

The Cross of Jesus Christ

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[0:00] And take your scriptures, take your Bibles, and turn to Isaiah chapter 53. Isaiah chapter 53.

One of the most powerful chapters in all of the Bible. I think no matter how many times it is read, the Holy Spirit bears witness that this is Jesus Christ that we are reading about.

Isaiah chapter 53, verse 1. Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering.

Like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted.

[1:19] But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

By oppression and judgment, he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living.

For the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

[2:26] Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer. And though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied. By his knowledge, my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death and was numbered with the transgressors.

For he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors. Again, it is our privilege, our blessing to have Bob's self with us.

Rather, come and preach the word. Amen. Such an honor to be again with you and in this pulpit.

[3:33] Thank you for your gracious invitation, and thank you for your fellowship in Christ for many years. Will you take your Bibles and now turn to 1 Corinthians in chapter 1.

It is my privilege and responsibility this morning to speak the gospel to you. And if it's okay, I'm going to, not knowing plenty of you folks, personally, I really don't know where you are in your understanding of how a person becomes right with God and how a person has an intimate, personal relationship with God.

So I'll be speaking largely from treating you all as though you're lost. You don't have that. You're cut off.

There's distance between you and God. Maybe you've been to church many times. Maybe this is your first day you've ever been to church. But without speaking about all kinds of other religions and denominations, I would just bring to you the word of God and ask us to listen to God's word.

1 Corinthians 1, when Paul made his way to a city called Corinth, he would speak to them, and here he goes in chapter 1, verse 17, For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

[5:19] For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is, this message of the cross, it is the power of God.

And notice in verse 23, in verse 22, the Jews demand miraculous signs. They're looking for ways to see God's power, reality, and action.

The Greeks look for wisdom. They want to have philosophical arguments that are overwhelming. But we preach Christ crucified.

The message of the cross, that's where the power of God's revealed. It's a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

He's exactly what the Jews were searching for, the power of God, but they were missing the message of the cross. He's exactly what the Gentiles and Greeks were looking for in terms of wisdom and philosophical rationality.

[6:39] But they weren't listening to the message of the cross. It's in the cross. Notice in chapter 2 and verse 1, he says, when he came to Corinth, he says, When I came to you, brothers, writing to the church, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And if you'll turn to chapter 11, 1 Corinthians 11, Christ gave to His church a supper known as the Lord's Supper.

And as the church imbibes in the elements of bread and the fruit of the vine, notice in chapter 11, verse 26, and whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you, you as a church, you proclaim, you preach the Lord's death until He comes.

the cross, the Lord's death, Christ crucified, and if you will, to Galatians. Just a few books later, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, and then Galatians.

Galatians 6, in verse 14.

[8:28] I love the translations that start out with God forbid, but here, this NIV says, may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's my boast, the cross. So when you take all these texts that we just read, there's a common theme that speaks to the centrality of the cross of Jesus Christ.

When you're looking at the message of the Bible, it centers upon the cross of Christ. The word of the cross. Preach Christ crucified, Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Proclaim the Lord's death. Should not boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ.

And if you are ever interested in becoming a Christian, you are going to have to come by way of the cross.

There's no other way to God. It's the cross. And you can look for all kinds of other religious experiences and maybe somebody somewhere has an answer to what happens when a person dies or how they can justify their existence and if there's a God, how we can know Him.

[9:55] But it all comes back to God's word revealing that you've got to come to God via the cross. That's the central point of the Christian faith.

That's everything that the Bible reveals. It's all hinged upon what happened there in regard to the cross of Christ. And it's all that this church here believes.

Our confidence, our hope for this life and the one to come. It's the cross. Which seems like a weird belief system when you think of explaining what happened at the cross to children.

Rather gory. Rather brutal. Rather inhumane. The liberal progressives, they would, they just shake their head at such things.

And self-righteous conservatives, they would, why do I need a cross? I'm good enough. I'm rather pleased with myself.

[11:08] God must open up the mystery of the cross to you or you will never get it. You'll never be saved God's way.

