

# The Power of the Offensive Cross

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**Bible Text:** Galatians 5:11; 1 Corinthians 1:17

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Galatians five verse 11. “But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted?”<sup>1</sup>

You see, the issue in the churches, the Galatian churches, it was a gospel issue. It was a core issue. It was a life and death issue. There were those that wanted to go back under the old covenant, the law of Moses, circumcision, which was a sign of that covenant.

He says, “If I am preaching circumcision, why am I being persecuted?”

In fact, Paul wasn’t preaching circumcision. He was preaching something else and that something else is what brought him persecution.

He says this, “In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.”<sup>2</sup>

I want you to notice those five words in our English Bibles. “The offense off the cross.”<sup>3</sup> And if you get nothing more from those words than this, you need to realize that an inspired apostle believed that if the cross is preached right, if it is preached the way God would have it preached, it is offensive to men.

Now take that thought and let’s go to 1 Corinthians one and verse 17. “For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.”<sup>4</sup>

Now here I want you to notice something right here. He said he was sent by Christ to preach the gospel not with words of eloquent wisdom. Now, folks, that doesn’t mean that the Bible doesn’t have wisdom. It doesn’t mean that the gospel isn’t a message of wisdom. It doesn’t mean that the cross of Jesus Christ lacks wisdom, by eloquent wisdom if we look at the context here in 1 Corinthians one, we see immediately what he means.

He goes on in verse 18:

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 5:11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:17.

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise.”<sup>5</sup>

You see, the wisdom that Paul is not interested in is the wisdom of the wise that God is going to destroy. The eloquent wisdom he is talking about is the eloquence of the world. He doesn't want any of that. Why? Because, folks, when you go to the wisdom of the world do you see what happens? The cross loses its power. And that is exactly what he says he does not want to do lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

When I was in my late teens, early 20s I carried around a silver cross. Sometimes I wore it around my neck. It had a chain on it. My grandfather had given it to me. The arms on the cross weren't slender little narrow things. It was one of those cross that were kind of broad. It had broad arms, you know, the arms were probably a half inch thick. And there was an engraven image of Mary on one side. And on the back it said, “I am a Catholic, please call a priest.”

Let me tell you something. I wore that around my neck sometimes. Most of the time I had that thing shoved in a compartment in my wallet. You see, my grandfather had given me that solid silver cross and I valued that thing. I assumed it said that on the back so that in case somebody found me unconscious or dead they would call a priest and I wanted that to happen.

Why? I rode a fast motorcycle. I drove a fast car. I will tell you this. I had it in my mind I did not want to get on that motorcycle without that cross in my pocket.

At that time I believed that cross actually had somehow, someway an ability to help me, to protect me. It was an idol. I trusted in it. In fact, looking back I now look back and my lost days and I don't think there was anything in my life that I trusted more than that cross to save me if I died.

Let me tell you this. When the Lord saved me, about six months afterwards one cold winter night up on a Michigan road I threw thing out into the darkness of a snow covered field.

I am not here this morning to give you a lecture on your jewelry. But let me tell you this. When the cross is worn casually as jewelry, when it is considered a thing of beauty, when it is used superstitiously to keep evil away it has no true power. The power of the cross is not as a piece of jewelry. The power of the cross is only in what the cross was originally intended to be, an instrument of death. The power of the cross is lost when we change it into a thing of beauty, a piece of jewelry, a thing to put in our pocket like some superstitious magic charm. The power in the cross is one. It is singular. It is its power to kill. That is the power of the cross. It is an instrument of death.

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:18-19.

Let me tell you something. When those early disciples heard Jesus say, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me,”<sup>6</sup> you need to put yourself in their context.

Folks, let me tell you something. If on your way to HEB you had to pass people and you could see in your mind’s eye men carrying this great big cross beam of their cross on their shoulders and back as they went out of the city to some killing place like Golgotha where they themselves would be tortured in one of the most unimaginably brutal deaths known, you would realize when Christ said, “Pick up your cross,” they didn’t even know he was going to the cross yet. Yes, he told them. Next thing you find they are debating on who is going to be the greatest. They never got what he was saying until he actually went there.

