

The Unpopular Message of the Cross

October 18, 2009

I. Intro

- a. Preaching is not the art of making a sermon and delivering it. Preaching is the art of making a preacher and delivering him. The more opportunities I have to stand up here and speak, the more I find this statement to be true. At school, they teach you how to stand up in front and convey a message to your audience in a way that doesn't put them to sleep. But it seems the truth about preaching is in fact what the saying says; it is about making a preacher. This is as much a learning process for me as it is for any of you. And it is awesome to be on this journey together; able to encourage each other and help each other persevere. And this is especially true with the message we will be getting into today which I have entitled, "The Unpopular Message of the Cross."
- b. Re-cap Last Week-Examined Two Things
 - i. The Leaven in the Bread
 - 1. Why it shouldn't surprise us that the message taught in Christendom today is on a wide spectrum.
 - 2. How the message has been corrupted and the truth has been distorted and perverted.
 - 3. This does not mean the Word itself is corrupt; it is pure truth.
 - ii. Embrace the Justice of God as much as we embrace the Love of God particularly when it comes to the Justice of God in relation to us post-salvation, once we are His children.
 - 1. Once we understand that God remains Just once we are saved, there is accountability in that and understanding that God remains Just should have an impact on the way we live our lives. Whether we live for ourselves or for Him.
 - 2. Understanding, as we read in 1 Corinthians 3 last week, that Christians will stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ and the way in which we built on the foundation, which is Jesus Christ, will be revealed and dealt with accordingly.
 - 3. Last week we read passages concerning God rewarding the righteous while the wicked will suffer loss and handing His own people over to their own stubborn ways. This is serious stuff we're dealing with, stuff that is not taught because we don't like being held accountable, we like the message of free love and grace without the justice.
 - 4. Once we are saved, whether we want to or not, we are building on top of the foundation and the way in which

we live has consequences which deal with the millennial kingdom, not one's eternal salvation because as that same passage in 1 Corinthians says, once we have the foundation of Christ, once we have been saved by the grace of God, that foundation can never be removed and eternal life can never be taken away. But don't be misled, that which we have built on top of the foundation can cause us to suffer loss.

5. The justice of God needs to be embraced by believers because what we see is when God executes His justice, it is because He loves us.
6. Today, we're going to see how the Justice of God and the Love of God help give us a full message of the cross.

II. Transition

- a. Unfortunately, I don't have the best of memories when it comes to bringing to mind things from my past, especially from when I was just a little guy. I don't remember being shorter than 5'4". Seriously though, unless someone brings it to my mind and describes it to me, it is tough for me to just bring it to memory.
- b. But one of my earliest memories is when I was a wee little fella, I'm talking age 6 or so. I was at the Christian bookstore with my ma and there was this cross that I really wanted (show cross). And as I pestered my mom to get it for me she made a deal with me. She said, if I memorized the Lord's prayer (I was allowed to insert debtor instead of trespass), my dad and her would get the cross for me.
- c. When I was in 5th grade, I went through confirmation class, every Wednesday night in order to become a member of the church we attended. And while it was cool to become a member of the church, I was most thrilled with what that meant: I got my own nametag and they gave me this cross necklace.
- d. What's the point? We are infatuated with the cross in today's society. It is one of the most well-known symbols of all-time. Practically every culture throughout history over the past two thousand years sees the cross and they know what is implied by it.
- e. The sad part is today it has just become yet another symbol with hardly any meaning.
- f. So was it worth it for me to memorize the Lord's Prayer to receive that cross? Yes. Because of what I am reminded of when I see this cross on my desk.
- g. Hopefully, the cross will mean something more to you after today than what it has in the past. More than a token of love and grace. Something personal.
- h. I am reminded of a quote by Billy Graham:
 - i. When Jesus said, "If you are going to follow me, you have to take up a cross," it was the same as saying, "Come and bring your electric chair with you. Take up the gas chamber and

follow me.” He did not have a beautiful gold cross in mind—the cross on a church steeple or on the front of your Bible. Jesus had in mind a place of execution.

