

# Forgetting The Cross

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[ 0 : 00 ] And let's open tonight to Psalm 78. We have many wonderful psalms from Asaph, and this is another one of his psalms.

Psalm 78, and we'll read the first 13 verses. Oh, my people, hear my teaching. Listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables. I will utter hidden things from of old. What we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us, we will not hide them from their children.

We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power and the wonders he has done. He declared statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born.

And they, in turn, would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds, but would keep his commands.

[ 1 : 19 ] They would not be like their forefathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.

The men of Ephraim, though armed with bows, turned back in the day of battle. They did not keep God's covenant and refused to live by his law. They forgot what he had done.

The wonders he had shown them. He did miracles in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the region of Zon. He divided the sea and led them through.

He made the water stand firm like a wall. And he goes on to explain all that God did for them in the desert. And then we come to verse 40. How often they rebelled against him in the desert and grieved him in the wasteland.

Again and again they put God to the test. They vexed the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember his power. The day he redeemed them from the oppressor.

[ 2 : 26 ] The day he displayed his miraculous signs in Egypt. His wonders in the region of Zon. Well, so much the word of God.

Let's trust that he will open our hearts to it. The repeated charge here against Israel is that they forgot God. They forgot his mighty and gracious works.

And especially his redeeming them out of the land of Egypt. The Exodus. And it is that forgetfulness that explains why again and again, over and over, they were unfaithful to God and broke his covenant and continued to sin against him.

Forgetting the Exodus from Egypt. It's that act of redemption more than any other that God repeats over and over in the Old Testament when reminding them of the great things that he had done for them.

It's this event. We see it enshrined in the law. It's enshrined in the songs of worship that they sang to him. Even as Psalm 78 is one of those.

[ 3 : 42 ] It was remembered annually. It was to be remembered annually in the Passover meal. It was to be repeated often on the lips of parents to their children, teaching them what God had done and especially how he had redeemed them out of Egypt.

And so it becomes the greatest Old Testament type foreshadowing and pointing to our redemption by the Lord Jesus on Calvary's cross.

In fact, that's why God decreed and arranged for his son to be crucified during Passover, that that connection would be seen. And that's why it was at the Passover meal that our Lord Jesus instituted a new covenant meal.

No longer the Passover, but now the Lord's Supper for God's people to remember our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, and his great work of redemption from sin, from guilt, from Satan, from death and the

grave.

Now, many times when I have read such passages as this, I have wondered how in the world could they ever forget the Exodus? How could they forget the ten plagues performed on their enemies that decimated their land, the water turning to blood, the frogs that infested the land, the flies that hail, the lightning, the locusts, the darkness, the death of the firstborn at midnight, and the cries that rang out from every home when the angel of death came and killed the firstborn, but passed over the Israelite homes that had the blood applied to the doorposts.

[ 5 : 29 ] And then how could they forget their predicament at the Red Sea, with the sea in front of them and Pharaoh's army and chariots closing in on them from behind with no way out, and yet how God just opened up away and the waters just congealed like jello and stood up as walls for them to pass through and then how God undid that and swallowed up their enemies in front of them.

How could they ever forget such things? Well, the answer, of course, is in the same way that you and I can forget the far greater redemption that is ours in Jesus Christ.

It wasn't that everything about the Exodus was somehow erased from their memory or that they were totally ignorant of it happening. No, I'm sure they could tell you about it as a part of their history.

It was something that they celebrated. But perhaps like our Independence Day, it was no longer front and center with them.

It was buried in the past and exerted no shaping influence upon their present life. It didn't affect the way they lived, the way they treated God, the way they treated His covenant and His commands.

[ 6 : 54 ] So in that sense, they forgot what He had done, the wonders He had shown them. They did not remember His power the day He remembered He redeemed them from the oppressor. the day He displayed His miraculous signs in Egypt.

So that event had no more effect upon their daily lives than if, as if it never happened. No difference. For they forgot.

And I say, can we not do the same with the cross of Christ that won our redemption? As Leahy says, it's my conviction, at times my sad experience, that as the cross of Christ goes out of focus so that it isn't before me, I find coldness and backsliding setting in.

It can become such a distant thought that it loses its controlling influence of my life. It's such a familiar thought that we somehow think that we've sucked all the sweetness out of the cross that there is to be had.

No, it's not like gum that loses its flavor, but rather yields fresh sweetness to the meditating heart that focuses upon it.

[ 8 : 11 ] A phrase that I find extremely helpful in this matter is, I think I heard it from Paul Tripp first, I'm not sure who coined it, but it's the phrase a cruciform life.

The idea is that our very lives are to increasingly take on the shape, the form, of the cross of Calvary.