When he said to pick up their cross, you had better believe they had seen what the Romans did. The Romans had a way with Jews. When those insurrectionists rose up and they got caught, when those men were caught murdering Roman soldiers, the Romans had a way of dealing with them. They dealt with them a way that no Roman citizen could be dealt with. They killed them in a brutal manner on a cross.

And if you had that image in your mind you are driving ATV. You see a man hauling a cross. If you had images of what it would have been like to watch men die on a cross, you would have realized what came into their mind. When Jesus Christ said, “Take up your cross,” they heard death. Cross meant death.

Take up the cross didn’t mean, take it up, put it in your pocket. It didn’t mean put it around your neck or through holes in your ears. Jesus’ words would have immediately put an image in their mind of condemned criminals going to die. Death.

And let me tell you this. It meant the exact same thing for Jesus Christ, exactly. The cross did not spare our Savior. You realize this. He was alive when they hung him on that cross and six hours later they took him down and he was dead. He was completely dead. The cross is a killing instrument. It is an instrument of death, not of beauty. And in that cross there is an offense.

He went to the cross to die, to suffer and die. And you and I do not want to empty the cross of its power.

1 Corinthians 1:17, you can see that this is exactly Paul’s concern. Don’t empty the cross of its power which tells me what? What does it tell us? It is distinctly possible to empty the cross of its power.

How does that happen? I will tell you what. There is only one way it happens, only one way. It is when we make the cross something it isn’t. That is the only way you empty the power of it. When you present the cross as what it is, it has power. And what it is is offensive to men.

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23.

Paul says in Galatians 5:11, “The offense of the cross.”<sup>7</sup>

Brethren, we don't want to turn the cross into something pretty, into something shiny, into something decorative or any such thing. For as soon as we do, we rid it of its power. There is real power in the cross, power to meet man at his deepest need. I will tell you what. There is power in that cross to do what nothing else in this universe can do, to turn away the wrath of God, to take away sin, to reconcile God in man so that there is peace, to do what nothing else can do.

But I warn you. The moment man's wisdom touches the cross it will only do one thing. It always does one thing. It guts the cross of its potency. It will, without fail, strip the cross of its offensiveness and it will always make the cross of Jesus Christ into something it is not and the power is gone.

Brethren, hear me. The cross of Christ is offensive. You think about the gory execution of the Son of God upon what those old timers called a Roman gibbet. It is offensive.

And do you know why?

Listen. You say, “I don't see anything offensive about it.”

Not if you think about it as something you hang around your neck, not if you look at it like a crucifix on the wall. That is not offensive. What is offensive about it is when you see the Son of God in all of his purity having to die the way he died. There is something in it that is offensive because I will tell you what it is. It leaves man no place to hide. That is exactly what it does. Jesus Christ suffered unspeakably on a cross and died. And do you know what thunders to me? Do you know what it thunders in men's ears? Sin is not trivial to God.

It says to mankind, “You are in trouble if you do not take what my Son did for sinners on that cross, if you do not take it for yourself.”

It spells out that God has such an opinion of sin and he will deal with it in such a way and when we see what horrors Christ had to endure on the cross it makes man step back and realize, “Man, my sin isn't as trivial as I thought it was. In fact, I thought it was hardly anything. And I see there in the death of the Son of God...”

It wakes us up to the fact that our sin is so great we needed to be saved by nothing less than the horrid execution of the Son of God. I tell you what. Men think little of their sin. Men by nature are boasters. They love to boast in their own goodness. They love to boast in their own merit. They love to boast in their own achievements.

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<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 5:11.

Folks, we have a room full of people here that were either lost at one time and now are not or are still lost. And you just ask yourself: Were you not or are you not still just a boaster? Men are pathetic boasters all the time.

But the cross speaks in different tones. Do you know what the cross says? It says, "Sinner, shut your mouth."

You say, "What? That's... how dare you? That is offensive."

Exactly. Exactly. That is the offensiveness of the cross. It tells men to shut their boasting mouths. It tells men they are bad. They are real, real, real bad. It tells men that without the cross there is nothing but certain condemnation and death and eternal punishment and destruction. It tells men that God is not playing around with sin. It tells men they are in dire, dire trouble.

