

The Meaning of the Cross (Proverbs 17:15; Isaiah 53:10)

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Today we are going to look at... it was actually prompted yesterday while I was working on the yard I was also listening to a preacher on the radio. And it struck my attention that when he began the sermon he says: "I'm going to tell you about the meaning of the cross." And I was surprised that he spent a lot of time talking about the cross of Jesus Christ, but did not put the emphasis on where the emphasis was do. And did not truly explained the meaning of the cross. And he did something that is so common today. Let me give you just a little bit of background. As you know I have said this before: Wisdom was not born with any one nor it will die with anyone. Now If I stand up here today and I say that the church at large is basically missing the point about the gospel of Jesus Christ you can look at me and say: "Who are you? Are you Billy Graham? Are you this guy or that guy? How or what gives you the right to stand here and say: 'The church at large is missing the point'?" Well, here's the point. History gives me that right. You see, one of the things that you have to understand is this. There is a difference between a theologian and a pop-theologian. Did you ever hear of pop music? It's the music that is Popular, music that is given to the populists, it's a music for the day, kind of it just jumps up. It doesn't last very long and one of the reasons is that it is pretty superficial. You know like... Sonny and Cher "I would die for you, I will even climb a mountain for you!" I never could figure out how climbing a mountain was more than dying for someone. But pop music is very superficial. Also there is what we called pop-theology, which is very superficial. Theology is the study of God and there is a lot of what we call pop theologians on the radio. They are not truly trained theologians, they just have a following. They haven't give themselves to study, they give themselves more to preaching. And their preaching deals more with illustrations, and stories, and antidotes, and cute little sayings, but as far as the theology, NO!

Now whenever someone comes to you and says like I said this morning: "The church by large has missed the point with regard to the cross" the first thing that you have to ask then, is this: "Why do you say that?". The answer better be this: "Not only because I have found these things in the Bible but because history backs me up." You see, if you say for example: "I believe a certain thing". If you stick Benny Hinn here and me right here and if you can pull both of us apart and if you ask Benny Hinn why he believes that all the stuff he does and the facts that he makes millions of dollars and he will only stay in five star hotels and all this different things. If you ask him why he does that he will tell you: "Because that is what the Bible teaches." And if you ask me, I will say: "He is completely wrong!" And if you ask me why, I will say, "Because this is what the Bible teaches". Now the question is, both of us are using the Bible as our authority, so who is right? You know that is the big question, who is right? Well there are two things that you need to look at. One of them is called context, and the other is called history. First of all I want you to understand something. If the Bible says, or if I make a statement the barn is red, it means the barn is red. I'm so tired of speaking on university campuses and hearing students say: "Oh, that's just your interpretation." And I say: "Well here interpret it grammatically, not according to the Spirit, not according to the, just grammatically. Like you would in an English class. What is it saying grammatically?" That's the first one. The second point is this. We have 2,000 years of Christian history. Ok? 2,000 years of Christian's writing. Thousands of, no millions of books. Now, if I teach something on the

cross and you compare what I teach to 2,000 years of Christian history, and you don't find it anywhere in 2,000 years of Christian history, then you've got to decide who is right? 2,000 years of Christian theologians and writers or Paul Washer? Well obviously 2,000 years of Christian history and teachers are right. Whenever someone teaches you something one of the good things to do is to compare what they are saying to 2,000 years of Christian history. If nobody agrees with them, they are probably wrong, aren't they? And if we as Americans come up with some new theology, or a new way of doing Christianity, yet it disagrees with 2,000 years worth of Christians from all over the world, who's probably wrong? We are! You see, and so that's why I say today, that on the teaching of the cross most of the people are completely missing the point. And here is, when we hear a teaching on the cross, and when someone preaches about the suffering of Jesus, what is it that you usually hear about? Physical suffering, right? Isn't that what? And I mean the preacher, - and we need to talk about physical suffering. - But I mean the preacher will talk about physical suffering, and what will happen? Then he will start crying, and everybody in the congregation starts crying. He talks about how the nails went through a certain part of the wrist, because that was the only thing that would hold up a man. And how the nail went through both the feet in a certain place. And then in order to keep alive the person would have to push upon the nail in order to take a breath. Because when you died of crucifixion you died of suffocation. They'll talk about the spear in the side, they'll talk about the crown of thorns on the head, they'll talk about all these different things, the beating with the whip, how he drug his cross and the blood is flowing down and everything else and then they'll tell you: "By this we are saved". Now, that draws you to a certain conclusion. How is it that the physical sufferings of Jesus, caused by men, somehow paid for our sins? It doesn't work out theologically. Are we actually... are our sins paid for because the Romans and Jews rejected Jesus? Are our sins are paid for because they whipped Him and beat Him?

