

SEVEN SAYINGS FROM THE CROSS

INTRODUCTION

Matthew 27:33-54; Galatians 6:14

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- “The Cross of Christ” means different things to different people
- To some it may mean a “relic”, part of the actual cross on which Jesus was crucified
- The Jews who reject the cross for a “torture stake” (cf. John 20:25)
- “The cross” is used in the New Testament as a metonymy for Christ’s atoning sacrifice, and hence, the gospel itself.
- The cross is the very centre and heart of Christianity.
- It is through the cross that sinful man can be justified, reconciled to God, delivered from sin, death and hell, and granted eternal life in heaven; without the cross, there is no Christianity.
- Yet, in modern churches, there is a de-emphasis on the cross in their preaching and singing.
- Many find descriptions of Christ’s brutal, bloody and agonizing death to be distasteful, and would rather hear a sanitized, bloodless gospel, and sing songs that make them feel warm and fuzzy inside.
- To the lost, the preaching of the cross is “foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:18) and an “offence” (Galatians 5:11)
- In their attempt to please the world, modern churches have discarded anything that might be offensive to the world, including the cross.
- It was through the cross that Jesus “spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” (Colossians 2:14-15)
- “The cross is the last argument of God.” (C H Spurgeon)

I. THE SUPERNAL DESIGN OF THE CROSS

- A. The cross is part of God's eternal purpose
 - 1. He is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8)
 - 2. Before the fall of man; before the creation of man, or even the world itself, God's provision for sinful man's redemption had been planned by God.
- B. This sacrifice is unique and never to be repeated
 - 1. Only Christ was both God and Man in one Person
 - 2. Only Christ was untainted by both original and actual sin, and as such, not liable to death
 - 3. Only Christ's sacrifice was sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2)
 - 4. "There is no more offering for sin" (Hebrews 7:26-27;10:12,14,18)
- C. Why the cross, and not another form of execution?
 - 1. His bones were not to be broken (Psalm 34:20)
 - 2. To be hanged from a tree was to be cursed (Deuteronomy 21:22-23; Galatians 3:13)
 - 3. He bore the shame associated with our sin (Hebrews 12:2)
 - 4. This form of execution allowed Him liberty to speak as He died

II. THE SEVEN DECLARATIONS FROM THE CROSS

- A. The four Gospels are primarily a record of Jesus' word and works (Acts 1:1)
 - 1. The four evangelists in their careful records of Christ's crucifixion make no reference to his *appearance* on the cross, or at any other time

2. They are more concerned with His *words*
3. By giving us *four* separate Gospel accounts, God has given a complete, multifaceted picture of the Saviour's life, death and resurrection
4. Every word of Christ has weight and deep significance – He never spoke an idle word

B. The seven sayings in order:

1. Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. (Luke 23:34)
2. To day shalt thou be with me in paradise. (Luke 23:43)
3. Woman, behold thy son...Behold thy mother! (John 19:26)
4. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Matthew 27:46)
5. I thirst. (John 19:28)
6. It is finished: (John 19:30)
7. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: (Luke 23:46)

C. These seven sayings form a chiasm:

- A. Prayer to the Father for others' ignorance (Luke 23:34)
- B. Making promises to others (Luke 23:43)
- C. Care for the physical needs of others (John 19:26-27)
- D. Forsaken by the Father as He bore our sin (Matthew 27:46)
- C'. Care for his own physical needs (John 19:28)
- B'. Making promises to others possible (John 19:30)
- A'. Prayer to the Father (Luke 23:46)

III. OUR SOLEMN DUTY TO THE CROSS

A. Repentance

1. It was our sins that put Jesus on the cross

2. Our response must be of complete surrender to Christ, trusting solely in His blood for our justification and eternal life

B. Reverence

1. The centurion, in great fear, confessed, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54)
2. God is to be eternally praised for His wisdom, love and grace toward undeserving sinners (Romans 11:33-36; cf. Ephesians 2:7)
3. Our one boast must be in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 6:14)

C. Resolve

1. Christ in His life and death is the believer's example (1 Peter 2:21-24)
2. As He died the most painful death, Christ's words were not complaints, but words that glorified God and edified others (cf. Acts 7:59-60)
3. Those who follow Christ, must deny themselves and take up their cross (Luke 9:23)
4. We are to suffer joyfully for his sake (Acts 5:41)
5. It must be our desire that "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." (Philippians 1:20)

CONCLUSION

"I entreat you to devote one solemn hour of thought to a crucified Saviour—a Saviour expiring in the bitterest agony. Think of the cross, the nails, the open wounds, the anguish of His soul. Think how the Son of God became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, that you might live forever. Think as you lie down upon your bed to rest, how your Saviour was lifted up from the earth to die. Think amid your plans and anticipations of future gaiety what the redemption of your soul has cost, and how the dying Saviour would wish you to act. His wounds plead that you will live for better things." (Albert Barnes)