If you look at the cross and you can just flippantly walk away and dance around and think, "Oh, I hope somehow in the end it is just going to all work out between me and God. You know, after all, he is just my buddy and it is me and him and..."

I had a young man call me Thursday. I get people coming to me like this all the time. It is people who aren't sure they are saved. I am trying to be saved, but God isn't saving me. Or I am trying to be saved and, well, I think I am saved, but I am not sure I am saved and I don't know if I am in and I don't know if I am out and I heard something you did and I am coming to you.

And as I began to press the issue and press the issue, I found out this young man, his eyes were just consumed with himself.

Am I repenting? Am I believing? Am I doing?

And I... he is trying to get himself where he is trying to do this, trying to do this, trying to do this.

I said, "Sir, your problem is your eyes are on yourself. You are self absorbed. You are self possessed. You need to get your eyes on Christ."

And as I began to dig deeper do you know what he confessed to me? He said that as he was struggling with God over his lack of assurance in whether he is saved or not, he said a thought came over him very strongly in all this frustrations. And he thought, "God, I deserve to be saved."

I said, "That is it."

And there may be some of you here. Oh, I can remember talking to a man, a man that I used to work for. And I remember telling him about us reaching out to some gangsters off

the street. And he rose up and I said to him, "It sounds like you think you are better than you are."

This man goes to church all the time. This man totes around a Bible all the time.

And he says, "Yes."

He is outwardly a very moral man. But his fangs came out and he said, "I am better."

Folks, we may have some of you here like that today. You say, "I am not like that prostitute. I am not like those people."

You may not admit it, but you think it. And I would just say come with me and look at the cross. In all your self righteous attitudes look at the butchery, look at the extermination and death. This wasn't any man. This was the spotless Lamb of God, the Lord of glory himself and he was slaughtered on a tree. It shows us, brethren, outside of that cross sinners get nothing but judgment and it will be severe, not severer than judgment demands, but judgment is severe.

Listen. You think your sin is small. Jesus Christ said by your... he said you are going to give an account even for your little careless words. He says God takes sin so seriously that even if you uttered an idle little word you are going to have hell to pay for it on judgment day. Our sin is a slight of God's glory. It is an attack on his glory and his holiness is offended and it cannot abide with sin and it will not and he will punish to the uttermost everything your sin deserves. And men just don't realize what it is their sin deserves.

Brethren, here is what I want to do. I have got three parts here. I am going to try to move through very fast. Each of the three parts has four points.

The first thing I want to do is I want to show you four horrors necessary to produce the power of the cross. Second, I want to show you four glorious results unleashed by the power of the cross. And third, I want to show you four demonstrations of the power of the cross.

First, four horrors necessary to produce the power of the cross. Brethren, let me tell you this. There are things in life that are frightening. There are things that we might even dare use the word horror to describe. People speak about, you know, they use it flippantly with regards to horror movies or that type of thing.

You know what I find here is that all we can do is just kind of grasp. It is just it is out of our grasp. Let me tell you this. During those three hours on the cross when darkness covered the land two of the four inspired writers of the gospels don't even go there. They are absolutely silent. Matthew and Mark tell us one thing. While Christ drank the cup of the wrath of God almighty, the Bible is for the most part silent. And God veils it with darkness. And it is as though he says to mankind, "This doesn't involve you so much. I am drawing a veil over it. It has to do with me and the Christ."

The one utterance that comes, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”<sup>8</sup>

But in the horrors of that darkness, the Bible gives us glimpses and we grasp at them and that is what I want to do here. The first one I am more and more moved by the Garden of Gethsemane and what happened the night before Christ died.

Listen. Just listen.

“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly.”<sup>9</sup>

More earnestly than what? Probably more earnestly than he had ever prayed in his life.

“And his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”<sup>10</sup>

That is what Luke tells us.