I was in German Mennonite camp, a bible camp, in northern, actually in the mountains, the Alps in Romania. And I walked to their theological, they had a theological library, and I walked in there and I saw a thing on the cross of Christ. So I pull it out and praise the Lord, it was not in German. The only book in there I think that was not in German. And I started looking through it, and this is what the man said: "God sent His Son who lived a perfect life..." Now this is a theologian... "God sent His Son who lived a perfect life and then according to the plan of God, men rejected him, they beat Him, they crucified Him, they mocked Him, they put crown of thorns on his head, they stuck a spear in his side, and all these different things. And God looked at that suffering, that Jesus suffered, at the hands of men and He considered that to be payment for all our sins against Him." Now, a lot of people say: "Well yeah, that sounds good!" Actually, historically that's a heresy! The deepest form of heresy. I mean you could be wrong about a lot of things, but if you are wrong about the cross, you are in trouble. Now here's what I want you to do. I want you to put 2 things together. How is it, what happened on that cross that would cause God to forgive us of our sins? Now, the first question though is this. Why does the Son of God, God in the flesh, why is it necessary that He die? Why can't God just forgive everybody? Have you ever thought about that? Why can't He just - I mean, we are called to forgive people aren't we? If you sin against me, I'm called to forgive you. I'm not called to require a sacrifice or anything. I'm just told to forgive you. So why can't God simply forgive? That's the first question you need to answer. And I will show you a verse. I want us to go to **Proverbs**. I am going to condense about a week worth of lectures into 1 thing, so I just want to go to 1 text.

Go to **Proverbs 17:15**. Now look what it says: "He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike, are an abomination to the Lord." Now let us just consider this one phrase: "He who justifies the wicked is an abomination to the Lord". Now we are in a big problem. Most of the songs we sing today are gonna be about

God justifying the wicked. That's what we sing about all the time. "Man, God justifies us, even though we were sinners. God declared us to be right." That's what the justification means. God declared you to be right before Him. And you praise God for that. But there's a big problem here. Do you see what it is? God says that anyone who declares the wicked to be right, when they are not right, they are an abomination before Him. So if God declared you to be right when you were not right, it's an abomination. He has made Himself an abomination. If God forgives the wicked, He Himself becomes an abomination. In a same way if a judge forgives a murderer and lets him go, he's no longer a Just Judge. It's so amazing to me how so many people - I speak at the university, the students are just furious because I say that God throws men in hell. They are furious when I say that. But do you know what bothers Heaven? Heaven has a problem with what God has done. Heaven's problem is this. If God is a just God He cannot forgive. He must punish the wicked. That is the thing of the whole Bible. Have you ever wondered why God [had] all the animals die in the Old Testament? It's a symbol, and a type. But the whole point is that if the sinner sins, he must die. He must die. And if God justifies someone who is wicked, and if he declares a wicked person to be innocent, then God is an abomination. God has become wicked. Now we are beginning to see why it was necessary for God - the Son to die. God cannot simply forgive. The law, the righteous law, demands that the sinner die. Demands it! You just can't push that away. You just can't say ok, well we are going to let them slide this time. If God does that He is unjust, He is wrong, He is sinful, He becomes just like the devil and the devil's accusations against Him now are correct. Can you imagine devil's standing before God? "Hey God, remember when we sinned against you? You were just then, weren't You? You cast us all out of Heaven, Yeah, where's your justice now God? Huh? Where is it? These men, this ball of dirt sins against you, you let him go. Guess what God, you [have] become like me. Congratulations!"