Christ crucified is to be such a focus in our mind's eye, indeed ever looking unto Jesus, that it ever becomes transformative and is the most powerful influence in my life, conforming me to who?

To Christ and Him crucified. So that's what Paul is saying, I believe, in Philippians 1.27, that whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel, and at the very center of that gospel is the cross of Jesus Christ.

And so, we're to see that our life and our conduct, as well as our words, commend the gospel, commend the cross of Christ, that we're walking worthy of that event that has so changed everything for us.

[ 9 : 27 ] Let its impact upon you be evident in all that you do. So, redemption from Egypt in that first Passover night was not to be forgotten.

So, parts of it were reenacted, were to be reenacted every year in memory of it. And, they were given instruction that when your sons, this could be years in the future.

When your sons ask you, why are you doing this, Dad? Tell him, I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt, when he struck with wrath the firstborn in every Egyptian house, when the Lord saw the blood on our home and passed over us in mercy.

mercy. So, what God did for them in redeeming them was to be the explanation of the things that they did.

And even so, as we take the bread and the cup tonight, your son might ask you, Dad, why are we doing this? And you can tell him, I do this because of what the Lord did for me at Calvary, at the cross.

[ 10 : 41 ] And so, that giving of his body and shedding of his blood for me that God's wrath might pass over me, that's a cruciform life, that's to live a cruciform life.

That phrase could be used of so much in our lives. Dad, why do you, why do we do this? Why do we keep the Ten Commandments? Why do we not go to work on Sunday?

Why do we go to church when so few do? Why are we found here worshipping God today? Why do we not take revenge when people do us wrong?

Why do we give hard-earned money to the Lord? And we say, I do this because of what the Lord did for me at Calvary. That's a cruciform life.

The cross is shaping the whole of our life so that its sweetness seeps down into the nooks and crannies of our hearts and lives.

[ 11 : 48 ] I just want to point out several applications of this principle of how the cross should shape our lives and indeed does impact the whole of life, what a cruciform life looks like.

And the first is just gratitude. Just gratitude. gratitude. We are prone to take for granted that which is familiar.

Familiarity often breeds contempt and we think little of it. But what happened at the cross will change my destiny forever so that if you come and see me a billion years from now it will still be the power of the cross that has me in heaven instead of hell.

Now if God never did another thing for me other than giving up his son for me should that be not reason enough to thank him every day of my life for Calvary?

And yet sadly I don't. I want to. I want to grow in that. I want to find myself daily before the Lord thanking the Father for giving his son up for me.

[ 13 : 04 ] Thanking the son for laying down his life for me and shedding his precious blood that has redeemed me. Thanking the Holy Spirit for sustaining him under that cross until he could cry it is finished.

His life laid down for mine has made all the difference in time and eternity. And so a cruciform life is a grateful life, a life of gratitude for the cross.

Let's be overflowing with thanksgiving for Calvary. That's to let the cross affect our thanksgiving.

Secondly, it should affect our parenting and grandparenting.

It's mentioned here directly, isn't it, in Psalm 78 that we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power and wonders he's done along with his laws that he commanded us to keep and to teach our children so that the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born.

And they in turn would tell their children. And then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. And what are the deeds that they are to be telling their children?

[ 14 : 23 ] It's how God brought us out of Egypt, the great redemption. That was the grand theme of the Old Testament. And so it is to be true of the cross of Christ, our great act of redemption.

It's to be constantly on our lips and especially to our children and to our grandchildren. Both in formal and informal times, in times of discipline, in times of great joy and happiness, in times of death and sadness, the cross, the difference it makes.

Thankful for the Sunday school teachers and others here as we labor together as a church body to reinforce what the children are hearing at home. Let's be intentional in instructing them and bringing them to hear the word taught and preached.

A cruciform life is a life loaded with talk about our Savior's mighty triumph at Calvary. Kids like heroes. We have one.

Let's talk of him. And then thirdly, a cruciform life is a life of cruciform love. And husbands, you clearly are charged with this from Ephesians 5.20.

[ 15 : 45 ] Husbands, love your wives. How? Just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for it. From heaven, he came and sought her to be his holy bride.

With his own blood, he bought her. And for her life, he died. And even so, men, your wife is to have a cruciform husband. A husband whose love for her is shaped by the cross.

A cruciform love is a sacrificial love. It's giving up of oneself for another. Giving up our own ease and rest and preferences in her best interest.

It's an initiating love. It takes the initiative in love no matter what's coming back to you from her. You know, our Savior at Calvary didn't wait to love us until we loved him first, did he? Rather, we love him because he first loved us. He initiated love.