Matthew says, “And going a little farther he fell on his face.”<sup>11</sup>

The Lord of glory before whom all will bow. It is he who falls on his face. And these are... if you could just hear this. Mark tells us he said, on his face, “Abba, Father,”<sup>12</sup> “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”<sup>13</sup>

And Matthew says that Christ spoke to his disciples and he said this. “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.”<sup>14</sup>

I want you to think about those words. Do you understand what it meant for a man to be righteous? It mean that death and the law had no claim on him. He could not die until he was made sin. And yet he says, “I am sorrowful unto death.”

The NAS says, “Grieved to the point of death.”<sup>15</sup>

Do you realize what he is saying? Do you know what death is? Death is when the soul is ripped apart from the body. Here is Christ. Understand. He is not under the load of sin. He has not gone to the cross yet. It is only in anticipation of the cross. It is only a thought about what he will endure. And the very thought of it is enough to rip him soul from body and he is at that very point.

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<sup>8</sup> Mathew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

<sup>9</sup> Luke 22:44.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 26:39.

<sup>12</sup> Mark 14:36.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 26:39.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 26:38.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 26:38 (NAS).

Now to a sinner that is offensive because that... he is looking at what it is for a man to have to go, but more than a man, even the God man. You think about that. The God man himself, in anticipation of the wrath of God is ready to be severed. He is ready to be split. He is ready to be ripped apart with anguish and you let that come in to your minds, your hearts, your souls, your thoughts.

That a righteous man in anticipation of the horrors of the cross should come to such a point.

The second horror of the cross comes out of Psalm 22:14. "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast."<sup>16</sup>

Do you know what it is like if you know... and I remember in high school my friends and I would hit each other in the arm as hard as we could. Or can you imagine what it is like if you are in a car and you see coming in the rear view and somebody is going to hit you? What happens when you know you are going to get hit? You brace. You tighten up.

But let me tell you what this means, "I am poured out like water."<sup>17</sup>

It means that when the almighty smote Christ he melted. There was no resistance in him. The blow melted him.

Brethren, let me tell you this. If our champion is poured out like water, if the lion of the tribe of Judah is melted at the wrath of God, what man is so bold?

Oh, sinners, so flippantly who say, "Well, you know, I am just going to go to hell where all my friend are, join the party there."

I will tell you anybody who talks like that has never heard the words, "I am poured out like water,"<sup>18</sup> coming from the very Son of God himself. His soul spilled like water under the wrath. Even the Son of God himself there was no bracing. There was no resistance. The billows of the waves of God's wrath came over him and it melted him.

A third horror is this word crush. Isaiah gives it to us. Isaiah 53:5. "But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities."<sup>19</sup>

Isaiah 53:10. "Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief."<sup>20</sup>

Brethren, the word "crush" in the Hebrew, it means Jesus was broken in pieces and shattered, not physically. It doesn't have to do with what men did to him on the cross. This has to do with the emotional and spiritual crushing. It was the will of the Lord to

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<sup>16</sup> Psalm 22:14.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Isaiah 53:5.

<sup>20</sup> Isaiah 53:10.



crush him. During those three hours of darkness God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in order to forgive sinners and yet be righteous, raised his arm and delivered such a blow to Christ that it shattered him. It spiritually and emotionally broke him to pieces. The holy servant of Jehovah was crushed.

Fourth horror I have already said those gospel writers went silent. God veiled it with darkness. And in all their inspiration the Holy Spirit just says, “Gospel writers, I am only going to give this task to two of you, Matthew and Mark. I am going to give one glimpse of that three hours that I want you to take to the world that you might let them know what took place under the shadow of that darkness.

Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”<sup>21</sup>

God forsaken. That is what Jesus was on the cross. He was God forsaken.

Don’t use that terminology flippantly. He was God forsaken. The Son was forsaken. What can you say? God the Father forsook God the Son something and that sounds like what it cost to redeem man shook the very foundations of the trinity itself. And I don’t have words. I can’t tell you. I can’t go there. I don’t know. Who can explain it?

Brethren, I had a guy call me this week. Again, it was another man struggling with being saved. He said, “I am at the end of myself. I am a great sinner. I have done many wicked things in my life. I have sinned for no other reason than just to sin. I am at the end of myself.” He said, “But I think I am too great a sinner to be saved.”