You see the problem? That's the problem. Now the only way that God can forgive sinful men is if God who made the law and God who demands satisfaction, if He Himself comes down and pays the penalty. That's why the doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses is so blasphemous. Look what they are saying. They are saying that when the world fell God created, created, an innocent being, the Son, He created Him. And then took this innocent being independent from God and put Him on a cross, to die, to fix the problem. See that's not what happened, the Son of God is not a created being, He is God. You see, the only way the law of God can be satisfied is by God. And you can use this against the Jehovah's Witnesses. If Jesus is not God, then everybody is going to hell, because what is done on that cross is not enough. God made the law; God has to satisfy it. It has to be God. If Jehovah's Witness comes to the door and says that Jesus wasn't God, just sit down and just start weeping. He'll say: "Why are you crying for?" "We are all going to hell." "Why?" "Because only God can satisfy God's law. Only He can pay the price. And if Jesus is not God then we are going to hell. Me and you, and the rest of us." But you see, God in order to forgive the wicked, and still be Just, He must die in the wicked's place. That's the only way He can forgive is to die in the place of the wicked. Now here's comes the important point. How does He die? What is it about the death of the Son of God that leads to our forgiveness? How does His death satisfy the law? Now, here is something I want you to understand. When someone says they have been saved - now I'd never do this to a young Christian or, but if they are a seminary students or something they are going to get this, if they say "I've been saved" And I go "From what? From what have you been saved?" People usually say "Sin!" "Nope!... Nope!" They say: "What you mean "Nope"?" "Sin wasn't after you. Sin wasn't gonna throw you in hell. You have sinned, but the sin caused something else. Sin isn't going to throw you in hell! Sin is not even a person! It's not a living being that's going to judge you, and grab you and throw you in hell. From what have you been saved? This is going to really rock your boat. I'll tell you from what you have been saved. From what you have been saved is not 'What,' it

is 'Who.' You have been saved from God ! You see here's what you need to understand. God is the judge of all the Universe. You have sinned, since you have sinned and made yourself an enemy of God before the just judge, when you stand before Him, He will throw you in hell!" Now I hear a lot of people say: "God doesn't throw anybody in hell." Well that's really nice if you write it on the back of a Christian T-shirt, sing it in a contemporary Christian song, but it is not in the Bible. Jesus said: "You do not be afraid of man who can kill your body, but be afraid of God who can kill your body and throw you in hell." You see? Again this God of ours is not very politically correct. He is not a tamed lion. People, have you ever heard this statement, we see it in **Romans 5**, we also see it in **Romans 1**: "enemy of God," and "hater of God." Have you ever heard that word "enemy of God?" Do you know what the problem is? Contemporary Christianity interprets it differently from the historical Christianity. You will hear preachers say: "When the Bible says that we were an enemy of God, it means that WE were an enemy against God, that WE were rebellion against God, that we were against God. But it doesn't mean that God was against us, that God was our enemy." And then they will usually say something like this: "It's like you are holding a gun against God, and God wants you to put that gun down, and then you'll be friends." That's not true! All throughout historical Christianity when it says "enemies of God," you know what it really means? Not only were you God's enemy, holding your gun on Him, God was your enemy holding His gun on you. You put your gun down, fine! He still has His gun on you. You are a criminal, you broke the law, you deserve to die, you can put your gun down to surrender if you want, but you are still going to hell. Because not only you are his enemy, but He is yours.