You can never understand that the bloody crucifixion of Jesus Christ was anything more than just another historical event rather than that awesome spectacle of grace.

You'll never get it. And I remember when I was in high school and traveling on athletic teams from northern Arizona down to Phoenix. The schools, we were big enough.

We had to play Phoenix schools so did a lot of road time and someone, when God was preparing to turn my heart, someone gave me a book of Spurgeon's sermons on the blood and the cross of

Christ.

And I would, we'd be traveling down I-17 weekend after weekend and I'm reading these sermons. And God lowered the boom on my heart.

[12:11] He opened my eyes and made me see Him and His glory and His holy glory, my sin and all of my depravity and corruption and vileness and helplessness.

But He opened up the cross of Christ and how the Lamb of God came out of heaven and He was pinned there to that scaffold on a hill outside Jerusalem one day and it all came together.

My eyes are opened and I beheld something amazing that I've never departed from and has become more dear and precious to me every day of my life.

As Christians, we grow only as we grow in appreciation for the cross of Christ. The cross must have a central place in our everyday thinking.

It's the cross that can relieve your sorely oppressed conscience. It's the cross. It's the cross that restores our hope and faith.

[13:11] It's the cross. That's where we were brought into a loving relationship with a holy God and it's there that we live rejoicing in that old rugged cross.

I'm going to ask five questions today and I get to give the answers. five points and credit to A.N.

Martin tapped these simple points just to have this presentation of the cross.

Number one, what do the scriptures mean when they speak of the cross? The cross of Christ. What do they mean? Well, it's not referring to a necklace somebody wears.

You saw a lot of those if you watched a lot of the batters in the playoffs. It's not referring to a church steeple, what's on top of that spire.

Not even referring to the original cross, that structure of wood. The cross is referring to a historical fact and the significance of that fact.

[14:27] It's the fact of the historical cross and it's the biblical interpretation of that fact. What does the cross mean?

Well, it was a strange death that day outside of Jerusalem some 2,000 years ago. Three men were nailed to crosses. crosses. The one in the middle was especially beaten and bloody.

His name was Jesus. He was attracting an especially large crowd. And there were strange happenings that day.

And Jewish historians verify the reality it actually took place. It began at 9 a.m. one day.

And it lasted for six hours until this Jesus died. In the middle of that time at noon all of a sudden the world became completely dark.

[15:35] The sun was shielded by God's supernatural power. At 3 p.m. the ground began to shake and the scriptures reveal that the rocks tore away from one another.

And in the temple there was this very thick large multi-layered curtain. And it just tore right down the center opening up the two rooms of the temple which carries a lot of significance in understanding the scripture.

But it was a real death. It was a real person. It was a real wooden cross with real iron spikes. Jesus was really hanging there in the shame of his nakedness.

And if you were there you would have seen the scribes and the priests the Jewish scribes and priests glaring. You would have seen the crowd gawking.

The soldiers gloating. And the followers of Jesus grimacing. and you would have seen the two men crucified on either side of Jesus.

[16:49] It was a real historic event. Just like 9-11 happened some 15 years ago. Just like the World Series took place and ended this past week.

It was a real historic event. So what really matters is the interpretation of that event. number two.

Who was this Jesus who died? After all of the Roman deaths and there were crosses and scaffolds all over the countryside.

What made this death so special? That today 2,000 years later there's a whole faith built around that one man and millions upon millions all around the world today are following and loving and trusting that man because of what happened that day on that hill outside of Jerusalem.

And those many people from around the world would gladly give their lives for that man. people from China and Brazil and France and Italy and Mexico and yes the United States.

[18:15] They believe their eternal destinies hang upon the significance of what that man was doing that day hanging on the cross.

Who was he? the answer is he was God. He was God. Nothing less than God living in a human body.

He was the eternal creator. He was God who came to reveal God. He was the outshining of God's person the exact imprint imprint.

If you take a stamp and put it in some clay God stamp and that imprint was Jesus Christ. The exact imprint of the very person of God.

Jesus said if you've seen me you've seen the father. This one known as Jesus put to death on that ugly instrument of death was indeed in fact God the son.