I said, “Sir, you may think that is a humble statement.” But I said, “That is a statement of such wickedness and pride you have no idea.” I said, “Sir, have you ever looked at the cross? Have you ever seen the Son of God forsaken, his soul spilled, crushed under the almighty affliction of his Father? Have you ever beheld that? Have you ever beheld him in the garden just as in anticipation of what was going to come and what he was going to face and to say it nigh unto tore him apart pleading with his Father? Are you going to look at that and say that isn’t sufficient for your sin? What are you making that out to be? That was no trivial thing.”

Christ going to the cross was not a waltz through the garden, folks. What he endured there you and I will never know. The only ones that can come closest to knowing it is that soul that after 10 billion ages has drunk the cup of God’s wrath and will have to do for forever more because he will never get close to the point of knowing fully what it was Christ endured. For him to be able to say it is finished, no man has the capacity to take away the full guilt of sin or any of the guilt of sin.

What does a man think he is saying when he says, “I think I am too wicked”?

Do you think Jesus Christ came into this world and went to the cross to save good people? Do you think he had his soul spilled to save good people?

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<sup>21</sup> Matthew 27:46; Matthew 15:34.

Do you realize now four accomplishments of the cross?

Brethren, listen. In the Old Testament the high priest would lay both of his hands on a goat. He would transfer the sins of Israel onto the head of the goat and the goat would be taken away and released in the wilderness. One of... that was a picture of what Christ would do. It was a type. It was a foreshadowing.

Listen to this. Hebrews 9:26. "He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."<sup>22</sup>

One of the glorious results of the power of the cross is it puts away the guilt of sin. We call expiation, ex, exit. That prefix is the idea of away from, out of.

Can you imagine David? He slept with Bathsheba. He has killed her husband. The prophet Nathan comes and says, "Thou art the man."<sup>23</sup>

The penalty for murder and for adultery is death. Can you imagine what sweet words it is for Nathan the prophet to say, "God has put away your sin."

Put it away where? It doesn't matter where. It is away from me. Christ takes it away. That is exactly what John the Baptist said, is it not? He says, Behold, there is the Lamb of God." What does he do? He takes away the sin of the world. John said, "You know that he appeared to take away sins."

That is what Jesus Christ... that is what... Brethren there is power. I guarantee you there is not a man alive, not the strongest man alive, not the most righteous man alive who has the power to even lift one sin off of a sinner. Christ takes all the sin of all God's people from all of their lives and he lifts the entire thing off and takes it away.

The second thing. He turns away the wrath of God. We call that propitiation. God put Christ forward in Romans 3:25 as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.

Listen. Sin, every time, stirs up the holy displeasure of God. God's vengeance is when he carries out his wrath, his sinful... or the displeasure for the sin of man is vengeance is when he carries that wrath out upon the sinner. Propitiation is the removal of that divine displeasure or that wrath so that God doesn't bring out his vengeance upon the sinner.

That is exactly what that is referring to. To propitiate means to appease or to remove wrath.

Listen to this. If you look for the word propitiation, the Greek word, and you look back in the Septuagint which is the Greek Old Testament, here is a place where it comes up,

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<sup>22</sup> Hebrews 9:26.

<sup>23</sup> 2 Samuel 12:7.

numbers 16 verse 44. “The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Get away from the midst of this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.’”<sup>24</sup>

Here is God, a consuming fire. The people have provoked him by their sin. But you have Moses and Aaron. They fell on their faces.

“And Moses said to Aaron, ‘Take your censer, and put fire on it from off the altar and lay incense on it and carry it quickly to the congregation and make atonement.’”<sup>25</sup>

There is our word, propitiation.

“Make atonement for them, for wrath has gone out from the LORD; the plague has begun.” So Aaron took it as Moses said and ran into the midst of the assembly. And behold, the plague had already begun among the people. And he put on the incense and made atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stopped.<sup>26</sup>

When we look at Calvary, behold the Savior dying for us. We should see in his death not first our salvation, but our damnation being borne and carried away by him. If sinners are ever to be forgiven, their sins must be punished accordingly above everything else. It was this demand in God himself, his offended holiness, it demanded that it punish sin.