God says things in the Bible like: "I will hate them." "I will come against them." "I will fight against them." "I'll raise up a standard." Again this God of 21st century Christianity is a lot a different from the biblical one, and a lot different than one that has been preached throughout 2,000 years of Christian history. So you see, not only were you making yourself an enemy against God, God was your enemy. And then one from whom you need to be saved is God because He is coming, remember what Amos has said: "Be prepared to meet thy God." Remember what Revelation says and talks about: "He is coming and the captains and the great man of the world will cry out for the rocks to fall upon them to hide them from the wrath of the lamb." He is not coming back with his hand like going: "Oh, I just want to save you but now you have to go to hell." No! He is coming back, it says: "sword of the Spirit." I mean everything else is going on here. He is coming back and He is gonna fight somebody. Because He is mad! Now, the problem that you have to see... there is punishment. We have broken God's law, so now we deserve to be punished. From where does that punishment come? Ask yourself that question. From where does that punishment come?

We have grown up under preaching that tells us, well if you sin, you know some bad thing happens to you, that's not God that's just the consequences of sin just like the law of gravity, you jump off the roof you gonna get hurt, you sin you gonna get hurt. It is not God's doing that's just the way that the things are. That's not true. God talks about coming and judgment all the time against people's sin. He does, just read the Bible. All the time! "I will come against you," "I will set my face against you." OK? So we realize that we have been saved from God and his punishment. So how is that punishment to be done away with? When Jesus the Son of God was dying on the cross it is not the spears of Romans, or the crowns of thorns, or the nails in His hands that save you. It is not that that pays for the crime. The suffering that the man heaped upon Jesus, God does not look at it and say "OK, good enough!" That's not what paid for your sin! What paid for your sin? Look in **Isaiah 53**. This is what paid for your sin: **Isaiah 53:10**, "But the Lord was pleased to crush Him." Now, you've all read **53** and you've heard gazillions of sermons on the radio and everything about **Isaiah 53**. But isn't it funny that when you hear

sermons on **Isaiah 53** it is always **verses 3, 4, 5 and 6** talking about the sufferings heaped upon Christ by men. But very rarely do you hear **Isaiah 53:10**, "It pleased the Lord". Who's the Lord? The word here is not Adonai, its Yahweh, or as some of you may pronounce it Jehovah. I mean its God. "It pleased God to..." what? "crush Him." This is the Messiah. "It pleased the Lord to crush Him." This word crush, it refers to like... The best illustration I can give you is, imagine... Do you know what a mill stone is? A millstone is what they used to have was a big stone, usually about this big, round, may be about that tall, I mean a huge stone. And then they placed another stone on top of that, that actually rotated. OK? It turned. And what you would do as you can imagine you put grain, corn and everything, in between those two stones and when they may their way through there, that stone would ground them to powder. That's the terminology being used here. That is what it refers to. It pleased God the Father to crush His own Son and to ground Him into powder. Now another illustration would be this. Imagine you are standing at the foot of a dam, that's a thousand miles high and a thousand miles wide. And you are standing right there at the foot of this thing and it is filled with water. And in 1 second the wall is pulled out away. What do you thing it is gonna happen to you? It means its over. Your body is never gonna be found.

Or imagine you are walking one day, and a star 6 thousand times larger that the sun, crashes [to] the Earth right on your head. What are we talking about here? How is it that that cross saves you? It's because on the cross all the sin that God hates... You know have you heard someone says the love of God is so great that you cannot describe it and that if you were to even get a glimpse of how great it is it will drive you mad. It is so great that it will literally drive you mad. And the only way you've ever gonna be able to know more of the love of God is if God supernaturally strengthens you and glorifies your body because standing in His presence and to know His love would be too much joy for you that you will explode. I mean you just want be able to handle it you'll go mad. Well, In the same way God hatred is so great it goes beyond description. And that if you were to even catch a glimpse of it it will drive you mad. It would be like a little wax figure this tall that has a nuclear bomb explode 3 inches away from it. You have no idea. The sin that evokes God's hatred, and I mean that word 'hatred', Ok? God hates! The sin that evokes God's hatred was placed on His Son. Now, you take all of the sins of God's people, from the first man ever saved on the face of the earth, to the last person ever saved on the face of the earth. All of God's people, all of their sin, is placed on the Son. All of God's justice, just punishment, but also all of Gods just hatred, His just loathing, everything that should be poured out on these sinful creatures throughout eternity, God throws down on His only begotten Son... crushes Him under the weight of His own justice.