[19:24] He was God. While all man he was all God. In the beginning was the word and the word was with God different but the word was God same.

The same was in the beginning with God. And this word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory even the glory of the only begotten of the father full of grace and truth.

The name was given to him Emmanuel which is interpreted God with us. Well thirdly why was he there?

If that is who he was why was he there? The answer certainly not for his own sins God because he was the innocent spotless Lamb of God.

In fact John the Baptist when he came and saw Jesus one day he says there he goes there he is the Lamb of God he's the one that takes away the sins of the world. Why was he there?

[20:38] Well by some he was vindicated like by the father his own father in heaven who didn't have the slightest disappointment in his voice or wrinkle in his brow but said one day that is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased.

First at his baptism then at the Mount of Transfiguration later in his life that's my son in whom I'm well pleased. He was also vindicated by his disciples who saw him and they were with him at times when he was so weary and hungry and chaste and crowded and threatened and yet they always saw in him a perfect purity a sweetness a loveliness a patience so that Peter could say later in a book that he wrote he never did sin never was there any deceit within his mouth not once did he sin not once how unlike me Jesus well you say well those are his closest associates they affirmed him but what about his enemies well take his betrayer

Judas he brought those 30 pieces of silver threw them down on the temple floor and says I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood take Pilate the judge the governor who at the end of that ridiculous trial as he washed his hands he says I am innocent of the blood of this just man take the soldier at the foot of the cross after having participated in the scourging and the crucifying his heart melted his eyes were opened so that he proclaimed truly this man was the son of God and even the Jews his arch enemies with all of their conflicting lies about him the best thing they could accuse him of come up with was he said destroy this temple and in three days

I'll raise it up was that any reason to murder a man well then why was he there the answer he was there for crimes that were laid to his charge in his person he was innocent but in his position he was guilty the scripture refers to Jesus as the last Adam of Adam and Eve so you have two great representatives in all of the history of man Adam in the garden and what he did there he represented all of mankind Jesus when he came and was pinned to the tree the cross he was there as a representative for those whom the father sent him to save two people groups the

Bible says in this first Corinthians 15 same letter that we read earlier as an Adam all die so in Christ all shall be made alive Adam personally was in the garden but positionally Adam represented the entire human race it's like when we start a football game you have the captains come out from both teams and stand in the center of the field the referee flips the coin whatever happens to the captain of Bremen High School happens to the entire team if he wins the toss they win the toss and then he chooses to either kick or receive and whatever he chooses that is what he's a representative of those he represents Jesus in his person was innocent but positionally he was the representative of his people he was the covenant head of those who have ever or will ever come to

[25:18] God through him so why was he there he was there hanging taking responsibility for the sins of those he came to save those graphic scenes of torture were evidences of what was going on between the father and his son Jesus Christ the son of the living God who was standing in the place of others fourthly what was really happening to Jesus on the cross well let's hear the word of God it says it clearly to us in second Corinthians 5:21 he the father made him his son to become sin for us he who had never sinned that we might become the righteousness of God in him he became sin for us

Galatians 3 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us for it's written cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree he became a curse for us Romans 8 32 he did not spare his son but gave him up for us all the father gave him up delivered him up put him on the cross made him a curse he became sin for us what happened it was the pouring out of the father's holy justice upon his only son everything that the law of God demanded for law breakers like you and me everything God's holy law demanded for transgressors was poured out in terms of justice the penalties of

God's justice upon Christ it was all laid upon Jesus we just read that in Isaiah 53 and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all and he bruised him he crushed him what happened to Jesus on the cross was justice holy justice the wages of sin is death somebody's got to pay for your sin the soul that sins it must die the son of God was taking our place and the hell we deserved was poured out upon him there that day he was our substitute and the son takes this position between us and God with his soul cleansing blood and he covers us under the shadow of his own omnipotence saying father

I placed them behind me those that deserve all the wrath of a holy God for their sin let that wrath break upon me pour out the terrors of divine justice on me I will stand in their place I ask you this question that day who was putting Jesus to death when I lived in Carlisle traveled a lot but when I was home I liked to go to the gym and work out leave the office about 430 and go over there and have a real good workout and on Wednesdays it was nice and I would go work out and right next door to the gym was a pizza place so I hit the gym hit the pizza and go to prayer meeting which was right around the corner movie about the passion of the

