

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Cross

Scripture: John 19:16-30

Code: 1511A

Our Scripture reading for this morning is taken from the nineteenth chapter of John's gospel. Please turn in your Bibles to John chapter 19 and I'd like to read as you follow verses 16 through verse 30. Beginning in verse 16, John records: "Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified. They took Jesus and led Him away and He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified Him and two others with Him on either side, one and Jesus in the center. And Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was near to the city and it was written in Hebrew and Greek and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, 'Write not the King of the Jews, but He said, I am King of the Jews.' Pilate answered, 'What I have written I have written.' Then the soldiers when they had crucified Jesus took His garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part and also His coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, 'Let us not tear it but cast lots for it, whose it shall be' that the Scripture might be fulfilled which saith, 'They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots.' These things therefore the soldiers did.

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother and the disciple standing by whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, 'Woman, behold thy son.' Then saith He to the disciple, 'Behold thy mother.' And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own house.

"After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, 'I thirst.' Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar and they filled a sponge with vinegar and put it upon hyssop and put it to His mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, 'It is finished,' and He bowed His head and gave up the spirit."

May God bless this most wonderful portion of Scripture.

As you well know, we have been studying for many months now the gospel of John. I believe that the only ministry that really is an ultimately effective ministry is an expositional ministry where you study through books in the Bible. But as I said, I prefer to study passages verse by verse and go through

the verses and explain what the Word of God says. But because our time is limited in doing that today and because also we want to focus clearly on the cross of Christ, I've decided to study for just a brief time this morning the cross as John teaches it in his gospel. So we're going to stay in the gospel of John in terms of our series, but digress from the pattern of verses that we've been discussing and just take the subject of the cross as John deals with it. And we'll be jumping around a little bit in the gospel of John and seeing the various aspects of the cross that John presents. In terms of a type of theology, we would call this restrictive theology. That is we are restricting our study to the theology of the cross as presented by only one writer, that is John. We're not going to take the whole composite of the New Testament and what it teaches on the cross, nor are we going to compare Paul and John or any other such comparison. What we want to do is examine what John says about the significance of the cross of Christ. And certainly nothing could be more fitting than that, an examination of the cross on this communion and certainly in terms of our study of the gospel of John it fits to look at John's presentation of the cross.

Now with that in mind, as we have seen by now in our study of John's gospel, John's gospel is a mixture. It is a mixture of the very simple and the profound. On the one hand it can be understood by the most humble, simplest-minded person in the world. It is so simple a child can comprehend the person of Christ and the plan of salvation. The child can read the stories of the miracles of Jesus in a Sunday-school class at the age of five or six years and understand. And at the same time that it is simple, it is infinitely divinely supernaturally profound so that the wisest Bible scholar, the holiest saint does not even attempt the statement that he has fully understood the depths of the gospel of John. Simple and yet profound, and thus we examine John and we find what we can understand and what we cannot understand...what we can understand we apply to life, what we cannot understand we apply to faith. So we see in the gospel of John this glorious union of the simple and the profound.

Then we see the major theme of John. I know you know this. We repeat it every time. I want you to get it. I trust it's embedded in your brain. John has one central theme, one relentless dogma that stalks every paragraph and that one central theme is this, Jesus Christ is God in a body. He's God in human flesh. He is deity, full God. And as such, He is the Christ the Messiah of Israel, the Savior of the world. John's one relentless theme is the deity of Jesus Christ. He is God, not one of many, not A, but God. This is his central theme.