When it is confronted with sin it must react against it in a wrathful outpouring of divine judgment. When Christ died because of his own infinite worth as the Son of God, he did enough to satisfy fully the demands of the glory of God’s offended holiness and justice.

And I will tell you what. He is the great high priest. That is a picture in the Old Testament in Numbers, Aaron running out. It says he stood between the living and the dead. That is Christ. Have you ever heard of him standing between the living and the dead? It brings to my mind a picture of him on judgment day. He brings all the sheep to his right hand. He brings all the goats to his left hand. And what divides them? He does. He stands between them. He stands between the living and the dead. He takes away the wrath.

Do you see what happened? Some perished. But Aaron came and made atonement for some of them.

The third thing. It restores a wrecked relationship. We call it reconciliation. Ephesians 2:16.

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<sup>24</sup> Numbers 16:44-45.

<sup>25</sup> Numbers 16:46.

<sup>26</sup> Numbers 16:46-48.

“And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.”<sup>27</sup>

Do you know what? There is alienation. Man has wrecked his relationship with God by his sin, by his guilt. Our sin separates us from God. That is one of the things Christ does. He goes to the cross and he offers us peace. He makes friends and lovers out of enemies.

Do you want to know a fourth thing? He pays our debt. That is another thing that the Bible refers to, redemption.

“In him,” Ephesians 1:7 says, “we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.”<sup>28</sup>

Jesus cries out in his forsaken agony with his own life’s blood spilling forth. And I will tell you what was happening. Payment was being made, payment. Do you know what redemption speaks of? It speaks of a ransom price.

Listen. You may not always think this way, but the Bible seems to connect ransom, redemption. Redemption is what happens when somebody is purchased by a ransom price out of captivity. Ransom, redemption always speaks of captivity. We are held captive in so many ways by sin.

Do you know it is very interesting what you find is basically it seems to be a ransom price which is also an adoption price.

Why would I say that?

Well, look. It says in Revelation 5:9 that, “by your blood [speaking to Christ] you ransomed people for God.”<sup>29</sup>

That is why we were ransomed. We were ransomed out of the captivity of sin, ransomed to be a people for God, to come into the family of God.

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,”<sup>30</sup> Galatians 4:5 says, “to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”<sup>31</sup>

We are redeemed so that we might become the adopted as sons.

1 Peter 1:18 says, “You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ephesians 2:16.

<sup>28</sup> Ephesians 1:7.

<sup>29</sup> Revelation 5:9.

<sup>30</sup> Galatians 4:4.

<sup>31</sup> Galatians 4:5.

In other words, we are ransomed out of the family of our forefathers, out of their futile ways, out of their futile ways of thinking, out of their futile ways of approaching God and you are ransomed out of that into this.

I will tell you this. Folks, it takes the power of almighty God to make you different than your forefathers. If you think you can just break out and say, you know, what was the old song? Cat in the cradle. I am going to be just like you, dad. You know, I am going to be just like you. Do you guys remember that song? And I will tell you what. The fact is that is absolutely true apart from the power of almighty God. You will turn out like your fathers, just like the ones that went before you.

I was turning out just like my dad. And it takes a ransom price of infinite almighty power to purchase you out of your family lineage and put you into the family of God. It takes a ransom price, the very sacrifice of the body, the pouring out of the blood, the crushing spiritually of the living Christ.

And we have got those four horrors, four benefits. Let me give you four—very quickly here—four demonstrations of the power of the cross.

Listen to this. Some of you may know Robert Murray McCheyne. That is a name that stands out as godly men who have gone before us. He was a Scotch or Scottish Presbyterian, died at the age of 29 years. He was a very godly young man. Many of his sermons and his biography for certain are preserved to this day. Listen to what came from his pen.

“The most striking...” He writes this after he heard this in some meetings. “The most striking example of self devotedness in the cause of Christ of which I ever heard in these days of deadness was told her last week by an English minister. It has never been printed and therefore I will relate it to you just as I heard it to stir up our cold hearts that we may give ourselves to the Lord.