Christ a movie I never did see read a lot of reviews on it but our church got cases of books that John Piper wrote about the passion of the Christ and he John Piper defined in his book what was happening to Jesus on the cross and what was going on so that such a popular movie and many people saw well that day I worked out went into the pizza place named Messenos and I knew the guys and I took a handful of those books and while he stood there kind of putting my pizza together I said have you seen and it was there from Italy Naples Italy and they had a picture of Naples on the poster of Naples on the wall had a Madonna there as a kind of a water type of nice ornamentation so I asked him have you seen this movie The Passion of the Christ and he said no he hadn't I said well let me ask you this question who do you think was putting

[30 : 39] Jesus to death on the cross you believe that yes he had a crucifix on the wall who do you think was putting Jesus to death and he thought it was a trick!

question or he didn't want to be embarrassed with a wrong answer so he came back with question after question who do you think I said well it wasn't the Roman soldiers and it wasn't the Jews and it wasn't the devil you know what the Bible says who it was who his father you should have seen that guy's face completely puzzled and a gas that that could possibly be it that the father was the one that was putting his own son to death interesting side story to that my son was in the Navy and stationed in Naples and had gone to a church in the area Italian church and become very close to those people love them and they received them so beautifully they learned a lot of Italian when they were there but

Ben was praying with an old gray-haired grandpa for his family his family had moved out of Italy and gone to open up pizza places in Scranton Pennsylvania and Carlisle Pennsylvania yeah that was my son grandpa in Naples Italy are praying that God would send somebody to tell his grandsons and children about Jesus and I walk into Massano's pizza and I'm talking to him about Jesus there is a goat it was the father it was the father bruising crushing is the word what in Isaiah 53 the father was crushing his own son the father was satisfying justice his violated justice due to my sins and yours crushing his own son as he stood in the place a substitute for us as sinners pouring out his judicial anger upon his own son

Jesus was receiving the punishment due to our sins from the hands of his own father he was there for me in my place paying the penalty and the price that my sins deserved sins cannot be overlooked not your sins either so when the father saw my sins draped around his own son he turns his face away from his own son and pours out his wrath upon him that's what was happening that day outside of Jerusalem 2000 years ago and number five what benefits come to sinners from the cross when Jesus just as he was about to die he cried out it is finished what is finished

Jesus sin bearing justice is satisfied and all those for whom Jesus died and you have draped yourself in him you have embraced him and you've been joined to him you can truly say I'm

accepted with God in the beloved I now stand in grace and I've been raised to new life as he was raised out of that tomb and his sacrifice was accepted by God his father and everything my sins deserved were paid by him in full and God raised his own son from the dead sin debts are paid in the person and work of Jesus Christ you know sins cannot be paid for by acts of penance sins cannot be paid for because maybe we start going to church and pay tithes and offerings sins cannot be paid for because of any works that we might try to do to offset the badness and the evil of our sins sins can only be paid for in what

[35:33] Jesus did on the cross he did for me what I could not do for myself all that I deserve fell upon Jesus and all that the spotless lamb of God deserved is applied to my account and that those trips and especially one day as I'm riding that bus and I'm reading those sermons it really dawned on me and captured me and I awoke and I realized that great transaction is what I need my sins to Jesus and his righteousness to me and because I can do nothing to help myself or make myself acceptable I can join a thousand churches and give hundreds of thousands of dollars I can do every good work that is known to man and still I come up short but

I look to Christ I look to the son of God's love and I have a savior who takes my guilt and my shame and he gives to me his perfect righteousness and makes me fit for heaven and he moves my soul to cry out hallelujah what a savior man of sorrows what a name for the son of God who came ruined sinners to reclaim say it with me hallelujah what a savior bearing shame and scoffing rude in my place condemned he stood sealed my pardon with his blood hallelujah what a savior guilty violent helpless we spotless lamb of God was he full atonement can it be hallelujah what a savior lifted up was he to die it is finished was his cry now in heaven exalted high hallelujah what a savior when he comes our glorious king all his ransomed home to bring then anew this song will sing hallelujah what a savior friend get into

