

The Cross of Christ

by Donny Coulter

This sermon delves into the significance of the cross of Christ, emphasizing the need to understand the depth of God's love and justice displayed through the cross. It explores how the cross breaks the penalty, power, and eventually the presence of sin in our lives, calling for a response to turn to Jesus for freedom and transformation.

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:24, Romans 6:6, 1 John 3:2, Matthew 11:28, Isaiah 53:6

Topics: "The Cross of Christ", "Freedom and Transformation in Jesus"

Description

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Transcript

I think sometimes we should be careful what we sing, what we pray, because when we pray for God to revive us by His fire, do you know what the intention of fire is? The intention of fire is purification, it's the burning away of the dross, it's not exactly a place of comfort and ease, but I would say that nothing ever worth having has ever been easy to get, especially when it comes to Christ, except for our salvation. Easy for us, hard for Him, and I want to talk about that today. Give me a second, I forgot to get the... So there's been, last week, I've said it this way, one of the advantages and disadvantages of standing here and looking at you is that I get to see sometimes the hurt, sometimes the squirm, and so we talked about a very practical thing last week, something that's very real to many of us, and I think we scratched a bit of a wound as I stood here speaking last week.

I watched several who literally wept because of the pain almost the entire time that we were standing here. I saw some of you squirming because the Holy Spirit was touching and convicting, and my thought as I was watching you over and over again, this thought came back to mind as I watched the tears flow and I watched some squirm, the thought that I had in my mind watching was, that's what the cross is for. What you're feeling right now, what you were feeling then, what you're feeling right now at this moment, that's what the cross was for.

The theology of the cross. Today, when I speak of the cross, I'm not talking about a piece of wood. I'm not talking about the instrument by which God killed Jesus.

I'm referring to the plan of God for His Son to take the sin of the world, to bear it for me and you. I'm talking about that, that is what I mean when I say the cross. It's funny, I was speaking with Francis and sitting at his table and we were talking and we were talking about the hymns that he wanted sung at the service yesterday and he said, as long as you don't sing that, the old rugged cross.

And I thought it's strange and so I asked why. And his question was, why do we put a piece of wood up to sing about a piece of wood? And I understand where he's coming from. He said, what if it had been a 30-30 that God used to kill Jesus with? And I said, well, the song would say something like, to the old 30-30, I will never be true.

But I told him that I never understood it like that. That when I speak of the cross, I don't speak of a piece of wood, I speak of what Christ did on the cross. And sometimes when we think about the cross and all that it entails, it can seem a little too theological.

We like to break it down theologically. It can almost seem impractical. It's almost like it's not where we live.

It doesn't apply to my marriage, to my kids, and all it takes to raise them. It doesn't apply to my pains and my hurts. But the thing is this, the thing is that the cross is central to the Christian faith.

Remember, I'm not talking about a piece of wood, I'm talking about what Christ did on the cross. And what Christ did on the cross is central to the Christian faith. There's a lot of things that we can learn from the cross of Christ.

Number one, it gives us insight into the character of God. In the cross, you can see both how loving and just God is at the same time. In the cross, you can see how holy and yet how merciful God is.

You can see the character of God. We can see the love of God. When we see the immensity, think about it for a moment.

When you see the immensity of what God did in the cross, when we see that, and we see his immense love for us, in turn, it creates in us a desire to love him. You know the verse, we love him because he first loved us. So it creates and helps us to understand and have a love for God.

We've been talking about holiness, and we're going to continue when I get back. We're going to continue talking about holiness. But when we see the cross, and all that it's accomplished for you and for me, then we should desire to fulfill the command of holiness.

And as we will see today, it has given us the power to do so. It will keep us, the cross, will keep us from falling prey to soft theology. Here's what I mean by that.

There are many churches that are trying to soften the blow of the cross. They're trying to soften what the cross is for. And the cross is for God's justice and wrath to be poured out on sin.

And that means, if we begin, we try to make people feel like they aren't so bad. When we take away from the reality of the cross, when we soften the cross, we're trying to tell people that you don't have to feel so bad. We've taken a soft stand on sin.

And we've convinced people that they aren't as bad as God sees them. And therefore it diminishes the need of the cross. These are doctrines of Satan and human pride.

May the Spirit of God give us ears to hear it and abstain from it. I listened to a preacher this week. I just caught a snippet.

