

Meditations on the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ

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 Title: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for man for forgiveness of sins"
 Text: Matthew 26:20-30
 Theme: The fellowship of His suffering always precedes the power of His Resurrection. The cross is always before the crown. God has given to His church a means of remembering and celebrating the power of the cross as a past fact, a present reality, and a future hope.

ILLUSTRATION:

"All objects lose by too familiar a view." John Dryden

"Nothing is wonderful when you get used to it." Edgar Watson Howe

Is this truth one you can die with and for?

In the absence of the hope-providing and heaven-securing cross-work of Jesus Christ, what is left?

ILLUSTRATION:

A little over a month before he died, the famous atheist Jean-Paul Sartre declared that he so strongly resisted feelings of despair that he would say to himself, "I know I shall die in hope." Then in profound sadness, he would add, "But hope needs a foundation." (Our Daily Bread, April 17, 1995).

Today we remember and celebrate hope's sure foundation.

Listen carefully to the following idea.

"The centrality of the atonement to Christianity has influenced our language, giving us the word 'crucial' which means literally 'pertaining to a cross.' When we say that anything is crucial we are saying that it is as central to that to which we apply it as the cross is to Christianity. What Christ did on the cross is the heart of the Christian faith. It is the central doctrine of Christianity. We must not minimize the centrality of the atonement." (New Dictionary of Theology, edited by Ferguson, Wright, Packer, "Atonement," 54).

What is the danger of becoming comfortable with the remembering and celebrating of the Lord's Table?

If you and I as the people of God forget the cross, what hope do the unbelieving have of hearing the gospel in our remembering and celebrating of the Lord's Table?

Lest we forget, let us look once more at the power of the cross-work in behalf of sinners.

In our last studies we considered five fundamental ideas as they relate to the life and death of Jesus Christ.

- I. The life and death of Jesus Christ was an intentional offering not an accidental event (Matt. 26:28, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20).
- II. The life and death of Jesus Christ establishes the New Covenant (Matt. 26:28, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20, 1 Cor. 11:25).
- III. The life and death of Jesus Christ is the means and basis whereby God can forgive the sins against Him (Matt. 26:28, 1 John 1:7, Rev. 7:14).
- IV. The life and death of Jesus Christ must be appropriated by faith in order to be effectual in the life of those who believe (John 6:53-56).
- V. The life and death of Jesus Christ redeems/purchased for Himself the church (Acts 20:28, Rev. 5:9).

When we come to the Table this is what we are remembering and this is what we are declaring. The Table that you and I are called to remember and celebrate is as infinite and as rich as the very person and work of Jesus Christ. The Table speaks of our Lord's life and death and thus is as deep and as wide as He is.

I would like us to continue in this line of thought by turning to Romans 3:25.

- VI. The life and death of Jesus Christ placates the wrath of God against sinners (Rom. 3:25).

“whom God displayed publicly **as a propitiation in His blood through faith.** This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed” (Rom. 3:25).

The great argumentation of Romans 3:21 and following culminates with this profound and glorious declaration that in Christ alone is God just in justifying the sinner. It is in the life and death of Jesus Christ that the justice and wrath of God against sinners can be satisfied.

“The need for atonement arises from the universal sinfulness of mankind and our inability to deal with the problem posed by our sin. The sinner is in a desperate situation. The plight of sinners is many-sided, but view it how you will, Christ has saved

his people by his atoning death.” (New Dictionary of Theology, edited by Ferguson, Wright, Packer, “Atonement,” 54).

It is wrong for us to . . .

“Overlook the fact that St. Paul, as a converted Pharisee perceived as no one else did the opposition between the new covenant and the old covenant, law and grace . . . and perhaps especially the inefficacy of the old legal dispensation compared to the efficacy and realism of the dispensation of salvation centered on the cross of Jesus. The consequence is a radical change in ideas concerning righteousness/justification. There is a different scheme or process for attributing justice/righteousness in the new covenant than in the old covenant.” (Theological Lexicon of the New Testament, Ceslas Spicq, translated and edited by James D. Ernest, 1:341)

The exact word used in Romans 3:25 is used elsewhere only in Hebrews 9:5.

“And over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly” (Heb. 9:5).

The same word family is used in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10-15.

“and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

¹⁰ “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son **to be the propitiation for our sins**. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. ¹³ By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ¹⁴ We have seen and testify that **the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world**. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God” (1 John 4:10-15).