Christ there and there only will the father deal with your sins pardon your sins he'll apply your sins to the account of Jesus Christ and he'll apply Christ's perfect righteousness to you making you the greatest sinner in the world right with him and fit for heaven without anything you can contribute whatsoever but you've got to experience a fusion to his person like two bones vertebrae are fused together and become one like a man and a woman who come in as two but they leave married as one that's salvation getting into Christ joined to Christ fused to Christ placed in Christ the scripture says God is just and he's the justifier of those who believe in Jesus you've got to come by faith not by any works you might perform but by faith whether your faith is great or whether it's just that of a mustard seed very simple and small it's the type of faith it's not the amount of faith come to Jesus by faith and you will receive that justification Christian speak to you for a moment you must accept this truth with this redemption Jesus has drained the cup of God's wrath his holy justice and he satisfied every bit of God's wrath in your place for your sin and he said he said it is finished and if Christ has satisfied God's holy demands toward you on your behalf then Christian you are accepted with God and though we still struggle with our sins on a daily basis we look by faith to Christ at what he did in our place on the tree your efforts don't matter you cannot earn

God's love Christian God loves you he loves you and he's never going to stop loving you he loves you as much today as he did yesterday and you can't get him to love you more tomorrow than he does right now he loves you and you can do nothing except as a Christian believe it is finished in your behalf and so as died as Christ died to make you holy then be holy as he is holy and enjoy all the benefits that are yours in Christ just some parting thoughts to you who maybe are not Christians here today and I say Christians who are truly born you may be a member of a church somewhere but I'm speaking to those who have never known dynamically personally intimately that fusion of your heart to the heart of

[41:22] Christ in salvation as described in the Bible if you're not a Christian what the cross says to us is your sin is serious you are what the Bible describes as a sinner that's the special category that you fall under and all of us all of us here today have sat where you sit and have had to deal with this very issue but we eventually had to come to the place where we said guilty vile and helpless we but Jesus Christ came into this world to save guilty sinners and Jesus Christ loves to save helpless sinners his name Jesus means Jehovah!

saves he will save his people from his sins and so from his gaping wounds on Mount Calvary he bids you come come and from all of his agony suffered there he bids you come he's no longer in the grave and so from that exalted place at the right hand of God he's still saying to you and everyone in this world come come unto me come unto me all you that are weary and heavy laden I will give

you rest and at the point that you're finally weary enough trying to figure out your life and future and security and identity and significance and value and hope and all the rest you're weary of trying to figure it out on your own and you're weary with trying to impress God with your good works that never are sufficient and you finally get weary of chasing for satisfaction in this world and what it has to offer and you realize

I'm chasing and I'm really never going to have that which is gnawing in my heart dealt with where I really have peace with God a peace that passes all understanding where I can say for me to live is Christ and for me to die is gain if you've ever come to that place where you realize and you're weary!

that door is open right now come unto Christ don't wait another day don't wait until you lay your head on your pillow tonight come to Christ now run to Christ now give your heart and life to Christ now come to Calvary and have that kind of dealing with the crucified savior your substitute Jesus my sin to you oh God give me the righteousness of your son I need!

to save me that's the truth that's the interpretation of the Bible with regard to the cross of Jesus Christ and without it being applied to your soul you're going to perish with it being applied you'll have peace with God and you'll never ever ever again come into condemnation believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved all that that cross the emblem of suffering and shame how I love that old cross where the dearest and the best for a world of lost sinners was slain so I'm going to cherish that old rugged cross till my trophies at last

[45 : 34] I lay down and I'm going to cling to that old rugged cross and exchange it someday for a crown my life as a man that has given my heart to Christ and find all my hope and purpose and peace in Jesus Christ I'm clinging and I'm cherishing I'm clinging and I'm cherishing and I believe to the day I die that by the grace of God will be what's going on in my heart and my life may it be so with you