And you know what she said? She said that Jesus died because of a broken religious system. That He had come to change the system. And that Jesus died not for our sin, her words, not mine.

That Jesus had come and died not for our sins, but He died because He went against the system and they killed Him for it. Doctrines of Satan and human pride. The cross is the place where all of the wounds of sin are healed.

And there's where we're going to sit today. The cross is that place where all of the wounds that have been created and caused by sin, and there are many, can be healed. That is what the cross is for.

What you felt last week, whether you're squirming or weeping, that is what the cross is for. All of our problems, every problem that we have in us, every problem that's in me, and every problem that you have, and every problem that the world has, is a problem that is caused by sin. Sin is the center and the central issue in all of our problems.

All our problems stem from our sin. Your problems stem from your own ugly sins. Your problems may stem from the sins that others have committed against you.

Your problems with sin come, oftentimes show up, oftentimes even in our reactions towards those who have hurt us. Our sinful reactions towards the people who have abused and misused us. The simple fact is that we live in a sin-cursed, fallen world.

Sin is all around us, isn't it? It's all around us. In all of this, listen, all of this says that the answer that we need, the answer is in the cross. The answer is in the cross.

Turn to 1 Peter chapter 2. 1 Peter chapter 2. Let's read and then we'll pray. That was just an introduction. 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 24 and 25.

I have a hard time reading this verse. Who himself, picture it, as you read this verse, picture it. Who himself bore my sins.

I know it doesn't say that. Who himself bore our sins. Where? In his own body.

How? On that tree. There is significance to that. Why? That we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness.

By whose stripes, by whose wounds, we are healed. For you were like sheep going astray. Some of your versions will say continually straying.

It's important that we recognize that. But have now returned, passive voice, that word, returned. We have now returned to the shepherd and the overseer or guardian of your souls.

Father, this morning I pray that your Holy Spirit would allow us to take the wounds that we all have because of sin. Whether they are wounds of committed sins or sins that have been committed against us or both. I pray that you would allow us afresh and anew to be able to place them at the foot of the cross.

To allow in our hearts Jesus to bear them for us. To set us free. I pray that you would do that.

God, I pray that you would help me as I speak to have your words, your heart, your thoughts. God, to speak only the words in which your Holy Spirit lead to speak. Thank you for the leading of your Holy Spirit.

For changing the direction of the sermon for this week. I pray God may you bless it. I pray for that one this morning or many that may be lost and without you.

They have never ever accepted you. Or they have made a mental ascent but they have never come to you as master. I pray that you would help them to see it.

Set them free from it I pray in Jesus name. Amen. Would you hang on with me for a few minutes? Because I'm probably going to go a little past 11.30. But I hope that you will see this as important.

And there are many, there are some today in which eternity may be in the balance. Can you think with me that way? There are just some sitting among us today. By their own choice.

They will hear the message and be challenged to respond. And they may or may not enter into a destiny. An eternity with Christ.

It's important. No sense in hurrying that up is there? The cross of Jesus saves you and me. It saves us from what we call in theology the three tenses of salvation.

It saves us from the penalty of sin. The power of sin. And someday the very presence of sin.

Oh Lord Jesus come quickly. First let's look at the penalty of sin. I know that what I'm going to be teaching you is probably nothing for you if you're a believer.

And you've been around for a while this is nothing new. You're not going to hear anything new. But I certainly hope that you are challenged to think about it again.

For some people here whose wounds were scratched last week. They need to hear and be reminded of what the cross is for. The cross, look at verse 24.

Who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree. You see that word the tree? It refers back to Deuteronomy chapter 22 and verse 21. Let me take you there.

Chapter 22. Sorry I had them backwards. Chapter 21 verses 22 and 23.

If a man has committed a sin deserving of death. And he is put to death. In other words he is stoned.

And you hang him on a tree. His body shall not remain overnight on the tree. But you shall surely bury him that day.

So that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance. For he who is hanged on a tree is accursed of God. Get the picture.

Someone has been found guilty and deserving of death. They are put to death and their body is hung on a tree. And the Bible here says that those who hang on a tree are accursed from God.

Sin has accursed him from God. Sounds miserable doesn't it? Turn to Galatians chapter 3 and verse 13. Let's take away the misery.

For Christ has redeemed us. That is you and me and all of those who respond to the call of the gospel. Christ has redeemed us.