“God has shown mercy, but not by pronouncing acquittal pure and simple; through Christ a price was paid, a ransom with expiatory value, so that ‘sinners’ have become just, have been made truly righteous.” (Theological Lexicon of the New Testament, Ceslas Spicq, translated and edited by James D. Ernest, 1:341)

Oh what a glorious thought! How unbridled and uninhibited we should be in the celebration of this magnificent truth. What is this idea of expiation?

DEFINITION:

To expiate means to bring satisfaction to a wrong done. It comes from a Latin word meaning “to make amends.” It is a compound word meaning “from ex- ‘completely’ + *piare* ‘propitiate, appease.’”

The nature of the sacrifice being the God-man has the ability to satisfy the wrath of God against the sins of the world for all mankind, in all places, at all times. Can anything be more powerful or glorious?

"The sacrifice of Christ has satisfied once and for all the demands for outward justice which God had deposited in the Law, and at the same time it has brought the positive gift of life and inward justice which the latter was unable to give." (Theological Lexicon of the New Testament, Ceslas Spicq, translated and edited by James D. Ernest, 1:341)

A sister word is used in Luke 18:13 to describe the plea of the needy.

¹⁰ "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' ¹³ But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, '**God, be merciful to me, the sinner!**' ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14).

God answered the prayer of the sinner by sending His Son to be not only the mercy seat, but the sacrifice upon the mercy seat that would placate once and for all the wrath of God against Him.

When we come to the Communion Table this is what we are remembering and celebrating.

VII. The life and death of Jesus Christ justifies sinners before the wrath of God (Rom. 5:9).

"much more then, **having now been justified by His blood**, we shall be **saved from the wrath of God** through Him" (Rom. 5:9).

We have looked at justification extensively in the past. We will continue to note it in the present and we will forever celebrate it in the future.

In the doctrine of justification "the person justified is described as 'just,' 'righteous,' not as a description of moral character but as a statement of his status before the court."

It is because of the cross-work that the Father can look upon the sinner and say, "This is my son, a son in whom I am well pleased." In the doctrine of justification God declares sinner's righteous.

New Testament scholar N.T. Wright notes how,

"The entire Christian mission is built on this foundation." (New Dictionary of Theology, edited by Ferguson, Wright, Packer, "Justification," N.T. Wright, 359))

This is what sustains us in our moments of consumption. As I battle the world, the flesh, and the devil, this is the truth that sustains me in my moments of experiential spiritual exhaustion. God declares me righteous, not because of what I have done or am doing, but because of whom He is and what He has done and who I now am in Him. Glory goes to God.

VIII. The life and death of Jesus Christ opens wide the way to God (Eph. 2:13, Heb. 10:19).

"But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been **brought near by the blood of Christ**" (Eph. 2:13).

"Therefore, brethren, **since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus**" (Heb. 10:19),

¹⁴ "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Therefore **let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace**, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:14-16).

¹ "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² **through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand**; and we exult in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1-2).

It is because of propitiation and justification that we have reconciliation. "God has reconciled the world, not counting people's sins against them. Reconciliation involves a change in the relationship between God and man." (Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible, "Reconciliation," William J. Woodruff, 662)

Jesus Christ is my introduction before the Father. He says, "Father, this is Pat Griffiths, treat him as you would me. Pat, this is My Father and your father, come to Him even as I would."

This is what His cross-work and ongoing ministry in my behalf has accomplished and is accomplishing for me right now even as we speak.

The life and death of Jesus Christ reconciles warring factions (Col. 1:20).

“and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, **having made peace through the blood of His cross**; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven” (Col. 1:20).

Where once I was barred, I now have a full and free access before the Father. His wrath against me has been satisfied and He now sees me in the full light of His Son. There is peace between God and me.

IX. The life and death of Jesus Christ renders powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14, Rev. 12:10, 11).

“Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, **that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death**, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14).

¹⁰ “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. ¹¹ And **they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb** and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death” (Rev. 12:10,11).

The Table reminds me that I am to live in the light of His *finished work*. Although I do battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, I am on the victor’s side.

X. The life and death of Jesus Christ cleanses our conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. 9:12-14, 9:23-10:6).

¹² “and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will **the blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, **cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**” (Heb. 9:12-14)

²³ “Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; ²⁵ nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶ Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. ²⁷ And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes

judgment, ²⁸ so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, **will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin**, to those who eagerly await Him” (Heb. 9:23-28).