[16:51] When we hated him, he loved us and died for his enemies. It's sacrificial love. It's initiating love. And it's unending love. Christ's love is a love that will never let me go.

It's an unailing love. Even when mine does fail, I have the assurance that nothing will ever be able to separate me from his love.

This cruciform love is to shape your love for your wives, men. But it's not just husbands who are to be shaped by cruciform love.

Earlier in Ephesians chapter five, indeed the first two verses, we find that a cruciform love is to be expressed for one another. It says, be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love.

Well, what kind of love? What shape is that love to take? Live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

[17:57] And so, such a church, a brotherhood, a family, overflowing with cruciform love for one another is a sweet-smelling aroma in the nostrils of God.

It's greatly pleasing to him. It's something he delights in. And the Apostle John is especially keen on pointing out this connection between Calvary's love and our love for one another.

It's often repeated. 1 John 3, 16 and following. This is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for each other.

You see the connection. Our love is to take on the shape and the form of his laying down our lives. So that if anyone has material possession and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?

Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. And that taps into our finances, our time, our prayers, our concern, our patience, whatever is needed.

[19:09] We are to give it. Bearing with one another, forgiving one another just as God in Christ forgave us there at Calvary.

As he was dying, his cry was, Father, forgive them. Forgive them. Cruciform forgiveness.

Undeserved forgiveness, the kind that we've received at the cross.

Freely, you've received. So freely give. Assuming the cost yourself like Jesus did rather than demanding payment from others.

1 John 4, 9 to 11. This is how God showed his love among us. He sent his one and only son into the world that we might live through him. This is love. Not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sin.

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we ought to love one another. It just follows. The cross must be seen in the life of the disciple of Jesus.

[20:17] Or the question is, is there really any love of God in their heart? Is the spirit really there? Because the spirit, the fruit of the spirit is love.

And that's why in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul rebukes that church with regard to their practice of the Lord's supper. They were fighting and bickering among themselves, and yet they come to the table. And there we partake of one loaf, demonstrating our unity in Christ. And the emblem, the symbol, was not shaping and showing itself in the body life.

That's why we need to be right with our brothers and sisters as we come to partake of the bread and the cup. So the cross, it's to shape our love, a cruciform love.

And then fourthly, and closely related, is that we're to have a cruciform response to mistreatment. Now this is found in 1 Peter chapter 2 and verses 18 through 23.

[21:28] It's in that section where the apostle Peter is dealing with slaves and how their masters may mistreat them. And if it's for doing good, then it's commendable that they bear up under that mistreatment.

And he says, if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.

He committed no sin. No deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate. When he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

So, as these Christians were suffering mistreatment in the world, persecution, they were directed back to the cross in the example of Jesus.

And what you see there is to be seen in you here, and you're being mistreated. And so, it is with us, brothers and sisters, that when others mistreat us, it's the example of Calvary, Christ crucified, is to shape our response.

[ 22 : 43 ] Instead of taking justice into our own hands and demanding payback of evil for evil, we're to not retaliate. Not even so much as to make threats in a verbal way, but rather to entrust ourselves to God to deal with the matter.

And so, to overcome evil with good, rather than to be overcome by evil. And so, Peter goes on in chapter 4 and says, when we're insulted because of the name of Christ, suffering because we're Christians.

Now, that might not have been so much a matter to us years ago, but it's becoming a big matter, isn't it? The world is taking out their hatred against Jesus and his commandments because we love this Jesus and we seek to obey his commandments.

And so, the world is becoming more bold in their persecution. Well, what do we need? Well, don't be surprised as though something strange is happening to you. They abused our Savior.

We should expect the same from this same wicked world that crucified him. We should not be ashamed, but we should rejoice, he says, and praise God that you even bear the name of Jesus for the spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

[ 24 : 07 ] We should commit ourselves to our faithful creator and just go on doing good, continue doing good. And so, the more verbal and insulting the world gets, the greater opportunity we have to display this distinctively different attitude toward the world.

There's something distinctively different about these people, and it's a cruciform distinction. It's the stamp of the crucified one upon their hearts and lives.

Fifthly, the cross should shape our perseverance in the battle for holiness. And again, Peter follows on here in chapter 2, in verses 24 and 25.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness. By his wounds you've been healed, for you were like sheep going astray, but now you've returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

Our holiness is to be cruciform holiness. Something of the cross is to shape our holy living. Christ's death to sin was our death to sin.

[ 25 : 24 ] And that's to be seen in our attitude towards sin, in our death to sin. It no longer is our master, so we're not to let it rule us any longer.

Christ's Calvary wounds have healed us from our waywardness, from our strained hearts. And that's to be evident in our living, no longer strained with wayward heart and feet, away from the paths of God's love.