Now also, John only has a few sub-themes. Every writer in the Bible has a major theme usually, and many sub-themes. The writers all have sub-themes, there's always a recurring series of thoughts. Most of them also have a major theme. John has a major theme and then he has some sub-themes. But they are very few. Paul, for example, has a multiplicity of sub-themes in any of his books. We studied Romans and there are just again and again brand new themes introduced all along in Paul's thought. John is not that way. John gets on one thing and just keeps driving it and driving it and driving it and driving it. And his sub-themes are few and they're unchanging and they keep weaving

themselves through the book. They don't appear here and then a new sub-theme here, and then a new sub-theme here. They're the same all the way through. His major theme goes all through, so does the sub-themes. It's as if the major theme is a piece of rope going completely through the book and woven into that rope are colored strands of string that are all a part of it woven in. The sub-themes recur and recur and recur and they're unchanging.

You say, "What are the sub-themes?" Well they're very few and very simple. His sub-themes, apart from the deity of Christ, are these...the Father-Son idea, God and His Father... God, I should say, and His Son Christ; the subject of life and death, the subject of light and darkness, the subjects of truth and falsehood and then three things, judgment, holiness and...judgment, witness and love. Those are John's sub-themes...Father/Son; light/darkness, life/death, truth, falsehood, judgment, witness and love. Those are the sub-themes of John. And very beautifully John takes all those sub-themes, and I don't have time to do this, this morning, but I'll just give you the end result. John takes all those sub-themes and focuses them on the cross.

For example, the Father/Son sub-theme, the theme of the Father and the Son is keyed at the cross. As Christ goes to the cross saying, "Not My will, but...what?...Thine be done." As Christ was on the cross and says, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The Father/Son theme focuses on God's plan and Christ's willingness to go to the cross.

Then the themes of life and death focus on the cross, don't they?...as Christ dies on the cross and comes to life and consequently provides by His death life for us. The theme of light and darkness focus on the cross, as dark men are liberated in the light by the death of Christ. The theme of truth and falsehood centers on the cross, the falsehood of legalism. The falsehood of salvation by works is shattered by the death of Christ, the sacrificial act by which salvation is provided not through works but through faith. And truth came with Christ. And then those three themes, the last three--judgment, witness and love--all focus on the cross. God's judgment on sin is on the cross. God's love is on the cross. And our witness to Christ is His death on the cross.

So John takes...and that's just a sketch...John takes all these sub-themes and weaves them in to focus on the cross. And so the cross and the death of Christ on the cross become...get this...the common ground for all of John's gospel. His theme, the deity of Christ, focuses on the cross. All his sub-themes focus on the cross. That's why John records the words of Christ at His death, "It is finished." That's the climax of all the themes of John as well as the climax to the redemptive life of Christ. So the cross becomes common ground on which all of John's themes meet and that's a fitting thing because the cross is a common ground where God and man meet, isn't it? There's only one place where we can meet God, that's on the common ground of the cross of Jesus Christ. You can't come to God by good works. You can't come to God by religion. You can't come to God even by

reading the Bible. You come to God only on the common ground of the cross of Christ, accepting His death and atonement on your behalf. And so John's common ground is the cross and so is ours. On this communion Sunday, what would be more fitting than to study what John teaches us about the cross? We're not going to study it all, fortunately, but just part of it. Time would obviously not permit.

But I do want to show you four things that John teaches about the cross in his gospel. And we're going to be flipping around rapidly, but I want you to get four things that John teaches about the cross. Here they are, the cause for the cross, the cure in the cross, the contrast at the cross and the consequences from the cross...the cure, the...pardon me, the cause, the cure, the contrast and the consequences.

Notice, first of all, the cause for the cross, chapter 8 verse 24. Why the cross? It says in 8:24, Jesus speaking, "I say therefore unto you that ye shall die in your sins for if ye believe not that I am He, that is Messiah, God's Son, ye shall die in your sins." Now that's an emphatic statement. Jesus is saying sin is a serious problem. The cause for the cross was the fact that men were dying in their sin. I know some critics have come along and said, "Well, the cause of the cross is simple...Jesus tried to exercise a little bit of religious patriotism and He got a little bit carried away so they took His life and He's a poor, frustrated patriot." Well that's foolishness. Why would people think it was a mistake Christ never intended to die and He got martyred inadvertently and messed up His whole operation.

