

The Cross of Christ

One of the more interesting tools I have come across is known as a water level. Its use is in determining the level of one side of a foundation with the other. They fill a clear tube 30 to 40 feet long with water and as the water seeks its own level, use accurately shows the true elevation and walla – a level wall height.

A nation of unrest needs to find a way to level out – to come to rest.

Our people need a true standard and are crying out for answers.

Saint Augustine famously prayed, ‘You have made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee.’

Blaise Pascal similarly said that there is a God-shaped vacuum within the human heart, and unless God is the one who fills the vacuum, we will be empty.

So where are we to go, and what are we to do, when we experience this emptiness? According to God our Father, the answer is simple.

Come home.

Last time we asked the question: How could a holy God justify sinful men?

How can He bring them home?

Tozer writes:

Salvation is bringing back to normal, the Creator-creature relation.

Peter’s first sermon is recorded on the day of Pentecost.

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know – this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death, But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.” (Acts2:22-24)

Today we will look closer at Salvation in Christ.

- It’s clear that God had a plan for salvation
- God’s Plan was Accomplished in Christ.

– His death conquered sin; His resurrection conquered death for all who believe in Him.

- Restoration of a relationship with God through Christ.

Paul summarized the gospel message,

“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved...For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” (1 Cor. 15:1-4)

I. The Plan of Salvation

The key elements of of God’s plan for our reconciliation were Christ’s death, burial and resurrection.

Reconciliation is bringing together of two enemies - restoring
God’s plan of restoring us to Himself was determined far in advance,

Peter’s message at Pentecost focused on Christ...
this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan
and foreknowledge of God,

Delivered up – ekdotos – only appears here in the NT.
Describes those surrendered to their enemies, or betrayed.

By the design of God, Jesus was betrayed by Judas into the hands of the Jewish leaders, who handed Him over to the Romans for execution.

Predetermined – horizo - Eng. Horizon
– *To mark out with a boundary, to determine*

Plan – “*God’s will, design or purpose.*”

Foreknowledge: Gk. Prognosis, -more than knowing beforehand,
- To foreknow one with absolute assurance in a certain state
or condition > close to the idea of predestination.

Taken together they indicate that...
Jesus Christ was delivered to death
because God planned and ordained it from all eternity.¹

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Acts 1-12*, (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1994), pp. 62-63.

Peter writes in his epistle that we were

“redeemed with ...the precious blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.” (1 Peter 1:19-20)

The prophets of old predicted a suffering Messiah who would become the sin-bearer – Ps. 22 and Isaiah 53 are two examples of this that display Christ’s sacrifice on the cross:

“...They pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots... All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will worship before You.” (Ps. 22:16-18, 27)

“Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.” (Is. 4-6)

In a sense Jesus death was a proof that He was Messiah, showing that God’s eternal plan was revealed to the ancient prophets many years earlier.

II. The Plan Accomplished

God’s plan of salvation would reconcile sinful men to Him was accomplished by Christ’s death and resurrection.

This man..., “you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death, But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death...”

Christ went to the cross to save us. Paul writes of what was accomplished, “When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us

all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.” (Col. 2:13-15)

All sin had destroyed was restored or undone by Jesus’ death and resurrection. Everything including, death, spiritual decay and bondage, debt to sin, guilt accusation, and satanic control were all removed by Christ’s sacrifice.

Peter writes that we were redeemed ...with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:18-19).

The redeemed are those who were purchased out of a slavery and set free.

The concept of reconciliation is also brought about by Christ’s death,
 “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come. Now all these things are from God who **reconciled** us to Himself through Christ... God was in Christ **reconciling** the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them... we beg you on behalf of Christ be **reconciled** to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”
 (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

Sin had separated God from man. Jesus’ death annulled the distance between God and man. [Not counting their trespasses against them]

God placed our sins on Christ and then put Christ’s righteousness on us.

The cross was God’s way of reconciling men to Himself.

Jesus’ purpose in becoming man was to be a sin offering to pay for sin

Peter writes,

“...and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.” (1 Peter 2:24-25)

When Jesus was hung on the cross, He had already suffered greatly at the hands of the Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers. He was unrecognizable because of their abuse. There is no greater expression of man's sin than his propensity towards violence against others. Jesus was the sin bearer.

On the cross He was separated from the Father; a holy God cannot look upon sin. Darkness hung over the earth as the Light of the World was dying.

Upon His death Jesus cried out to His Father, "Why have you forsaken Me?" just before He died, committing His Spirit to the Father, saying, "It is finished!"

The Romans would write a declaration of a criminal's crime, saying "Paid in full" – Gk. "tetelestai" – Jesus who bore the sins of the world proclaimed the same.

"By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all... For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified." (Heb. 10:10,14).

Alistair Begg writes,

"On the basis of Jesus Christ's death the Father reckons to believers His Son's righteousness, pronouncing them free from all guilt and declaring them just and righteous before Him."²

When Jesus died the curtain in the Temple was torn from top to bottom. The Holy of Holies was now opened to all a holy God restored to sinful men.

The hymn writer penned these thoughts,
 Because the sinless Savior died,
 My sinful soul is counted free.
 For God the just is satisfied
 To look on Him and pardon me.

III. Experiencing Salvation.

But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

Salvation is moving from living death to deathless life.

[Jack Odell]

Nothing to pay! Yes, nothing to pay!

² Alistair Begg, *What Angels Wish They Knew*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), p. 123.

Jesus has cleared all the debt away.
 Blotted it out with His bleeding hand!
 Free and forgiven and loved you stand.

Paul spoke of a mystery now revealed,
 "...**Christ in you**, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man **complete in Christ**. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me."
 (Col. 1:27-29)

Two-fold mission: Christ in us, and others complete in Christ.

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!
 Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you –
 unless indeed you fail the test? (2 Cor. 13:5).

Salvation is our standing before God – our position in Christ.
 The process of personal growth and development is all about discipleship.

Through discipleship we learn the practice of Christianity:
 Christ who is in us, lives His life through us.
 The indwelling Christ becomes our daily experience.

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."
 (Gal. 2:20).

He promises to give us everything we need.
 We come to the place where we realize that Jesus is all we need.