“Christ’s death brought its irrevocable result. He cannot come to die again. Whatever He achieved by the offering of Himself is finished and settle for all time. Christ’s first coming was as the sin-bearer. At Christ’s second coming, His purpose will be apart from sin, for that was dealt with by His once-for-all sacrifice when He came the first time.” (Hebrews, Kent, 182).

“The sin question will not be brought up at Christ’s second coming, any more than it is now being brought up by Christ, our Great High Priest, at God’s right hand. He bare sin ‘once-for-all.’” (William R. Newell, Hebrews, 324, 325).

¹ “for the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, **make perfect those who draw near**. ² Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, **would no longer have had consciousness of sins?** ³ But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. ⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵ Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, “SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME; ⁶ IN WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE TAKEN NO PLEASURE” (Heb. 10:1-6).

“To have no more consciousness of sins does not mean that true believers are henceforth blissfully unaware of sinfulness in their lives. **The statement refers to the consciousness of sin’s guilt as being still objectively unrecovered.**” (Hebrews, Kent, 182).

The devil delights in making us believe that what the cross secured must now be maintained by man. He delights in calling us to freedom but keeping us in bondage. Many of you still live in the past. A past that keeps you from living in the light of His glorious kingdom. You struggle and strain against the bog of despair unable to believe that what He has done is truly enough for this life and for the life to come. Friend, you are free. Your conscience has been cleansed from dead works to serve the living God.

“There are, sad to say, many thousands of true believers who have not yet fully entered into the great fact that their own sins are forever gone in Christ’s death.” (William R. Newell, Hebrews, 325).

His life and death are the means through which the redemptive work of God takes place. This is what the Lord’s Table calls us to remember and to celebrate.

XI. The life and death of Jesus Christ sanctifies the people through His own blood (Heb. 13:11, 12, 20, 21, 1 Pet. 1:2).

¹¹ “For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp.

¹² Therefore Jesus also, **that He might sanctify the people through His own blood**, suffered outside the gate” (Heb. 13:11,12).

“The purpose of Christ's suffering was . . . that he might sanctify the people. His purpose was to set them apart to God by removing their guilt, and thus to enable them to have continuing access to God on the basis of forgiveness by expiation.” (Hebrews, Kent, 285).

“according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, **by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood**: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure” (1 Pet. 1:2).

¹³ “for He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:13,14).

God, in and through His Son, has set us apart from the world, the flesh, and the devil in order that we might live in His white and glorious light.

APPLICATION: (Where do we go from here?)

The cross of Jesus Christ, His resurrection from the dead, and His on going ministry in behalf of His people cast its shadow over every area of our lives. It acts as a blanket that engulfs the bed and hangs lavishly over the sides. How do we live in the shadow of the cross 24/7? How do we have a week of 7 Sundays?

1. How to have 7 Sundays: Is it relevant Monday through Saturday, not just Sunday?

Monday	Think about the sacrifice Christ made in your behalf.
Tuesday	Think about the benefits of the sacrifice of Christ for you
Wednesday	Are you celebrating the WBC family? What issues are so important as to keep you from enjoying God's family?
Thursday	Thank God for whom He is and what He has done
Friday	Thank God for what He is doing and will do
Saturday	Prepare your heart/mind for corporate worship on Sunday

2. How have I applied (or can I apply) this passage to my life?

I take all of life and I compare it to what who He is, what He has done, and who I know am in Him. In light of Him, how am I to evaluate this present difficulty?

3. How would a man, woman, married, single, youth, senior, seeker, etc., apply it?

The cross is trans-generational. The cross is impartial and non-discriminatory. It cares little for race, creed, color, or geographical location. It is an invading army of unstoppable light dispelling darkness wherever it is found.

4. Can I give them a “take-home” application – something they can do at home, work or at school?

I ask that you take what you have and where you are at and place it at the foot of the cross, take it to the empty tomb and see what God will do with your present problem and concerns?

5. How can I show them how to do it?

There is nothing that can conquer the cross. There is nothing that can withstand the power of its effervescent light. Push your problems and concerns to the cross and trust God to consume your unbelief and doubt.

6. Have I kept Christ in the application?

Is Jesus enough or do we need more? May WBC be a place where the power of the Christ saturates and consumes our darkness, heals our wound, and brings wholeness to our disjointed lives.