Listen, the cause of the cross was not chance, the cause of the cross was not some kind of luck or unluck, the cause of the Christ (cross) was not some kind of a misguided resolution. The cause of the cross pure and simple was the fact that without the cross men would die in their sins. That's the cause of the cross. There's only one way, says the Bible, that sin can be remitted, and that is by the shedding of blood and the cross was necessary because of the sin of man that was causing man's death here and in eternity. And so the Bible clearly and John clearly presents the cause of the cross as the sinfulness of sin, the seriousness of sin. And John brings this out so beautifully, so clearly. He points to the fact that man is sinful and that sin is bringing about a death and a perishing that is both here and now and eternal. Sin demands that someone die and so someone has to die for us or we die in our own sin. Sin demands the payment of blood, so someone must shed blood. So the death of Christ was caused by the seriousness of sin.

Now John takes two angles on this. I just want to share them with you. They're not anything profound, we're just reviewing the thoughts of the cross as we approach the Lord's table. But John takes two interesting angles to present the seriousness of sin here in his gospel. Angle number one is this, to begin with John makes it clear that unless sin is dealt with, man will perish eternally. And this he points up in John 3:16 where he says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son and whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Without

Jesus Christ, without the cross men perish, eternal death and the fate of perishing is a very real thing. John shows how serious sin is when he says that if a man lives in his sin and refuses the salvation offered in Jesus Christ and if a man refuses the shed blood of Christ on the cross, refuses to receive Christ as Savior, that man's sin is so serious that He perishes eternally. That is serious. Those who do not believe, those who do not receive Christ do not have eternal life but perish. John's constant reference is to the fact that without Jesus Christ men are hopelessly lost and about to perish. In fact, John makes constant reference to the world and he shows that the world is in total sin and that all men are in danger of perishing.

Listen, if the gospel was for the world, then the world must need it. And the only reason the world would need the gospel would be that without the gospel they perish. And that's exactly the truth. All men are in danger of perishing. And John says this is serious and this is why God sent Christ to die to stop this.

And then John presents this idea of the seriousness of sin a second way from another angle. He presents it as the wrath of God. In chapter 3 verse 36 John shows how the wrath of God operates against sin. Sin is so serious it can cause a man to perish eternally, secondly, John says, sin is so serious that it causes the wrath of God to be activated. Verse 36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abides on him." In other words, John says sin is so serious that, now watch this, by its very existence it activates the wrath of God. God is of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity. God cannot tolerate sin. And by the very principles of the universe, when sin exists it activates, it sets off God's wrath. It's like a fire in a building where they have a sprinkler system, as soon as the flame hits the wax or whatever happens to be the touch-off point, the water is released. Whenever sin comes into existence, whenever it appears, by its very nature it activates the wrath of God. This is not a future thing, this is a now thing. That's why John says, "He that believeth not is condemned...and what's the next word?...already." It's a now thing. The wrath of God is activated at the moment of the existence of sin. Why? Because the universe is built on moral, spiritual principle.

And I've illustrated this so many times but I need to do it again because it points up the truth of this fact. If you jump off a building, you're standing on a twenty-story building and someone says, "Don't jump because if you jump some time later in the future you're liable to get hurt." There's no future about it, you jump, you're going to get it right now. And if you jump, God doesn't have to kill you. God doesn't have to kill you. The law of gravity will. I always think of the two morons who were shooting ducks and one of them shot a duck and it fell down and landed right down on the anchor in the boat. One moron looked at the other one and said, "That was a stupid thing, you didn't need to waste a bullet, the fall would have killed it." Well it's the same kind of a thing. God doesn't need to take pot-shots at men in kind of a personal retribution vengeance, God doesn't need to go around just judging indiscriminately or discriminately. God merely set the universe into a moral pattern and all a man needs to do is bring sin into the picture and it activates the wrath of God. And that's why the

unbelieving man is condemned not in the future but already he lives in a state of condemnation. He lives in a pattern of the exhibiting of the wrath of God. It's permanent. The sinner lives in a state, in a state of calamity culminating some day in the horrible calamity of dying in sin and perishing eternally.

