

The Cross of Christ Is Foolishness

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of recognizing sin to appreciate the power of the cross and the hope it offers for redemption and restoration.

Scripture: Isaiah 59:1, John 5:14, John 10:10, Romans 6:16, Romans 6:23, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Hebrews 9:22, James 1:14

Topics: "The Cross", "Sin And Salvation"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the importance of not shying away from the controversial truths of the cross and sin, as they are essential for understanding the power of God's salvation. The avoidance of discussing sin minimizes the significance of the cross, which is the core of Christianity. The message of the cross confronts evil and sin, urging believers to confront, confess, and turn away from sin rather than ignore or overlook it. Sin has a life cycle that either grows or withers based on how it is fed or starved, highlighting the need to actively combat sin in our lives. The cross of Christ is crucial as it addresses the presence, cost, separation, and enslavement of sin, offering forgiveness, eternal life, restoration of relationship with God, and freedom from sin's control.

Transcript

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

There is a significant shift in the church today to avoid controversial truths such as the cross. The cross confronts evil; it's repulsive to sinful man. Darkness hates the light. God's Word says to confront, confess, and turn from sin, whereas many encourage us to ignore, overlook, and continue in them. Silence about sin minimizes the cross. But the cross only makes sense in light of the consequences of sin. "To convince the world of the truth of Christianity, it must first be convinced of sin. It is only sin that renders Christ intelligible" (Andrew Murray; 1794-1866).

Many mistakenly believe that Jesus didn't mention sin--after all, He was "a friend of sinners." However, Scripture reveals quite the opposite. For example, in John 5:14 Jesus exhorted a man to sin no more or a worse thing would happen to him. He also told the woman caught in the act of adultery to "go and sin no more."

It's clear that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15), why, then, is there a move within the church to avoid mentioning difficult truths such as the cross, sin, judgment, and so on? John 12:43 may reveal the answer, "They loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God." "The old cross slew men; the new cross entertains them. The old cross condemned; the new cross amuses. The old cross destroyed confidence in the flesh; the new cross encourages it" (A.W. Tozer).

Sin has a life cycle--it either grows or withers depending on whether we feed or starve it. This is why the puritan author, John Owen, wrote, "Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you." With that said, here is why we need the cross of Christ:

Sin is within: "Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:14-15). Our sinful nature is at war with God. No peace treaties can be signed; no concessions can be made...sin must be eradicated: "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin" (cf. Hebrews 9:22). The life of the flesh is in the blood. Christ's life had to be offered in order to save ours.

Sin has a cost: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). It's been said that sin takes you farther than you want to go, costs you more than you want to pay, and keeps you longer than you want to stay. Sin has a tremendous price, but fortunately, this greatest of debts was paid: "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Sin separates: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2). Sin separates all nations, tribes, and tongues from God. There are two types of separation: 1) separation from God eternally, and 2) separation that believers experience as the result of besetting sin. If God seems distant, Bible study boring, and church inconvenient, it may be that sin is hindering your relationship with Him. Look within...is jealousy, envy, bitterness, gossip, lust, or anger controlling your thoughts? Do you have a critical spirit? Are you compromising the gospel? Are you filled with pride and judgmentalism instead of love, joy, peace, contentment, and gentleness. If there is no repentance of besetting sin, one can never experience true freedom in Christ.

Sin enslaves (controls): "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?" (Romans 6:16). Mike Wilkerson, in his book *Redemption*, writes, "Sin corrupts worship. Not a ceasing of worship but a distortion of it. We never stop worshiping. Rather, in sin, we worship anything and everything other than God. We tend to exalt a substance, an experience, a person, or a dream to the level of a god. We define life by its attainment, and we feel like dying when it eludes us...The Bible calls this 'idolatry.' So addictions, for example, aren't just drug, alcohol, food, or pornography problems. They are worship disorders. They flow from hearts bent on worshiping created things rather than the Creator." Sin enslaves, controls, and distorts. The only way to break sin's hold in our life is to embrace the cross. Jesus came to "save His people from their sins." The penalty for sin was paid on the cross (propitiation), and our guilt was removed (expiation).

Conviction is a wonderful gift from God...run to it not away from it. Conviction is also the first step toward truly knowing God. Does 1 Corinthians 1:18 convict you: "For the message of the cross is foolishness to

those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God"? Is the cross foolishness to you? That can change today. John 10:10 says that Jesus came to give us life, freedom, and a relationship with God. Are you experiencing this abundant life? Or are you bound by sin, rules, compromise, or tradition? 2 Corinthians 5:17 says that if anyone is in Christ they are a new creation. The old has gone, and the new is here. You must trust in Him as Lord and Savior and repent from your sin. This isn't popular but it is powerful.

If you're a believer, but find yourself trapped in sin, misery, and depression, there is also hope. God's continually calls His people back to Him. If you return to Him with all of your heart, He will return to you. That's a gift of the greatest value...a promise that will never fail.

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