“The awful disease of leprosy still exists in Africa, whether it be the same leprosy as that mentioned in the Bible I do not know, but it is regarded as incurable and so infectious that no one dares to come near the leper. In the south of Africa there is a large leper house for lepers. It is an immense space enclosed by a very high wall and containing fields within which the lepers cultivate. There is only one entrance and it is strictly guarded. Whenever anyone is found with the marks of leprosy upon him, he is brought to this gate, obliged to enter in, never to return. No one who enters in by that awful gate is ever allowed to come out. Within this abode of misery there are multitudes of lepers in all stages of the disease. Dr. Hollbeck, a missionary of the Church of England from the top of a neighboring hill out side the leper house saw lepers in it at work. He noticed two particularly sowing peas in the field. One had no hands. The other had no feet, these members being wasted away by the disease.

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<sup>32</sup> 1 Peter 1:18.

“The one who lacked hand was carrying the one who lacked feet upon his back and he, again, carried in his hands the bag of seed. He dropped a pea every now and then which the other pressed into the ground with his foot. And so they managed the work of one man between the two. Ah, how little we know of the misery that is in the world such as this prison house of disease.

“But you will ask, ‘Who cares for the souls of the hapless inmates? Who will venture to enter in at this dreadful gate never to return again? Who will forsake father and mother, houses and land to carry the message of a Savior to these poor lepers?’

“I will tell you who. Two Moravian missionaries impelled by a divine love for souls have chosen the leper house as their field of labor. They entered it never to come out again. And I am told that as soon as these die, which die they most likely will, a fearful death, other Moravians are quite ready to fill their place.

“Ah, my dear friends, may we not blush and be ashamed before God that we, redeemed with the same blood and taught by the same Spirit should yet be so unlike these men in vehement heart consuming love to Jesus and the souls of men.

“And I just ask you. What is it that makes two young men devote themselves as missionaries to the cause of God to leave father and mother and home and comforts and go into a distant land? It is a thing of power that does that. It is a thing of power that releases men from the comforts of this world to go do that. It is the power of the cross of Christ.”

This comes, in part, from the pen of Spurgeon, the Baptist pastor from 150 years ago. He tells the story of a Mr. Thomas Hawks taken, chained around the midsection to a stake and he was burned for his faith. Hawks, when he was in prison, before having gone to the stake, promised his friends, “By the help of God I will show you that the most terrible torments can be endured in the glorious cause of Christ and his gospel the comforts of which were able to lift the believing soul above all the injuries men can inflict.”

Once the flames were kindled around him at the cross, they quickly blazed with such fierceness that his speech was taken away by their violence. His frame shrunk. And the people assumed him dead. His body was consumed.

The onlookers, seeing how burned he was, expected to see his body break apart over the chain and fall into the fire. But instead he lifted his flaming hands, each finger spurting fire. He clapped them three times with a shout of, “None by Christ, none but Christ.”

You tell me, folks, what has power on this earth to put a man in flames and with all victory and power and authority and triumph shout, “None, but Christ.”

Folks, what wondrous energy seized the man, what made him strong? What helped him to bear under that kind of cruelty of men? What made him unmoved in the flames?

I will tell you. It is another thing. It is a thing of power. It is the cross of Jesus Christ.

“For unto us who are being saved,” Paul says, “It is the power of God.”<sup>33</sup>

The cross has power to loosen our grips on life and to stand up before the most cruelty of man and say, “I will go to your stake, but I will not deny this cross.”

Folks, you cannot deny the cross when you have tasted its power. You cannot come and lightly speak of it and say, “I know longer believe in it or recant of it,” if you know its power.

When the persecution starts, the ones who Matt talked about in the Sunday school who will not endure to the end, they will walk away precisely for that reason. They never experienced the power of the cross. You will hold to your faith in the very flames themselves and all consumed in fire call out to the victory of Christ, “One way.”

There is one power in this world that produces it. It is the power of the cross. This is preserved for us by that most notable Christian Jonathan Edwards, the life of David Brainerd. On his death bed Brainerd under the extreme agonies of death, in a day when there was no morphine, there was not Tylenol, there was no aspirin even. He told those that gathered around him, “It is another thing to die than people imagine.”