So John shows the seriousness of sin from two angles...the present idea that a man exists under the wrath of God, the future idea that he's going to perish eternally. Serious...sin is serious, so serious it caused the cross. You think God would have sent His only begotten Son to die on a cross needlessly? No, it was caused by sin. Sin has far-reaching consequences.

You know, the Jews had a little time understanding this. They always felt that sin only...only was punished in temporal life. You know, here and now, because the Jew believed that by virtue of his very existence he was assured of the Kingdom, see. The Jew believed he was saved just by being a Jew, just by nationality. Remember Romans 2? The Jew believed that he was on the inside already and that there would never be any possibility of him being lost, or his being outside God's plan or of perishing. That was an absolutely unthinkable thought. The Jew thought that everything that happened in terms of punishment for sin happened right here and now. Remember when the man born blind was confronted by Jesus in chapter 9? He was born blind and the Jews...the disciples, His own disciples, Jews, of course, said to Him, "Who sinned? This man or his parents?" See. They assumed that everything that happened in life was a result of sin and that all sin was taken care of for them in this life. And Jesus said, "Nobody sinned, this is done that the works of God might be seen." In other words, they had the idea that all that was going to be happening in terms of punishment for sin would take place here. Jesus says it's not that simple. There is a present tense...oh yes, there very definitely is. There is a present living under the wrath of God right here and right now in this world. That's right, there is. In case you don't think so, refresh your memory. It says, "The wrath of God," we just read it, "The wrath of God abideth on Him." The word "abideth" is present tense, right here and right now. For the unbelieving man it's not a future wrath, it's a present thing. The wrath of God presently, continually abides on man. Right here, right now he's subject to God's wrath.

But that's not all. Lest the Jews think the extent of it is in this life, that's not all. Jesus says there is a future judgment to add to what goes on in this life. You might look at it in John 5:27. Jesus says that He has been given authority to execute judgment. What kind of judgment is this? Well notice verse 28, "Marvel not at this for the hour is coming in which all that are in the grave shall hear His voice and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." There is a punishment in this life in living under the wrath of God but there is a full judgment in the life to come, a resurrection of damnation. Yes men without God are judged already, condemned already, but that's not the end of it. There's a future eternal perishing for those without Christ.

You know, John's...that's a brilliant writer, especially under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who was really writing every word for him, using his own personality and all. And John didn't make a mistake. There are two words that John could have used for judgment, *krima* and *krisis*. *Krima* means a fact, judgment is a fact. Last Tuesday he was judged, boom-bam, it was a fact. Tomorrow I will be judged, boom, just a fact in time, one point, that's it. That's *krima*. But John doesn't use *krima*. John uses *krisis*, *krisis* is a process.

You know what John says? The unregenerate man is not just waiting for a fact of judgment, he is living in a process of judgment. He is under the constant judgment of God continuously. The man without Jesus Christ persists in abiding in the wrath of God, he is literally a slave. That's exactly...exactly the words of chapter 8 verse 34 and I'm going to read it to you, don't look it up, just listen. "Jesus answered them, 'Verily, verily I say unto you, whomsoever committeth sin is the *doulos*, slave, of sin.'" A man in sin is enslaved to it. It's not a fact, it's a process of slavery. A slave is not liberated at all, he binds himself to that which masters him. And it's kind of a tragic thing because Satan gives the illusion of freedom, see. And sadly and truthfully, men who go out and sin do it happily and they do it with feeling that they are controlling their own actions and they figure, "Well, I can sin this time, I know it's wrong, or I can do it next time I'll say no," see. And they feel they have a certain freedom but that freedom, folks, is an illusion. There is no freedom in slavery, none at all. And a man's sin only changes forms, he's never released from it. It may be a little different next time then it was last time, but it's still sin...it just changes form. There is no freedom because he's a slave. You see, man is never the master of sin, sin is always the master of a man.