Christ has bought us back from the curse of the law. How has he done that? Having become a curse for us. Christ became our curse.

For it is written, cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. That is what the cross does. What you deserved.

What I deserved. The justice and the wrath of God. Jesus took that curse of sin upon himself.

And became a curse before God. He was cursed for us. And not only that.

Look what it says. Who himself bore our sins in his own body. Without taking too much time.

Christ had to be one of us. And as one of us. As a human like us.

Without sin. He bore our sins. He took our sins upon him.

He took our sins on himself. In his body. On that tree.

The justice and wrath of God. Were poured out that day. On the cross of Jesus Christ.

As he bore the sins. He who knew no sin. Became sin for me and you.

The curse that he became. God poured out his wrath. And his justice on him.

And that should have been for me. He took upon himself. Everything that you have ever done.

Everything that offends the holiness of God. Everything that you have ever done. And everything that's ever been done to you.

He took upon himself. And God enacted his justice. And wrath there on the cross.

Let me tell you what I believe this shows. This shows that God does not take sin lightly. You believe it? Unless you see the ugliness of the cross.

Not a piece of wood. Unless you see the ugliness of the cross. Then you will never understand.

That God does not take sin lightly. He doesn't take it lightly. He doesn't shrug sin off.

You know our justice system can sometimes seem very unfair. Can it? Often times big crime little sentence. And for some reason we often see God the same way.

Don't we? Especially in our world. God would never do that. How could God hold that against him? Let me affirm to you.

That God does not take it easy on sin. Take a look at the cross. Sin is an offense to a holy God.

I was saying that last week. That the beginning of the internal struggle. Of finding victory over the internal struggle.

Is to realize that what I am doing. In terms of impurity. What I am doing is an offense to a holy God.

The cross screams it. Doesn't it? That sin offends God. Why else would God turn away? Why else would Jesus say.

Why have you forsaken me? Sin must. And it will be judged. And dealt with.

And God did everything to do that. In the cross. Let's look at this practically for a moment.

Practically. The fact that God does not take it easy on sin. Says two or three things to me.

The fact that God does not shrug off sin. Now for those of you who have been wounded. Those of you who have been hurt.

Those of you who have sinned. Listen. The first thing.

In terms of practicality. Those that have sinned against you. God sees it.

Do you hear me? Those deep wounds that you are feeling. That you experience. That happened to you in your life.

Those who did that to you. God sees it. He sees every nanoparticle.

Of the sin against you. Don't let that go by. That if you are a wounded person.

Please understand. That God sees it. He sees every ounce.

Of sin that was done against you. And He will enact His justice. And His wrath.

Against those who hurt you. Have to believe it. To those who have sinned.

And turned to Christ. Did you hear how I said that? Those who have sinned. Maybe.

God help me. Maybe. You are a perpetrator.

Sitting here today. You have turned to Christ. You know what this says to me? In practical terms.

Here's what it says. It says that God. Sees His Son.

God sees His Son. God has judged your sin in Christ. Not one nanoparticle.

Of your own sin. Has escaped His justice. As you have come to Christ.

In faith. It is finished. You find yourself lost.

In as we spoke of last week. Sexual impurity. I want you to know that God has dealt with it on the cross.

If you find yourself living. In disobedience to God. Maybe it's bad decisions.

And bad choices that you have made. Maybe it's because you have run. Run from a call of God in your life.

Let me tell you about my dad. My dad loved Jesus. But he always struggled.

With guilt and condemnation. Over one thing in his life. Because when he became a believer.

A Christian. And after he began to mature. And grow.

He felt the call of God. To become a preacher. To go into ministry.

And my dad said no. He didn't think he was good enough. He couldn't do it.

And my poor dad. He lived his whole life. In regret.

For not responding. To the call of God. And I would like to say to those of you.

That maybe you have done that in your life. You have heard the call of God. And not responded.

And refused. You do not have to live. In guilt and shame over that.

That's what the cross is for. This one may be a little hard for some. Practical.

We have to see everyone. Everyone. In need.

Of Christ. Even those who have hurt us. When we understand the depth.

Of. The depth of God's forgiveness. For me.

When you understand the depth of God's forgiveness for you. Remember you can't take it lightly. God doesn't take your sin lightly.

And no you may not have perpetrated some evil against someone else. But your sin is just as bad. In the eyes of God.