You say: "Brother Paul could you kill your son for me?" "I'm sorry." You can argue theologically whether I should or I shouldn't - I couldn't. And I'm evil. The Bible says if you being evil can give good gifts to your children, if you being evil can love your children... Now here's God, perfect love manifested towards a perfect Son, who never did anything but bless His Father and crushes Him under the weight of His holy hatred. When those preachers, you know the cup, you know, Jesus says let this cup pass from Me and they say: "Yes, going to the cross He didn't want to go the cross" No! they are wrong, and yes they are right they just don't know what they are saying. Listen to me, there have been martyrs who have gone, followers of Jesus Christ who have been burned as a steak and while they were burning they have lifted their hands and praise the Lord. Ok? Now let me ask you that question. Do you think they are greater than our Lord Jesus? There have been Christians... I have a picture in my office I keep it right in front of my desk, a huge picture of all these Christians crucified in a Roman theater, and they have been burned after they have been crucified, and lions have been set free on others. I keep that in front of me all the time to remind myself that this is still happening today.

And there were many of those who were crucified and sang out with joy as they were pounding the nails. Do you think that they are greater than Jesus? Do you think Jesus would actually cower, and fret, and cry under a punishment that even some of His followers were able to endure with joy? Do you think Jesus is weaker than them? What you need to understand is Jesus wasn't thinking when He was in that garden "Save Me from this hour." "Let this cup pass from Me." He wasn't thinking about the nails in His hands, He wasn't thinking about a wooden cross, He wasn't thinking about a spear in his side, or Romans, or anything else. What He was thinking about is this: "Father, I have never been out of your bosom. I have always been in the most perfect, wonderful, beautiful relationship with You. I have all throughout the eternity." God did not create this world because He needed something, because God was always content with His Son. You take everybody in this world and throw them straight into the hell, God will still be happy because He's got His Son. I don't want to offend your humanism, but that's just the way it is. God's perfectly happy. He did this, He created us, not because of His need but because of the overflow of His abundance. And here His Son is separated from Him.

I remember after my little boy was born and I had a monitor up there in his room and I was outside and had the other monitor just right within the door... working up on a ladder, probably about 15 feet in the air, and nailing some things... and he cried... I didn't even think, I threw the hammer and leaped. I went right off the ladder. I hit the ground running. I was a new father, but I still do the same thing today. I mean, hit the ground running. If we being evil could love our children, and here is the Son, thinking: "I'm gonna be ripped out of the heart of the Father, the Father is gonna to turn His face away from me." Now you may think: "Oh yes, he turned His face away because he didn't want to see His Son suffering." No, you've got it all wrong. He turned his face away because His Son had become detestable! His Son had become sin. All of you who are fathers and those who are mothers know. I mean, your kid after gets to a certain age he does something and its: "Is dad looking, is mom looking?" I mean he can't do anything unless mom and dad is looking. I can [be] worshipping... he grabs my face and goes like this.

The Father turns his face away and says: "No!". He became the abominable thing, an abomination. You and I are an abomination before God in order for us to be forgiven God has to die as an abomination in our place. You and I deserve to be crushed under God's wrath. In order for God to save us and forgive us He was crushed under His own wrath. That's what the cross is! That's what it means! And now you can to see why if you have ever had a heavenly vision of truly what happened on that cross it will affect you for the rest of your life. You'll become a prisoner to that thing. You won't be able to get away from it. Let me give you an idea. I used that illustration. I love to use it because of its shock value of it, because it makes the people so mad.