You know what Christ came to do? Did you ever think of it like this? This is kind of interesting, kind of exciting. If men have the illusion of freedom, then Christ came to shatter that illusion and replace it with true freedom. Isn't that what Paul tells us when he says in Galatians, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty where with Christ has...what?...made us free?" You see, Satan gives to a man in sin the illusion that he's free. I have for ten years shared Christ with a certain person, same story now as it was ten years ago, "I don't want to receive Christ because I'm free to do what I want now and if I receive Him, I won't be free," see. And I keep telling him, "That's not the way it is." But Satan has planted in his mind such an illusion of freedom that he actually believes that being able to choose between different forms of sin is some kind of liberty when it isn't. So you know what Christ came to do? Shatter the illusion of freedom, make you see that you're a slave and then give you true freedom. This is what John says, and oh, he points it out so clearly in chapter 9 verse 39, he quotes Jesus and listen to what Jesus says, and Jesus says, "For judgment I came into this world." I came to shatter the illusion of freedom. Watch this, "That they who see not might see." Now watch this one, "And that they who see might be made blind."

You know, some people think they see. Christ says I came to make them blind. I came, first of all, to shatter the illusion and make men who think they see, who think they have liberty know they're slaves. And then once I've got them blinded in slavery, I can open their eyes again to true freedom. Jesus came to judge. Jesus came to blind the people that think they see in order that they might really see. He came to shatter the illusion of freedom, replace it with true freedom and men so lost in sin and so enmeshed in sin didn't see when He came, unfortunately. They thought they saw but they didn't. And instead of seeing the light, they loved the darkness, didn't they? You know, it's interesting, nobody would say the sun shines for the purpose of creating shadows, would they? The sun shines for the purpose of...what?...giving light, right? But whenever it gives light it also throws shadows, doesn't it? You know why Jesus came? To give light. Whenever He gave light, He also cast shadow and some people love the shadows more than the light. That's the seriousness of sin.

And so, this process of living in darkness ends in a final disastrous calamity of perishing eternally. My Dad always used to say that death doesn't change anything, it just crystallizes into permanency what you are in life. If you're condemned already, you'll be condemned there. And if you're perishing now, you'll perish then. If you're dying now, you'll die then. The poet was right when he said, "Still as of old, man by himself is priced, for 30 pieces Judas sold himself, not Christ." When a man rejects Jesus Christ he sentences himself to perishing and he prices himself out.

And so, John says the cause of the cross is the seriousness of sin. Secondly and very simply and quickly, he says the cure of the cross...cure in the cross is the forgiveness of sin. Chapter 12 verse 32...in chapter 12 verse 32 Jesus said, "And I if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto Myself." Christ talking about being crucified when He says "lifted up." He is saying that My death will bring salvation to man. This is John's message. Remember the words of John the Baptist in John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away...what?...the sin of the world." You see, the cure is in the cross, He takes it away and He can only take it away as a Lamb slain. The one who believes in Jesus Christ, the one who receives Him, the one who accepts His death in his behalf, that one has a cure for sin. The cure for sin is in the cross, it's through Christ.

So, in John 5:24 Jesus says, "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth My word and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life and shall not come into judgment but is passed from death unto life." When you believe in Christ and accept the offering of Himself on the cross, you have eternal life. That's present tense. Do you realize that I have eternal life right now? That I am right now living in eternal life, and so are you if you love Christ. Isn't that a fantastic thought? You're not waiting for eternal life, you have it. Nothing can ever kill that life. Oh my body may die, death can only kill my body, it can't touch my life. Eternal life isn't a quantity of life, you see, it's a kind of life, it's a quality of life. It's the kind of life that can't die. My body may go, will go unless the Rapture happens first, but

nobody is about to kill my life, it's eternal...it's eternal. And John says, "He that hath the Son hath life," in his epistle and here he says, "If you believe you have life, everlasting life." And the only way you can ever have everlasting life would be to have your sin taken care of, so evidently that's what the cross does, takes away sin.

