



9: The Power Of The Cross

At the heart of the gospel there are four essential points.

- God: there is a God and we are accountable to Him.
- Man: all have sinned and deserve God's judgement.
- Jesus: by God's grace we can be saved by Jesus.
- Response: salvation is open to anyone who trusts Him.

This week we have come to number three. It is about the answer to man's predicament. Before we go on, let me remind you just how grave that predicament is.

Man, made to live for and find his only joy in God has rebelled and incurred God's wrath. In wrath God has subjected the whole creation to corruption, futility and groaning. Man is cut off from God — dead, helpless, hopeless with no way he can restore the broken relationship — and condemned to eternal suffering in hell. It can be no other way, for that is what justice demands. Man's only hope is that somehow God might be merciful and gracious, but justice will not allow that for the penalty must be paid.

That is where the cross comes in. The good news — the great news — is that God has made a way. God — the Lord Jesus Christ — became a man so that He could in all righteousness be our representative. He lived a perfect, sinless life and He suffered — unimaginably horrendous suffering — in His death on the cross to pay for our sin. It was God's plan from eternity past. Let's think about what the cross achieved.¹

The Cross Removes God's Wrath

"Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood."
Romans 3:24 – 25

"He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."

1 John 2:2

The cross removes God's wrath by providing a substitute. God's wrath is not cancelled it is satisfied. It is diverted, absorbed and spent. Sin is not swept under the carpet, it is brought out and paid for in full.

The Cross Cancels The Demands Of The Law

"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."
Colossians 2:13 – 14

The Cross Ensures Our Forgiveness

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

Ephesians 1:7

¹ Further Reading: The Passion of Jesus Christ, John Piper, Crossway. Available to download free from DesiringGod.org

“For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Matthew 26:28

The Cross Provides For Our Justification

“We have now been justified by His blood.”

Romans 5:9

Forgiveness and justification are not the same thing. To be forgiven implies that I am guilty but my crime is no longer to be counted. Being justified implies that I have been tried and found innocent. It calls for more than just the payment of my penalty.

The Cross Makes Us Holy, Blameless and Perfect

“He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

Philippians 2:8

“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.”

Romans 5:19

“...not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ.”

Philippians 3:9

“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.”

Hebrews 10:14

Justification requires the removal of my guilt: it also requires the crediting of Christ's righteousness to me. On the cross Jesus completed the perfect righteousness that is now mine.

The Cross Removes Our Shame

“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience?”

Hebrews 9:14

The Cross Delivers Us From The Power Of Sin

“[He] gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age.”

Galatians 1:4

“Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.”

Hebrews 13:12

“[He] bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness.”

1 Peter 2:24

“He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them.”

2 Corinthians 5:15

The Cross Takes Away All Condemnation

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died.”

Romans 8:1 and 34

The Cross Brings Us To God

“...when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son.”

Romans 5:10

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”

1 Peter 3:18

“You who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”
Ephesians 2:13

“We have boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus.”
Hebrews 10:19

The Cross Gives Us Eternal Life

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”
John 3:16

The Cross Obtains For Us Everything That Is Good

“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”
Romans 8:32

The Cross Brings Peace On Earth

“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”
Ephesians 2:14 – 16

For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
Revelation 5:9

The Cross Redeems Creation

“All things were created through Him and for Him... it pleased the Father by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”
Colossians 1:16 – 20

“And by His stripes we are healed.”
Isaiah 53:5

The Cross Reveals God's Glory

“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.”
1 John 4:10

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honour and glory and blessing!”
Revelation 5:12

“We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour.”
Hebrews 2:9

Even though our condition, apart from the cross, is utterly hopeless people still put forward other ways of salvation. What "alternatives to the cross" have you come across?

Why do so many people have such a problem with the whole idea of the cross?

What do you think Paul means when he writes in 1 Corinthians 1:18, "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing?"

Some, who would not deny the necessity of the cross nevertheless relegate it to the sidelines, replacing its centrality with other things. What other things – even things that in themselves are biblical – can usurp the cross from its central position?

What is the effect if we do this?