- i. Today, we are going to discuss the point in history where God’s Justice and God’s Love came together in the purest form and that is at the Cross. The wrath of God was fully satisfied and by the same token, in the most loving act by God, man was re-connected with his maker.
- j. And why is it important for us to study the full word of the cross?
 - i. 1 Corinthians 1:18 *For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

III. The Popular Message of the Cross-incomplete message taught today.

a. Christ’s Cross

i. The Grace of Christ

1. From the foundation of the world

- a. Revelation 13:8b *“in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.”*

2. Last week we read the precedent God set forth in how to atone for our sins:

- a. Genesis 3:21 *“The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.”*
- b. It was the blood from the animals God slew in order to cover Adam and Eve that in fact covered their sin.
- c. Verse on Christ’s blood

3. Necessary in order to remain one with His future Bride

- a. 2 Cor 5:21 *“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*
- b. Romans 5:19 *For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.*
- c. Christ, as in the type of Adam eating of the fruit in order to remain one with His wife, came to earth in order to redeem His Bride.
- d. In order to allow a plan of salvation to be set forth, a way in order for Eve to be redeemed, it was necessary for Adam to eat of the fruit.
- e. Likewise, Christ had to come to earth, humble himself and take on the sin of the world in order for His future Bride to be redeemed.

ii. The Suffering of Christ

1. Philippians 2:8 *Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*
2. Not the time for Christ to set up His kingdom
 - a. Hebrews 2:9 *But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.*
3. Agonizing in the Garden
 - a. Matthew 26:39 *And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."*
4. Suffering Servant
 - a. Isaiah 50:6 *I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting.*
 - b. Mark 15:19 *They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him.*
 - c. In all of these verses we clearly see Christ understood that suffering precedes glory.
- iii. The Hope of Christ
 1. Hebrews 12:2b *who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*
 2. He currently sits at the right hand of the throne of God as our High Priest and He awaits the future day when He sets up His kingdom and His Bride is revealed.

IV. Transition

- a. So, why is this message "popular?"
- b. I think Soren Kierkegaard answers best "To become an 'admirer of Jesus' is much easier than to become a follower."
- c. There is no accountability in this message.
- d. I want to argue that there is a fuller picture that the cross should symbolize to us.

V. The Unpopular Message of the Cross

- a. Our Cross
 - i. Luke 9:23-26 *And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. 24 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. 25 "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? 26 "For whoever is ashamed*

of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

1. Once a person believes, he is to take up his cross and follow Christ from that moment on.
 - a. Deny=arneomai
 - i. Disregarding one's own interests
 - b. Story of boy switching from kindergarten where he got out of school at noon to first grade where he stayed all day. First day of school, he started packing up at noon to go home. His teacher asked what he was doing. He told her it was time to go home. She said, oh no, you go to lunch now then come back and we have some work to do. The boy, in disbelief, placed his hands on his hips and said, "Who on earth signed me up for this program."
2. Not something we are to put down or pick up at our leisure
3. Romans 12:1-2 *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*
 - a. We are to put ourselves on the altar and offer ourselves as a sacrifice. When an animal was placed on the altar, they didn't put it on for a while, take it off so he could have a little "personal time" to do as he pleased and then put it back on.
4. So what is this metaphorical cross?
 - a. Galatians 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*
 - b. Seems as if it has something to do with this inner struggle. We have been crucified with Christ, yet our sin nature remains even though we have been forgiven and the Spirit lives in us.
 - c. Romans 7:18-25 *18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. 19 For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. 20 But if I am*

b. Hebrews 12:1-3 *1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

i. We endure because we have that same joy before us: the inheritance, to be a co-heir with Christ

1. Romans 8:17 *heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.*

8. Sketch of Peter

a. Thought Christ would overtake Rome and set up the Jewish Kingdom then.

b. Christ rebukes him "Get behind me Satan" as he was aligning himself as a child of darkness not a child of light

c. Not even a day later, Peter denies Christ three times after vehemently proclaiming his allegiance to Christ

d. At the tomb, the angel tells the Marys to go tell the disciples, and Peter as if Christ knew he needed encouragement. Peter ran to the tomb and we are told, he marveled at what took place.

e. After the Crucifixion Peter is fishing and a man yells from shore. Peter knows it is Christ and jumps in the water and swims to him.

f. Jesus asks three times, "Do you love me?" and then commands Peter to tend his sheep giving him responsibility

g. Jesus tells Peter he will die a martyr's death (which must have relieved him after he just betrayed Jesus) but then Peter asks, what about John? How will he die?

i. Jesus tells him if he wants John to remain till He returns then so be it but you follow me.

ii. This is the full message of the cross.

- iii.* This is an individual process
- iv.* God gives us the grace and the mercy to follow after Him once we believe.

VI. Conclusion

- a. Spurgeon “There are no crown-wearers in heaven who were not cross-bearers here below. “
- b. Dr. Vance Havner “We need men of the cross, with the message of the cross, bearing the marks of the cross.”
 - i. Will you be a man of the cross?
 - ii. Will you take it up daily?
 - iii. Will you deny your own interests for the sake of Christ?