When you see and understand the depth of God's forgiveness for you. You will probably be okay. With the forgiveness of those who have hurt you.

Yes. The cross. Is for them too.

I know. That's hard. So you have been freed from the penalty.

Of sin. The penalty of sin. You have been set free.

If you have come by faith to Christ. You have been set free from the penalty of sin. And ultimately the penalty of sin.

For all who refuse Christ. Is an eternal separation in a place called hell. Away from God.

I have often said. I don't know exactly what hell is going to be like. I see what I read in scripture.

I understand with my finite mind just a little bit about it. But I can tell you this. One of the worst parts about hell.

To me would not be the flames. Would not be the torment. It would be the eternal knowledge.

That God was true. That Jesus was real. And there will forever in eternity be a gulf.

A separation between me and the knowledge of that God who is real. I can never get to Him now. That's hell.

Throw in a little flames. And a few worms and it gets even worse. But you don't have to.

You don't have to experience that penalty. Jesus took on Himself. Bore in His own body.

He bore it for you. In His own body. On a tree.

He took your curse. And that freedom can be yours if you come to the cross. Come to the cross of Christ.

Not to a piece of wood. But to what Jesus did. If you come to Him by faith.

Now not only does it break the penalty of sin. Take away the penalty of sin. But it also breaks the power of sin.

The power of sin has caused us to continually stray. Look here in 1 Peter chapter 2. Look at the second part. Well let's read the second part down to the end.

Having died to sins that we having died to sins might live unto righteousness. So now the power of sin. Do you see the power of sin being broken here? That we have died to sins and now we are living unto righteousness.

The power of sin is broken and now we are able to live unto righteousness. Having died to sin by whose stripes we were healed. All of those sins.

I don't give in to the idea that these verses like this are speaking of physical healing. Even though I believe that sickness is caused by sin. I believe within it's context and He even says in verse 25.

He clarifies why He says by whose stripes we are healed. For is the next part of the verse 25. For you were like sheep going astray.

He doesn't mention anything about physical healing. He's speaking of the healing that we need from the wounds of sin. And we were healed from that by His wounds as we read in Isaiah 53.

For you were like sheep going astray. I'm sorry. For you were like sheep going astray.

Now some of your versions will say it this way. For we were like sheep continually straying. Now Peter has structured this on purpose this way.

He has put this together like this for us on purpose. So that we could understand. We can catch on that our problem is something that we will always have.

We will always be straying until the power of sin is broken. You will always be straying until through the cross of Christ the power of sin is broken. We are always apart from Christ.

We are always in a constant state of turning away from and running away from, straying from the shepherd. This was a pattern for sheep. Why do they need a shepherd? Because they are used to straying.

That's what they do. Isaiah 53 as we read today says, all of us have gone astray like sheep. All of us like sheep have gone astray.

That's what sheep do. Sheep stray and they run away. Here in lies the heart of the parable of the shepherd.

The other night Kylie came in and she said, hey we learned about the one lost sheep and the one lost coin. So we talked to her through about all of that. Here in lies the heart of the shepherd.

And the heart of the shepherd is to find and bring in and to break the power. And so he says here for you were like sheep going astray but have now returned. Look back up to the second part first of verse 24.

That we having died to sin might live for righteousness. Listen to the words of Romans chapter 6. A lot of stuff to read but I'm going to read it quickly. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not.

Meganoita. How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? You see what he's saying? Do you see the power of sin being broken for us in these words? He's saying how shall we who have died to sin in Christ how shall we live any longer in it underneath its power? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? You died with Christ. Therefore, by the way baptism is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That's why we do immersion. Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death and just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father even so we also should walk in the newness of life. Do you see a power being broken? Do you see it? As you read it? For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death certainly we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection knowing this that our old man was crucified with him that the body of sin might be done away with.

That we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Do you see the breaking of the power? You see the breaking of the bondage? That if you have come to the cross of Jesus Christ and by faith receive what he has done you have died along with him and you have been set free to live out the holiness that he has commanded us to live.

For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ we believe that we shall also live with him. Knowing that Christ having been raised from the dead dies no more.

Death no longer has dominion over him. For the death that he died he died to sin once and for all. But the life that he lives he lives to God.

Likewise you also do you see that? Oh this is wonderful stuff I'd love to teach it but we're not going to do that. Reckon! Reckon yourselves to be dead. Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin but alive to God and Christ our Lord.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lust. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you for you are not under the law but under grace.

