

## “The Work of the Cross”

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Read Matthew 1:18-25; Colossians 1:12-23; John 19:30



The Bible contains a divine record of a story written by God. It speaks of His creative activities for the purpose of declaring His glory by redeeming those who stood in rebellion against Him. This redemptive act was planned by Him and provided for the believing. The means of securing for Himself worshippers was through incarnation and crucifixion. “God revealed himself as merciful to humanity in the Incarnation, when he manifested himself in human flesh, and the supreme moment of that revelation was on the cross at Calvary.”<sup>1</sup> In the incarnation, God would become flesh and in the crucifixion, life would die. In Jesus Christ, man would find the offering and the offerer. Jesus would become the priest who offers and the lamb offered. He would function in a duality of roles. Saint Paul in Galatians chapter 4 verses 3 and 4 tell the reader how “in the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” There was a distinct time, person, and reason as to why everything happened as it did. According to Luke, “The Father has fixed [the time] by His own authority” (Acts 1:7). It is the author who writes the story.

The work of the cross accomplished by the incarnate Son of God was “a promise kept” and “a power displayed.” God promised a deliverer (Gen. 3:15) who would bring deliverance (Gen. 3:21) from mankind’s shame, fear, and guilt. And He kept His promise. What the Old Covenant foretold and pre-figured, the New Covenant features and presents. In Christ Jesus, the promise is fulfilled and finished.



The New Covenant was made by God and secured by blood. It is the work of the cross that constitutes the content of the New Covenant. The biblical record contains the consequence of the cross-work. Colossians 1 speaks of rescue (v. 13a), transfer (v. 13b), redemption (v. 14a), forgiveness (v. 14b), reconciliation (vv. 20a, 22), peace (v. 20b), holy, blameless, and beyond reproach (v. 22c). All of this falls from the gibbet on which the Son of God was slain. It is through the instrument of death that life is birthed. It is the grain of wheat in dying that brings forth a harvest of life (John 12:24). This is the paradox of the biblical cross. This is where the wisdom and the work of the cross collide. “This insight is one of the factors in [Martin] Luther’s thinking that gives his theology an inner logic and coherence. Take, for example, his understanding of justification, whereby God declares the believer to be righteous in his sight, not by virtue of any intrinsic righteousness (anything that the believer has done or acquired), but on the basis of an *alien* righteousness, the righteousness of Christ that remains external to the believer. Is this not typical of the strange but wonderful logic of the God of the cross? The person who is really unrighteous, really mired in sin, is actually declared by God to be pure and righteous! Such a truth is incomprehensible to human logic, but makes perfect sense in light of the logic of the cross.”<sup>2</sup> How profound! How stunning! How “illogical!” God in His wisdom and because of His work “declares the sinner righteous yet while a sinner.” Only God can rescue the drowning, transfer the damned, redeem the indebted,

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forgive the despicable, reconcile the dastardly, give peace to the destructive, and declare holy, blameless, and beyond reproach those who are defiled and deserving of damnation. How vast is this work? How unfathomable is the idea that “God would come down and love the unlovely and the unrighteous before the objects of His love have any inclination to love him or do good?”<sup>3</sup> This is the work of the cross whereby God saves the sinner, rescues the rebellious, delivers the undeserving, and graces the godless. Oh may God enlarge the hearts and minds of His people in order that they might comprehend the magnitude of His work in their behalf. May blind eyes be opened and deaf ears hear so that the glory of His work would weigh heavily on His people.

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<sup>1</sup> “Luther’s Theology of the Cross,” Carl R. Trueman. [http://www.opc.org/new\\_horizons/NH05/10b.html](http://www.opc.org/new_horizons/NH05/10b.html)

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<sup>3</sup> “Luther’s Theology of the Cross,” Carl R. Trueman. [http://www.opc.org/new\\_horizons/NH05/10b.html](http://www.opc.org/new_horizons/NH05/10b.html)

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