

The Intent and Extent of the Cross
April 11, 2021

This morning, I need to go back. Every once in a while, as Linda and I are leaving home, usually to come to church, I suddenly can't remember if we put the garage door down. We usually think of it before we get to the west end of the Croftville Road and one of us will say, "Did we put the garage door down?" and the other will say, "I don't know. I wasn't paying attention." And we'll almost always pull over, check traffic, do a U-turn, and go back and check the garage door before we head on into town or wherever we're going.

This morning, I need to go back. Friday a week ago was Good Friday. In the message on Good Friday and again in the message on Resurrection Sunday, I repeated enthusiastically and emphatically an assertion that deserves clarification. In those moments of preaching, I know what I meant by what I said but, what I said could lead someone to a conclusion that I would not mean for anyone to make. So, I want to revisit what I said and attempt to say more clearly what I meant, and what I believe God in His word means for us to understand, embrace, and love.

So what did I say that makes me want to take us all back for clarification? Wanting you to understand and personally appreciate how wonderful, how amazing, how glorious is the grace of God displayed in the death of Jesus on the cross in our place and on our behalf; wanting you to be filled with authentic awe and wonder at the complete, perfect, effective, and successful work of Christ in the cross I said, "Jesus Christ died for the sins of every man, woman, and child who ever lived, who lives, or who ever will live."

I wanted you to see yourselves in that statement. I wanted you to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that all of your sins have been paid for, that there is nothing lingering that you still have to work off with God. I wanted you to be assured that there is no sin in your life that is not covered by the blood of Christ, and that you can live in the freedom and love that "Jesus paid it all." I wanted to encourage your faith and joy in Christ by knowing Jesus death on the cross for your sins left nothing undone. There is no defect or deficiency in the death of Christ relative to the work of salvation He came to do on your behalf.

That's what I meant then. It's still what I mean today. And it would have been really good if I had explicitly added all of what I just said to those two sermons. But I didn't. I left my intent to be extracted by your from the context, both the sermon context (what I said) and the audience context (who I was preaching to.) I sort of, unintentionally and unwittingly, left you hanging, having to figure out on your own not only what I said but what I meant. As a result, someone very rightly asked a wonderful and important question. And that question made me realize the garage door was wide open and we had to go back. So here we are.

Now, just as an aside, before we get to the actual question that precipitated a sermon U-turn, I want to express my gratitude for the question. Folks, when you ask me questions about sermon content, you offer me three tremendous gifts. First, you encourage me that you are listening to the messages. Second, your questions encourage me to grow personally and professionally (and you actually give yourselves a gift when you make me a better person and better preacher.) Your

questions send me back the word, back to prayer, back to study and meditation and the search for God's intent in His word, and that process, frankly, is the key to spiritual success for all of us. Paul wrote to Timothy and said, "Study to show yourself approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Your questions help me realize the power and presence of the Spirit who teaches and instructs us in God's word.

The third gift I get from your questions in encouragement in godly relationships. Most of the time, when you ask questions, you're actually looking for answers, and that means more conversations about God and His word and the impact of His word on our lives and our lives together. And that journey enables us not only to know God better but to know one another better. And I have to tell you, I got sunburned on my legs while I was in Florida, and my knees love my fingernails. My knees itch from the burn as it heals and they love when my fingers do some scratching. Most days my knees take my fingers totally for granted, but when there is an urgent need, my needy knees are grateful for capable fingers. In the same way, we learn new ways of appreciating one another in the process of searching out God and His truth together.

So, back to the question at hand. I said, "Jesus Christ died for the sins of every man, woman, and child who ever lived, who lives, or who ever will live." And the question that came up that has sent us back to take another look at that statement is, "Pastor, did you mean to say that the sins of everyone who ever lived are covered and forgiven at the cross so that everyone is going to heaven regardless of who they are and what they've done?"

It is a great question. That question is a logical conclusion that could be drawn from what I said. Phrased a little differently the question goes like this, "Does Jesus' death on the cross apply equally to everyone?" or "Does every person gain the same benefit from the death of Jesus if Jesus died for every person's sins?" Another way of thinking about the question is to ask, "Is everyone going to heaven since Jesus died for everyone's sins?" It is a great question and it is exactly the right question to ask given how I phrased my statement in those two sermons.

I know what I meant, and now I need to make sure you know what I meant but didn't say. In order to adequately respond to the question, we have to consider what the Bible reveals about both the intent and the extent of the cross. We need to consider these two other questions. First, what was God's intent for the cross? Second, what is the extent of the benefits of the cross?

1. The Intent and Extent of the Cross

a. Definitions

- i. The intent of the cross means the goal God had in mind for the death of Jesus.
 - (1) How does Christ's death fit as a major component of God's eternal plan for salvation?
 - (2) Why, from God's perspective, does Jesus die on the cross?
 - (a) Just a note here, Christian.
 - (b) Every question you deal with about God and the world, is better answered when you seek the answer from God's perspective first!

- (i) Addressing issues from the world's perspective first simply solidifies in the minds of worldlings that their perspective has primary merit
 - (ii) Addressing issues from God's perspective demonstrates that all of creation makes sense only in relation to its Creator and His motives and that answers will only be truly understood when He is understood.
- (3) From God's perspective, "What does Jesus' death accomplish?"
- ii. By the "extent of the cross" we mean the scope of the benefit.
 - (1) How widely is the accomplished work of Christ applied in the human population?
 - (2) More simply, who does Christ's death on the cross actually save?

b. God's intent for the cross and the extent of the cross can be seen in four indispensable truths.