At times he was completely delirious with pain. He said that it was impossible for any to conceive of the distress he felt. He was concerned in his pain lest he should dishonor God in his extreme agony. He said that the thought of enduring it one minute longer was almost insupportable.

He is there wracked with the kind of pain that the thought of having to endure it one minute longer was almost driving him mad. He was being cared for by Jonathan Edwards daughter Jerusha Edwards and he loved her. And in all of his pain, in all of his suffering and realizing he was about ready to leave the woman he loves, he says with joy and peace that he is ready to leave her and leave life. He is ready for eternity.

And I will tell you this. What gives men on such a death bed as that hope at death?

Listen. I saw my aunt die. I went to the hospital. She died without Christ. She was in such... there was such terror in her eyes. She was a 40 some year old woman crying like a little child for her mother, “Mommy!”

She had a look in her eyes. I was at my step-father’s bedside when he died without Christ. If you think you can spurn Christ, come to Church. Be religious and get to the end and get on your death bed and if you think you will die easy without Christ, if you will die easy having lacked assurance all through this life, if you will die easy trusting in your church going or your works, I have seen it. People don’t die easy. There is only one

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<sup>3333</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:18.

thing that causes men to die easy and it is a power unknown to this world. It is a power that comes from that cross.

I have one more and I am done.

King James II in February, 1685 had two covenanters, two women, Margaret Wilson aged 18 and Margaret McLaughlin, 64 arrested near Wigtown on suspicion of having attended an unauthorized prayer meeting. They were tied to stakes in the rising tide at Wigtown. But if they simply would disown their faith, disown their Savior, they would be freed. They both refused. The older Margaret was first to drown with the younger Margaret refusing to bow to the tortures of the soldiers who were gathered round her forcing her head under the water. The mockingly shouted, "Take another drink, Henny."

But she defied them by singing Psalm 25 as the waters engulfed her.

The bodies of the two Margarets were buried together in Wigtown graveyard along with three local men also executed a few days later for their faith.

I just ask you folks. What miracle of grace gives the meekness and the patience and the cheerfulness and the self denial to two Moravian men, to a man in the flames, to a man wracked with pain on his deathbed, to two ladies in a rising tide?

Brother, sister, I will tell you this. There is power in the cross and there is power there to free us from all fear of loss in this life, to let it go. You are not citizens of this world. The power of that cross has set us free and ransomed us to God. We are people of another kingdom. The power of the cross calls us not to ease and not to luxury and not to retirement and rest and securities. You are called to live in the power, in the cross.

God, help us.

You want a prophetic word? Here it is. Some of you that sit there have an awful, vain confidence. You smile and smirk and play and laugh in the sight and thunders and distant rumblings of coming wrath. You are a stranger to the power of the cross.

Some of you are going to be consumed who right now think you won't. It is going to take you unawares. I know it is true. Most healthy thing for the Church today would be if God would take me and put me at a cross and burn my body to cinders and let all of you see me clap my hands three times in the fire and shout out with victory. It would purge away the chaff. Some of you take this matter far too lightly. There is power in the cross. Christ endured horrors on that cross to produce such fruit and such power to sinners. Don't despise it. Don't think it a small thing.

What he did on that cross is fully capable of saving the most foul, the most wicked, the most backwards. Jesus Christ didn't come into the world and do what he did on that cross and unleash the power that he unleashed on the cross except for one reason, to save really, really, really bad people, judgment deserving, hell deserving, fury deserving,



wretched depraved miserable people. God forbid the thought even cross your mind that you are too bad to be saved by what I just described to you. God forbid it. No act of humility. It is a thought of abomination. Your thought would desecrate the very cross of Christ if it had the power to do it.

Brethren, let me tell you this. I think we will begin to see more people saved if we learn that our message to this world needs to be clear enough, biblical enough concerning the cross that we don't gut it of its power. And if you seek to make the cross unoffensive, you have lost the power.

Brethren I will tell you this. If you are looking for a system, if you are looking for a way, if you are looking for a technique, if you are looking for something essential to your gospel message, take this with you. Know how to explain the cross in a way that it is offensive. If you get to the place where you make it out to be anything less than that, we have lost the power of our gospel.

God help us.