And, you know, the only way you can appropriate that life and appropriate the cross is by faith. Did you know that? It's by believing. It's so simple. Just accept the sacrifice of Christ, believe and receive Him, John said. That's all. You see, Christ told us that it demands faith. John reminds us of this. But may I add one thing that's very important? It's always the folly of the procrastinator to think he can come to God any time you want. Don't you believe that. It's always the folly of the glib person to say, "Well, when I get ready I'll come to God." Don't you believe that. Jesus said this, "No man comes unto Me except the Father...what?...draws him." And listen to this, we just read it in John 12:32, Jesus said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to Myself." He didn't say, "When I get on a cross all men will run to Me." He said, "I'll draw them." Listen, you can't come to Christ any time you want. You come to Christ only when the Father draws you...only when the Son draws you...only when the Spirit of God, John says in chapter 16, convicts you. So if you haven't learned that lesson, look back to the pre-flood civilization and remember these words, God said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." That's why the Bible so carefully says, "Today is the day of salvation." When you sense the conviction of God, move. Jesus said, "I'll draw men." He said in chapter 5 verse 21, "For the Father raiseth up the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son gives life...listen to this...to whom He will."

When you sense the convicting power of the Spirit of God, when you sense the drawing power of Jesus Christ, when you sense the attractiveness of His beautiful person...that's the time to come to Christ because there may come a time in your life when you no longer sense that conviction, when you no longer feel the beauty of Jesus Christ and sense His drawing power. And at that point, it's too late. Come while you may. It's a folly to think you can come whenever you want. You may never want to again.

And so says John, there's not only a cause for the cross...sin, there's a cure in the cross, salvation is provided. Thirdly, and just I want to mention it and that's all, there's a contrast at the cross. You say, "What's the contrast?" Well, in chapter 1 John tells us what the contrast is. Two things meet at the cross, verse 14, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth." Verse 16, "And of His fullness have all we received and grace for grace." Verse 17, here's the contrast, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

You know what the contrast is at the cross then? The contrast between what? Law and grace. What put Christ on the cross? The Law did, didn't it? You say, "How did the Law put Him there?" I'll tell you how. "The wages of sin is...what?" That's the Law, right? You sin, you die. So the Law said somebody has to die for sin. So the Law put Him there. You know what else put Him there? Grace put Him there. Grace said, "How about a substitute?" God loved us so much that He provided a substitute. That's grace, isn't it? Law says somebody has to die. Grace says Christ will in your place. See? So Law and Grace met at the cross, didn't they? And you know what? When Christ died, the Law was totally fulfilled and so you know what happened? The Law was taken care of and after the cross there's no law, only grace. The Law said death, Christ died...the Law was done. And what's left is grace. You see the contrast at the cross? The Law came by Moses but Grace and truth by Jesus Christ. This is the beautiful reality of the cross.

You know, the Jews thought that salvation was by works, they didn't understand. Ole Philip and Nathanael understood Him. Remember in the first chapter when he says, "We have found Him of whom Moses and the prophets wrote." See? Nothing new. Jesus Christ was the one the Old Testament prophets were talking about. Chapter 5 verse 39 says, Jesus speaking, listen to this, "Search the Scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life...watch this...and they are they which testify of Me." The Old Testament was talking about Jesus. Did you know that? In all the sacrifices, in all the prophecies, in all the types and all the symbols, Christ was the fulfillment of all of it.

