial art. That was my one objective in life. I longed to sort of have my own studio somewhere and doodle the rest of my life.

Get paid for it. And you know that was what I was after. And I was somehow made aware subconsciously or whatever that if I surrendered to Christ he may demand more of me than my sin.

Oh I was happy to part with my sin. I longed to have peace of mind. I knew that I was a sinner even though I lived a good life.

Never smoked a cigarette in my life. Never been to a dance in my life. Never had a drink in my life.

Should be in Guinness Book of Records. They haven't discovered me yet. But you see I lived a good life.

But I knew I was a sinner. But I was not prepared to surrender that one supreme desire that I had. In fact for three years prior to becoming a Christian many, many times, I hate to think how many times, I literally would shake under conviction of sin.

The Spirit of God trying to draw me to himself and refusing to go because I was not prepared to meet the cost. And at the age of 18 when I finally surrendered, it was not a matter of saying Lord take away my sin. It was a matter of saying Lord here I am.

Use me. Whatever plans you have, whatever purpose you have for my life, I'm yours. When I place myself on the altar, I'm yours.

I realized God wasn't interested in my sin. He died for me. He loved me.

Gave himself for me. You see it took me three years to make that decision. Lord I'll go wherever you want.

I'll do whatever you want. Let's turn to two scriptures just in closing. See if I can get them in.

First of all in 2nd Peter chapter 2 and verse 1. False prophets also arose among the people. I want you to see the way in which this verse is written. It's referring to something that is in the past.

Peter says false prophets arose. We've already had a problem with the false prophets he said. Then he makes a prophetic statement just as there will be false teachers among you.

Meaning that there will come false teaching. And it says they will secretly introduce destructive heresies even denying the master who bought them. And notice how relevant that word is.

In other words Peter is making a prophetic statement to the church. We've had problems in the past with false prophets. There is going to come into the church teaching.

It will come in secretly. When something is done in secret you're unaware that it's taking place. And he says the ultimate outcome of that they will bring into the church that which is damnable.

The King James says damnable doctrines or destructive heresies. And you could put if you like to the purpose of God. And how will they do it? By saying no to the master who owns them.

The master who bought them. You see we are living in the fulfillment of that. Every evangelist or maybe I shouldn't say every evangelist.

But most evangelists are violating the Word of God. By really saying you can deny him the lordship over your life. Have you ever wondered why Jesus Christ was put on the cross? The Bible tells us that they said we will not have this man what? Reign over us.

We will not have this man reign over us. Therefore crucify him. Now we have a religion that says we still will not have this man reign over us but we'll accept his forgiveness.

In other words I don't want him reigning over my life. I don't want him telling me what to do. We don't want this man reigning over us.

I want to be in control of my finances, my time, my plans. I want to be in control of my life. I don't want him reigning over me but I'll accept cleansing.

And so he says here even that this teaching will come in it will go as far as he said denying the master. And that word in the Greek is the strongest Greek word for lordship. It means a despot.

Denying the master who bought them. You're not your own what? You're bought with a price. All right one final verse in the book of James.

James chapter 4 and verse 13. Come now you who say today or tomorrow we shall go to such and such a city, spend a year there, engage in business and make a profit. Now notice there's nothing sinful about this.

He's not talking about going to open some sort of gambling joint, some casino. He's not talking about opening some house of prostitution or selling drugs. He simply here is referring to something that all of us are guilty of doing, sitting down and determining what we will do with our life.

I assume maybe this is a young couple and they say you know I'm tired of living in Dallas. It's too hot. Why don't we move somewhere? Why don't we go to Florida? Why don't we move to Canada? You know I'll engage in business.

Let's spend a couple of years there. Let's hopefully make a profit. Every businessman things haven't changed have they in 2,000 years.

But there's nothing really wrong with that. We're all guilty of doing that. I'll go to college here.

I'll get my degree. Then I'll open a law practice or a doctor's practice. I'll be a mechanic.

I'll be a lawyer. I'll be a dentist. I'll be a nurse.

I'll be whatever it is that I decide to be. And I'll make some money. And then James says you do not know what your life is like.

You're just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. In other words he begins to put things in perspective. He says listen life is too short to do that.

Your life is going to be over before you know it. Instead he said, verse 15, you ought to say if the Lord wills we shall live and do this thing or that thing. In other words James understands listen we do not have a right to say I will do this.

I will do that. I'll go here. I'll go there.

Unless we first of all say Lord what is your will? Do your plans fit into this? If my going to Canada fits into the will and purpose of God I'll go. If it doesn't don't take me. He says but as it is you boast in your arrogance and all such boasting is evil.

In other words you are proud of the fact that you are making your own decisions. Therefore verse 17, the one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it to him it is sin. You see sin again is selfishness.

Sin is not just adultery, homosexuality, stealing. Sin is living independently of God without recognizing his lordship, without bowing in submission before him, without recognizing I am not my own. I am brought with a price this morning.

I belong to the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He died on the cross not for my sin. He died on the cross for me.

You see if God could only totally control this congregation this morning I believe we could revolutionize the world. If man said listen Lord I'll go anywhere, I'll do anything without any reservations, without holding back. Whether I'll go to the jungles of South America, go to the mountains of Tibet or whatever it is.

Lord I don't care. I don't need recognition. I don't want anything else.

I don't want the comforts of a beautiful home and so on and so forth. Lord I present myself before you as a living sacrifice. I thank you for cleansing.

I thank you for taking away my sin this morning but Lord I place myself at your disposal and I say with the Apostle Paul Lord what would you have me do? Let's just close in prayer. Father again take this word, seal it we pray in our hearts. Father I pray that you would look over this congregation and see the travail of your soul and be satisfied.

Lord that you would lay claim to lives today. Father use them for your glory. Father we stand again on the threshold of a whole new move of the Spirit of God.

I pray Lord that there might be vessels that will say Lord here am I send me. Lord they'll not dictate their own terms. They'll not draw up their own contract but Father they'll say Lord you fill in the blanks.

Wherever you want me to go Lord I'll go. Lord like Ruth, whither thou goest I will go. Lord where you lodge I will lodge.

Your people will be my people. Where you die I'm prepared to die. Father make that real in our lives we pray in Jesus name.

Amen.

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