- i. Jesus died on the cross as a sacrifice.
 - (1) When God set forth the first commandment, he made death the penalty for lawbreaking
 - (a) Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.
 - (b) The infinite offense of sin by divine decree of the Creator requires the forfeiture of life.
 - (i) God sacrificed an animal to clothe Adam & Eve
 - (ii) God accepted Abel' animal sacrifice as normative
 - (2) Christ's death on the cross was the death of a sacrifice
 - (a) **Ephesians 5:2 (ESV) ²And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**
 - (b) **Hebrews 9:6 (ESV) But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.**
 - (3) God set death as the penalty for sin; Christ paid the penalty God required of sinners by His sacrificial death on the cross.
- ii. Jesus died on the cross as a substitute.
 - (1) **Romans 5:8 (ESV) but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**
 - (a) Christ died in our place on our behalf
 - (b) Christ suffered death on the cross in our place, in the place of sinful humanity.
 - (c) Christ gave Himself in love and obedience to death on the cross for the benefit of people like you and me.
 - (2) God make Him who knew no sin to be sin for us
- iii. Jesus died on the cross as a satisfaction.

- (1) Propitiation
 - (a) **Romans 3:25 (ESV)** *For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.*
 - (b) **1 John 4:10 (ESV)** *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*
 - (c) Definitions
 - (i) “a sacrifice that bears God’s wrath to the end and in so doing changes God’s wrath toward us into favor.”
 - (ii) God setting aside by his own hand His righteous, holy, perfect, and personal offense at sin, through the substitutionary sacrifice of His Son
 - (d) God’s justice is satisfied by the life and sacrifice of Jesus.
 - (e) Jesus bore the wrath of God against sin.
 - (i) Both the expiation - a sacrifice that removes the guilt of sin
 - (ii) And the propitiation - a sacrifice that satisfies God’s wrath at sin and restores God’s favor toward the sinner

iv. Jesus died on the cross for a select group of people.

- (1) There is no expectation in the Bible that every person will be saved.
 - (a) **Rev 20:11-15**
 - (i) Everyone is judged by what they have done
 - (ii) Everyone whose name is not found in the book of Life is cast into the lake of fire.
- (2) There is ample expectation from Jesus that some people will be saved.
 - (a) **Matthew 20:28** ²⁸ *even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*
 - (b) **Matthew 26:28 (ESV)** ²⁸ *for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*
- (3) There is specific expectation that specific people will be saved
 - (a) John 3:16
 - (b) Two Clues
 - (i) God so loved the world
 - 1) So, how can we understand the statements that “God so loved the world” if the whole

- world is not saved?
- 2) Noah is an example of how God loves the whole world by saving a select few.
 - a) Qualitative rather than quantitative world
 - b) Everyone without distinction versus everyone without exception
 - i) w/o distinction: all kinds of people from every tribe, tongue, nation
 - ii) w/o exception - everyone. Period
 - (ii) **That whosoever believes**
 - 1) Believes/faith in Jesus Christ as Savior is the limiting factor for who experiences the benefits of the completed work of grace Jesus accomplished on the cross.
 - 2) More than “whosoever,” it is “whosoever believes.”
 - (iii) **Those who believe are those predestined from before the foundation of the world to put their trust in Christ and be saved.**
 - 1) ***Ephesians 1:5-6 (ESV) ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.***
 - 2) ***Romans 8:29-30 (ESV) ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.***

c. Did Jesus die for the sins of everyone past, present, and future?

- i. Yes and No, with clarification.
 - (1) The value of Christ’s death on account sin is infinite and precious
 - (2) The application of the value of Christ’s death is limited and particular
- ii. Better:
 - (1) **Jesus died because of all human sin but the benefits of His death apply only to those who believe.**
 - (2) Therefore, Jesus died because of everyone’s sins but his death only

has redemptive benefit (the application of the four indispensable truths only to) those who believe.

- iii. **Only those who believe and put their faith in Christ are delivered from the just and right wrath of God that sin deserves.**
- iv. God loved the world so that everyone who believes would have life.

2. So, where does all this leave us?

a. For Christians (those who believe)

- i. Glory that your sins were really covered when Jesus died for you.
- ii. Rejoice that through faith you are now and forever hidden with Christ in God
- iii. Praise God that your guilt has been removed through the death of Christ
- iv. Rejoice that God's wrath and justice toward your sin has been satisfied in the death of Christ restoring God's favor to you.
- v. Rejoice in faith, the gift of God purchased on the cross in the death of Christ. **The gift that proves He will fulfill His promise in your life, and apply every benefit of the cross for you.**

b. For those who do not yet believe

- i. Take heart because Jesus did not die merely to give you a chance to save yourself if your faith is good enough.
- ii. Jesus died to actually and effectually save you.
- iii. Believe. Put your faith in Him. Trust God to apply the full benefits of the cross in your life.
- iv. **Christ accomplished a completely full and satisfactory and effective redemption for everyone on this planet who believes.**
 - (1) "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will never perish.
 - (2) Believe on him, and you will become a full and complete participant in the perfect salvation, the perfect payment for sins, the perfect propitiation of the wrath of God, the perfect obedience for imputation, the perfect deliverance from death and hell and Satan and into the everlasting glory of God. Every spiritual benefit for which Christ died is yours for the believing because of Jesus' death." (Piper)
 - (3) When you believe as you ought to believe, you will discover that your belief was purchased by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.