And then may I add this thought? If that is true then the cross wasn't just Christ, it was also God, wasn't it? Some people have the idea, you know, one writer said that salvation is kind of...Christ's death is kind of like Christ wringing from the hands of an angry God all those that God's going to crush. You know, we've got God up there, sort of a compassionless demigod about to destroy the world and Christ runs to the rescue of the world. That's a bunch of boloney. Listen, the cross is just as much God as it is Christ, for it was God who so loved that He gave. Salvation proceeds from God's loving heart foretold all through the Old Testament. And when Christ went to the cross He said this, "I do the will of Him that sent Me." The whole plan of the Law was fulfilled in Christ and grace issued from His cross. Tremendous truth.

Well, fourthly and lastly, we've seen the cause, the cure, the contrast at the cross, look at the consequences. Just two things. What did the cross provide? Well John 3:16 John says it right, "For God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." First thing it provided was a salvation with a quality of life called everlasting life. That's why the next verse says, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved." Salvation, that's the cross. The cross provided salvation. It redeemed men to God, John said. And from the cross life came out of death.

And at the cross light came out of darkness. Truth burst forth from falsehood. Eternal bliss replaced eternal judgment. All at the cross. All sin was crushed. All evil was defeated. Satan was conquered. All the accusations of Satan's mouth have been stopped by those who love Christ. Salvation provided at the cross.

You see, without the shedding of blood there can be no salvation. Christ shed blood for us. Salvation is possible. By faith we apprehend it. John tells us that we have to receive Christ by faith, doesn't he? But you know something, here's a fascinating truth about John I discovered in studying. Do you know that John never uses the word "faith" one time in his whole gospel? Not once. But listen to this, here's a thriller. He uses the word...the verb "to believe" ninety times. Now let me show you why I believe this is true. If he had used the word for "faith," the noun, faith would have been an object, you know like faith is this or faith is that or faith...he doesn't talk about faith as an object. He uses the verb and he makes "faith" a process, see. He doesn't say "have faith." That's not John's character. He says, "Keep on believing." See? John makes the Christian life not a point in history but a process of living. It's a continual pattern of believing. Boy, he's got it right. Faith is not a passive static thing, it's a moving dynamic life. And so we keep on believing in Jesus Christ.

But the cross not only provided salvation, lastly one glorious thing the cross provided was this, unity, oneness. You know why we are one in Christ? Because we all met Him on the same common ground. Where? The cross. Every one of us, as I've said, is kind of like a snowflake in God's eyes, all of us came to Him a different way, didn't we? All through our own life and every one of our relationships to Christ is unique, isn't it? Your's isn't like mine. Mine's not like your's. But you want to know something? We all stand on the same common ground...the cross of Jesus Christ. And that unity is something beautiful.

I love the words of Christ when He talked about this. It just...to me it's so thrilling to just realize that I'm one with all of you and every believer and one with Christ. What a joy. In John 10, I love these two verses, verse 15 and 16. He says in verse 15, "As the Father knoweth Me," Jesus talking, "even so I know the Father and I lay down My life for the sheep." If you're a Christian, you're one of those sheep. Now listen to verse 16, what a thrill. "And other sheep I have...Gentiles...that are not of this fold, them also I must bring and they shall hear My voice...listen to this...and there shall be...what?...one fold and...what?...one Shepherd." Unity in Christ. And oh those precious, precious words of John 17 where Jesus says, listen, verse 21, "That they may be one as Thy Father art to Me and I in Thee that they also may be one in us."

You know, you've got two things there. In chapter 10 you've got a positional oneness, in chapter 17 you've got a practical oneness. In chapter 10 He says, "You are one...positionally." In chapter 17 He says, "Why don't you act like the one you are?" See? Unity at the cross. You and I as Christians all met at the cross, didn't we? That's the point of our union. That's our contact with God. No wonder John focuses on the cross.

So, John resolves all his themes at the cross. They're all there. The cross was everything. It still is. What could be more fitting this morning as we enter into a communion service than to take our stand beneath that cross?

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