A kid said one time: "Well when I go to hell..." He was taking joy in the fact that if he went into hell, at least there will be people on the outside who would be suffering because they loved him so much, and knew he was going to hell. You know that mentality? "Well I will hurt myself, and it will hurt everybody else who loves me?" I noticed this tendency in him, and I said... "Young man let me just give you an idea what is gonna happen on the day that you stand before God". He said: "OK, I'm not afraid" I said: "You will be!" I said: "This is what's gonna happen. The moment you stand before God everything that your parents loved about you, it wasn't you, did you know that? It was the common grace of God on you. That's what caused them to love you. Now, at the moment He declares your judgment, that grace is gonna be pulled off of you. And what your parents are going to see is a seething monster that would make a Hitler looked like a choirboy. And do you wanna know something?" I said "when you take your first step into hell, the last thing you are going to hear is all of creation, along with your parents,

standing up and applauding and worshipping God, because God has rid the earth of you. So don't think that anybody is gonna be mourning up here in heaven and some how you gonna have vengeance on at least somebody as you suffer there in hell. You will find no satisfaction there!" He said: "That's horrible!" I said: "More horrible than you can ever imagine, repent and believe. Flee from the wrath to come." I was speaking at the university last week and some students were in invisible protest against me. They came in, sat down on the front rows, cross their arms, pull their hats all down, and pretended to be sleeping. And this was their big protest, I guess. I just walked over to the corner and I said: "Listen... listen." and I began to tell them about hell. And I said, "Now I want you, I will give each of you a quarter so you can go home, go back to your room and call your mom and tell her that all of you are going to hell. And she needs to pray for your soul." You see sometimes in the universities, do you know the biggest argument they use against me? They'll say: "A loving Jesus would never send anyone to hell." Do you want to know something? If it were not for the loving Jesus we wouldn't even have the doctrine of hell. Do you know that? You look in the Old Testament you can hardly find, it is there, but it's hardly any passages in the whole Old Testament about hell. You look in the writings of Paul there is almost nothing about hell. Really! Do you know where everything that we know about hell, do you know where it comes from? From Jesus! Really! Almost everything we know about hell comes from Him. The loving Jesus who died to save men spoke more about hell than everybody else in the entire Bible put together. Why? I think that there is one reason. This is just my opinion. Hell is so horrible that man cannot even comprehend it. So the only one who can truly comprehend how horrible hell is, is God Himself. And only God is able to communicate the horrible nature of hell in any way.

So remember now when you hear about Jesus dying for you, you know now, that it is more than some whips. Those whips were nothing. I don't wanna depreciate His physical suffering but, folks, the cross is about the Son of God being crushed by his own Father. And when he cried out: "It is finished!" that meant PAID IN FULL! Do you know why God can never pour out his wrath on you, if you are Christian? He can never, never pour out his wrath on you. Never! His judgment... His wrath, He can never pour it out on you. Never! It is impossible! He can't do it! He can only act toward you now with the greatest of love, the same love with which He loved His dearly begotten Son, is the love He loves you. He cannot love you with anything less. Do you wanna know why He cannot poured His wrath out on you? I'll tell you why. Because His Son drank it. It doesn't exist anymore. It is gone! He drank it. There is nothing left for you. There is no more punishment for you if you are a Christian. But, if you are not a Christian, oh, dear friend, you don't even wanna know, you don't even wanna know what awaits you. Lets pray.

Father, we thank You for this day. We ask Lord, your blessing and your help. And Dear God help us to appreciate what You have done for us in giving your Son, not an angel did You gave us, not gold, not a piece of the throne that You throw away, but You gave us your only begotten Son. And for that we will worship You throughout all eternity. That we have an older brother, and He is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters because He has died for us. He's taken away our sin, and He's given us His own righteousness. In Jesus' Name. AMEN

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