

Do You Know What the Cross Means?

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You have to realize, God left heaven and He took upon Himself flesh, and He endured the wrath of God. The one thing only that I ever read in the Scriptures that Christ said, "Father, no, no, if possible not that." You read in the Psalms, "poured out like water."

Listen, can you even conceive how God can forsake God? We don't even know, we can't even fathom how God and man can be one in one person. And how there can be a forsaking of one person of the Godhead by the other. We don't know it, We don't know it. We don't understand how that's possible. But it was necessary. When you consider that sin requires the damned to stay in hell forever and to suffer forever, unending, forever and forever. When you look at the cross, and it hits you square between the eyes, sin demands death and God isn't messing around. And if He finds unforgiven sin, He will throw you into the lake of fire and even when His Son became sin, He drank the cup. It's like, "Son, if you will become sin in the place of my people, I must force a cup to your lips that you will not want to drink." And He drank the cup of God's wrath, and He drank every drop of it.

And when man looks at that cross, he begins to realize, God never sweeps sin under the rug. He never ignores it. Sin is really, really bad. Sin demands that Christ Himself must suffer and die. The Law has such absolute sway, it will be gratified. The Law will be upheld. The Law will be sustained. It makes man realize he is in trouble. It makes man realize there is an awful price to pay for sin. It makes man realize that there is no way he can save himself. God had to send His Son into this world. It strips man. It lays man bare to look at the cross. That's what He is saying here.

You see, as soon as somebody comes along and they say, "Hey, we need circumcision." We are saying, "Oh, I can add to the work of Christ." But you see, the offense of the cross is that the cross screams at man, "You add nothing to this!" You can add nothing. Because why? Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. It strips it all away.

You see, the offense of the cross is, "Man, you are not good enough. You are filthy, you are wretched, you are a sinner." And the truth is, that most men will not come to Christ because they would rather be good enough in that day.

You say, "Where do you get that?" Well, for one, all you have to do is talk to people, and you can figure that out. But in Romans you have that reality. You have Israel, they pursued a law that would lead to righteousness. But they did not succeed in reaching the law. You see, there is the problem. There is the problem- they had their Law, but they never reached it. And so the Law comes in and condemns them. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written. You see, it's an offense. "Behold, I am laying in Zion, a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense."

Why is Christ so offensive? Why is the cross so offensive? Because it says, "Man, you are not good. You are bad." You say, "There couldn't be any better news." That's true, there could be no better news for men who are absolutely at the end of themselves and realize, "I can do nothing to save myself. I am totally on empty, I am at the bottom, I have come to the end."

Lord, I am going to hell, I realize it. I am absolutely weak and I am in a hopeless condition, and if You don't come save me, I won't be saved."

You see, for people like that, this is the best news on the face of the earth. But for people who think they are pretty good, they don't want this. The Cross is an offense to them. Because it sticks them right in their pride. Proud man loves to boast, he loves to tell you about his credentials.

That was Paul when he was lost. Let me tell you about my credentials! I was circumcised the eighth day. I was born of a certain tribe of Benjamin. I am a Jew! I have got all the credentials! By flesh, I was born in the right people. I was born in the right tribe. I was circumcised in the right way. I was of the elite, I was a Pharisee. When it came to the Law, as a man, as a religious man, I sought meticulously to keep it. You know what the cross does? It steps in and it strips you bare of all that. It says it's all worthless, and if you will go to heaven, you have got to denounce it all. Lay it all aside, set it down, count it as dung. That's what he did. Count it as worthy of nothing but the dung heap! Everything.

That's what the cross does. It comes to man and it says, "What's your going to church? Throw it on the dung heap. So what if you have owned a Bible! So what if you were born in a Christian family. Throw it on the dung heap! So what if your grandfather was a preacher, throw it out on the dung heap! So what if you have done your penance. So what if you've gone and taken the Lord's Supper. So what if you were baptized." How so many people want to say, "Well, I am a deacon, I have sung in the choir, I have been baptized." So what! Throw it on the dung heap!

That's what the cross says to man, and it's offensive and man's pride just bristles when he hears it. "How dare you tell me that! How dare you tell me that I am not good enough! I am not bad enough to go to hell." You know what the cross says? The cross says, "You are bad enough to go to hell, and you needed something supplied outside your efforts to make a way to heaven. That's what it says and that is offensive to self-righteous man, that is offensive to his pride. Man by nature is proud. Man by nature thinks he is good enough.

Why do you think we can go up and down the streets and almost everybody says they are good enough to go to heaven. Almost everybody in this country believes that they are going to heaven. Almost everybody believes they are right with God. Why? Because they are proud and they are deceived. And when you begin to tell them about the cross, you begin to tell them about how bad they are, how bad man is, and what that cross is all about... Jesus said it. Jesus said, "I didn't come for those of you that are well..." The self-righteous, they rejected Him. He said to them, the tax collectors and the prostitutes, they are going in.

Why? Because a lot of the tax collectors and prostitutes look at their lives and they say, "There is no hope for me." No! The cross is hope for the hopeless. It's the good church goes that there's no hope for. Because the thing is, if you go to Christ, you go to Christ to be saved by Him. And if you want to add any of your works, any of your efforts, any of your circumcision, any of your "stuff," then He won't take you. You come by faith in Him alone. And that's good news for bad people. That's bad news for good people.

But that's what He said, "I came to seek and save sinners." I came to call sinners to repentance, not righteous people. He said, "Who needs a doctor? Is it the healthy person who

needs a doctor?" He's a doctor! He came to heal the sick. And He was basically saying to them, "I didn't come to heal those who are well, I didn't come to call the righteous."

You say, "Well are there any?" Well, there are those that think they are. Listen, there's only one kind of faith that saves. It's the faith that says Jesus is all. He's all my salvation. He's all my hope. It's not part Him and part me. It's not 90% Him and 10% me, it's not 99% Him and 1% my circumcision, or uncircumcision. It's because... as soon as one part comes in, then Paul just says, "That's it! Do the whole thing."

You see, that's what Christ says, remember Paul's inspired, this is Christ behind him speaking. Christ is basically saying this to all of us, "Even if it's 9,999 parts Christ, you bring your one part in you, that's it! You've just disconnected from Me, and now you keep the whole thing." You see, Christ doesn't share any of it. He says, "I'm saving you wholly, or not at all. You want one little part in it, you are severed from Me. That's it." But if you are a sinner, that's the best news ever. That means I don't have to have anything. I mean if you look at your life and you really come to realize, "If it took even one part in 10,000 mine, I am going to hell because I don't have anything to offer." You see, salvation is for the bankrupt, it's for the broken, it's for the destitute, it's for the one who is broke.