And a big fat amen. Oh I would love to spend all day I'd love to make you fall out of the window sleeping. So it's so rich that we don't have to do what sin tells us to do anymore.

You don't have to pursue sexual impurity anymore you don't have to. It's been broken in the cross. Christ broke that for you.

He broke the power that it has over you. He broke it. You don't have to be addicted to substances and pornography and sexual stuff.

You don't have to be addicted to that because He has broken this power over you. We just have to believe it. The power of sin is broken.

But I want you to know this. The power of sin requires the ongoing care of the shepherd. You see what he says? Back again in chapter 2 verse 25.

For you were like sheep gone astray but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. We need the constant care of the shepherd. Of the overseer.

This word overseer is the word Episcopus. It's the same word that we use to talk about the elders of the church. They are to guard over the guardian of our souls is Jesus Christ and it takes the constant care of the guardian of our souls.

Do not take yourself out from under his care. Do not stray away from his care. And you will be able to overcome the power of sin in your life.

And the wounds that come from it. Hallelujah! Someday we will be saved from the very presence of sin. You can write this verse down.

1 John chapter 3 and verse 2. 1 John chapter 3 verse 2. We're going to read all of verses 1, 2, and 3. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God. Therefore the world does not know us because it did not know him. Beloved, now we are the children of God.

And it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. But we know that when he is revealed we shall be like him. The very presence of sin someday is going to be gone.

Come quickly, Lord Jesus. For we shall see him as he is. And everyone everyone who has that hope that someday sin will fall away I will drop this robe of flesh and sin will be gone, banished from my presence forever.

And everyone who has that hope in him purifies himself even as Christ is pure. That's why we work at holiness for deliverance to come. We must turn.

Remember I said that it was passive? That word returned or turned to is passive. Now what it means is that there is an action taking place on those sheep that comes from an outside force. Christ is turning you.

The great shepherd get the picture? The great shepherd has turned you. We are making in this exchange, we are making an exchange of masters. We are exchanging the master of self for the master of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you are going to experience being free from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin and someday from the very presence of sin, if you're going to experience that then you must turn to Jesus. He's calling you today. He's calling your name.

You hear him. He's saying come. Come to me.

All who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Come. By faith, come.

Believe what he has done for you. You have two responses. Okay? Two responses that you can make today.

You can walk out of here today and into eternity bearing your own sin and the justice of God. You can walk out of these doors today and bear upon yourself your own sin and with it you will be bearing the justice and the wrath of God when the day comes. Or, you could turn to the great shepherd and accept what Jesus has done.

Let him bear your sin and the justice and the wrath of God and walk out of here a new creation. Which one will it be? Will you walk out with a heavy load? Or will you walk out free from all of the bondage? It's completely up to you. Come to Christ.

Accept what he's done for you. Believe that he has taken your sin. Believe it and you will be free.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for your Word and for your Holy Spirit. I pray this morning for those who are hurting, who have been wounded.

There are many. I pray for them this morning Lord that they would find solace and comfort in the cross of Jesus. That they would find solace and comfort in the bearing of their own sins and the sins that have been committed against them.

God, I pray that maybe some for the first time would relate this to their life and their experience and just apply it. Spirit of the living God, give them the faith to do that. Set them free from the wound that has been carrying them for their whole lives.

I pray for those who are struggling with sin, with selfishness. They are still serving the master of self. I pray that you would help them to accept and Lord if they are believers, if they are followers of Jesus, I pray that you would help them to accept what you have done by breaking the power of sin over us.

Help them to enter into that kind of relationship with you. This is not just religion. Lord, this is relationship.

It's faith. Set them free from religion and from themselves. Give them victory over the sin that so easily besets us.

I pray for that one Lord who does not know you as their personal Savior. God, I pray this morning that they see the beauty of the cross and all that it does for them. The cross of Jesus.

Lord, I pray that they would see it and respond to it. I pray that there would not be one who would walk out the doors with a load of sin bearing their own sin. Don't let them walk out.

I trust you to do that now in Jesus' name. Amen. We have a member of our church that needs to be brought in.

Or not brought in. Brought up. So, I'm going to ask Majesty Wood come and then our elders and their wives if they would come.

And then our worship team if you would come and prepare real quickly.

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