But now following the Good Shepherd as he leads us in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. You know the book of Hebrews is all about persevering in hardships.

Everything that was making them want to quit following Christ and to not finish the race. Hardships and battling sin. Facing the persecution from the world.

They just wanted it to end. And were being tempted to quit the race. And so you know these words. But notice the connection between the cross and perseverance. Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.

[ 26 : 37 ] And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart in your struggle against sin. You've not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood, but he did.

So let something of his mortifying of sin, his death to sin, be seen in your struggle against sin.

He calls us to take up our cross and to follow him. Deny yourself, take up your cross, follow. If you don't do that, you can't be my disciple. What he was saying is he was going to Jerusalem. He had a cross waiting for him at Jerusalem, didn't he? And he says, if you're following me, you're going to need your cross too because you're going to be mistreated. And you need to be ready to lay down your life.

[ 27 : 42 ] You need to be ready to deny yourself and lay down your life if you're following me. And so may the Lord direct our hearts into God's love and into Christ's perseverance, cruciform perseverance against all the pressures to quit and to give it up.

Jesus didn't quit. And so when you think it's costing you too dearly, just remember, look again at the cross, considering him, endure your cross as he did his for you.

And then prayer. Prayer is different because of the cross, isn't it? In fact, every time we pray, the reality is that the cross has opened up this new and living way to come into the most holy place and have a face-to-face meeting with God in prayer and to be able to come with confidence.

It's the blood of Jesus. Hebrews 10, 19 to 22, therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place, that's the heavenly holy place, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way open for us through the curtain that is his body.

And since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

[ 29 : 11 ] We pray in Jesus' name, we're drawing the connection between Calvary and the blood that was shed there that opens up my access to God.

I'm coming, God, not on my own merit and worth, but I come in Jesus' name. I come on his arm. And then in Jesus, the scepter is always up. It's always welcomed to me so that I can come with confidence.

That's a cruciform prayer life. It's shaped by Calvary. What a costly, privileged prayer is.

It costs the blood of Jesus. Let's embrace that privilege with a sense of what it costs our Savior. It's purpose in life.

You're not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God in your body. If he purchased us with his blood, then we aren't our own. So my new purpose in life is now to honor and magnify and to glorify him.

[ 30 : 10 ] Where does that purpose in life come from? It comes from the cross where he bought us. And then we're going to a cruciform heaven, by which I mean it's a place where the song is ever worthy as the lamb that was slain.

And so we sang tonight, amazing love. How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me? There are people around the throne of God in heaven tonight singing that very theme.

Worthy is the lamb. That was slain. That purchased us for God. Amazing love. They see him and are still amazed that he would die for them.

Let me end with a parable, a garden parable. A man planted a garden right beneath the cross of Christ. And all the plants bore the richest harvest, like none ever seen on earth before.

This is just a story I've made up, like Jesus made about the Pharisees and the tax collectors. So it wasn't just 30, 60, 100 fold, but it was thousand fold return on the plants that he had planted there at the foot of the cross.

[ 31 : 22 ] A supernatural fruitfulness. So he just kept expanding his garden, but he soon observed that the further his plants were from the cross, the less fruitful they became.

But when he took those same plants that were furthest from the cross and transplanted them right at the foot of the cross, they again, they produced thousand fold with an increase.

And so in the same way, nothing is so life-giving as the cross of Christ. And here is the greatest demonstration of God's love ever in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

And so it is staying near the cross of Christ that its sweet influence permeates the whole of our lives and we live cruciform lives that bear the marks of Calvary.

And our gratitude for our Savior. That's where we're most healthy. There our love for Jesus grows most rapidly. There our gratitude and appreciation and thankfulness overflows.

[ 32 : 31 ] There our zeal to tell our children and others about the cross finds increase. There our cruciform love for others, sacrificial love for others grows.

Our cruciform response to mistreatment, cruciform forgiveness, cruciform perseverance and holiness, cruciform mortification of sin. It's at the cross that the world is crucified to me and I to it. Our cruciform prayers flourish there. Our cruciform purpose in life, to live for him who died for me. And there thrives our cruciform hope of heaven where the lamb is all the glory in Emmanuel's land. So on any given day, you have nothing more important than to bask in the love of Christ for you, seen at Calvary.

And I say that because it's near the cross that the benefits of it reach our hearts and seep into the whole of our lives.

[ 33 : 37 ] Let's sing that song, Jesus, keep me near the cross. It's number 704. 704. And let's make this our cry.

Did Jesus die for us? Oh, then let it be our focus. Let it be something we don't forget, but it's so much a part of our lives that we are daily remembering it.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.