

Christ Crucified

Part 1

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[00:00:01] It's laid on my heart, as I may be helped, to continue a little the precious subject that's been before us this afternoon. I would choose a text, and it's a text in five words, but we preach Christ crucified. It's quite evident that things weren't right in Corinth. And things aren't right today. And there are various remedies that are brought forward. The modernist will preach a Christ without a cross. The ritualist will [00:01:03] preach a cross without a Christ. But whether it's Jews or Greeks, in the Pauline context, for us it's in the modern situation. We say with all boldness, we preach Christ crucified.

Now before I leave this text, I'd just like you to notice one little point that those who read the Bible in the original will have noticed. This word crucified is worthy of our attention. There is a tense in the Greek language which speaks of an event which is historically accomplished in the past, but the moral effects of it continue to the present [00:02:03] time. Now this is the best New Testament example we have of the Greek perfect tense. And I'd like you to carry away with you tonight this wonderful text, but we preach Christ crucified.

Now if we're going to get any gain from our little meditation tonight, I would say that perhaps the most important issue for us is to get the right viewpoint. Viewpoint. That Saviour whom we love, who's been into death, he's not on a cross now. No place too high for him is found, the highest place in heaven. And we were singing in that hymn before this meeting, gazing on the Lord in glory, while our hearts in worship bow, it is there we [00:03:12] learn the wondrous story of the cross, its shame and woe. I'll bring this little point to you, perhaps you haven't noticed it. In the New Testament there's only one writer who speaks of the cross. I know there's one scripture that speaks of crucified, we'll refer to that in a moment, but there's only one New Testament writer who speaks of the cross, and that writer is Paul. Peter brings the kingdom before us, John the family, but Paul's line is the body, and the gospel of the glory sees Christ outside of and above [00:04:07] nature. Heaven's accepted one. And I hope that this viewpoint will enable us to see the little points that I bring out in this address in their right color, we will only properly understand the cross as we get the viewpoint from the glory. Perhaps it is, you know, that through sheer familiarity we have ceased to recoil from the offense of the cross. Death, by crucifixion, was something invented by the Romans for their worst enemies. It was used, for example, in civil life if a slave killed his master. And I think perhaps the [00:05:10] nearest approach we have, those of you who may be familiar with a farming community, is when they nail a rat to a barn door. That's just exactly what man did to the Lord of Glory. And I think this perhaps ought to come home to us afresh, that this was the death by which he died. Now I would like, for the sake of order, to bring before you five points tonight. A text in five words. I want to bring home to you five points. And the first of these is to see that in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ we have the measure

of man's guilt. This is where John [00:06:10] helps us. The only other reference to the cross, you remember, he speaks of that great city. Which spiritually is Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. It's the cross, dearly beloved friends, which shows the measure of man's guilt. God had been testing man from the beginning. In innocence, under government, without the law, under the law, prophet, priest, and king. And last of all, you remember, he sent his son saying, they will reverence my son. And [00:07:02] you know what the answer was, this is the year, come let us kill him. With wicked hands, he was crucified. Now sometimes, you know, we say the world's getting worse and worse. I venture to say that this is a misnomer. When Christ was here, it was that the secrets of many hearts should be revealed. And the wretchedness of man's heart is shown at the cross when he was crucified on a cross of wood. I was brought up, I don't know whether you know the hymn, Dr. Wolfson's [00:08:02] hymn. We used to sing it with all vigor. When I was young, man is a total wreck, will never reach the shore. I don't know whether you sing it here. But I'll just give you this, under this important subhead, that every advance in civilization is accompanied by a fresh disclosure of the wickedness of man's heart. Clothes, where did clothes come in? The tilling of the soil, where did that come in? It came in with the entrance of sin at the Garden of Eden. Cities, awful city London, which some of us are glad to get out of. Cities, [00:09:08] where was the first city built? It's connected with Cain. Artifices of iron and brass, harps and organs, where did these come in? Lammock.

Vineyards, where did these come in? We find a good man drunk. And I suppose the Tower of Babel, a ziggurat, virtually the Old Testament equivalent of a university, is connected with the scattering of the nations and the confounding of the language. I only venture [00:10:06] to say this because we're living in a day when the devil more and more seems to have captured man's ear, ye shall be as gods. And we find there are tremendous technological advances today so that man, he's got to the moon, he almost thinks he can do everything. It's in a context like that that the Western world is going to produce the first beast and the false prophet. Nothing to boast of in civilisation. The cross, let's keep near to the cross. The cross shows us the wretchedness the guilt of man. This world is stained with the blood of God's Son and shortly it's going to be [00:11:06] brought into judgment. A most important lesson for us to learn and we learn it at the cross.

Now the second point that I'd like to dwell a little bit upon is that the cross represents the climax of the Lord's life down here. What did the cross mean to Jesus? Oh that I might be given help to speak just a little bit upon that. Jesus was born to die. You get a hint of it, I wonder if [00:12:04] you've noticed it. Simeon, now let us thy servant depart in peace for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. Strange language that, isn't it? If the Lord Jesus was the promised Messiah he would have thought he would have desired to live. But he knew intuitively taught by the Spirit of God that he would be refused. He was content to die and wait. Do you not say to the mother of Jesus, yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own heart also. The long shadow of the cross lay the whole life of Jesus even at the commencement of his ministry and he was popular initially. He [00:13:09] said the bridegroom shall be taken away. And then you remember he said I have a baptism to be baptized with. How I am frightened to be accomplished. Go and tell that fox I must do cures today and tomorrow. The third day I shall be perfected. And these instances which came before us in the earlier address of where the Lord plainly declared that he was going to die, mocked, despitefully used, scourged, spitted upon, and crucified. We sing in our morning meetings, [00:14:17] we come together to break bread. At thy grace we are confounded. Dearly beloved brethren, I hope we are. Because in the cross you find that the features that marked him in his pathway come to their climax. And I'd just like to underline that for a moment. Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who though he was rich yet for our sakes became poor. That we through his poverty [00:15:01] might be enriched. Where was the poverty in evidence? At Bethlehem's manger? Foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, the Son of Man

hath not where to lay his head. It comes to light preeminently in his death. He was crucified through weakness. His weakness finds his climax at the cross. His obedience comes to light at the cross. Wish ye not that I must be about my father's business? But in the garden he said, not my will but thine be done. You see, all these lines of truth are leading on to the point where there'll be the maximum exhibition [00:16:05] of it. And when you come to the matter of love, that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father has given me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence. But listen to this, greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. I ask you soberly, lovingly, tenderly tonight, my dear friends, do you think in our affections we've perhaps moved away from that center cross? I have a little book here. If I thought everybody [00:17:09] would read it, I'd gladly give you one each as you walk out of this room tonight. Difficulty is, you know, not to buy books, but to read them. This is one not only to read, but to read, learn, and inwardly digest. It's Mr. Darby's book on the sufferings of Christ. I was deeply interested the other day to notice that it was first published in the Bible Treasury in 1859. Why do I say that? There was a revival in 1859. And I just wonder, my dear here, [00:18:03] whether a revival isn't connected, not a little measure, with the way in which we can enter reverently, devoutly, devotedly, into the precious truth of love that came to die. Don't imagine it's going to be easy. You know, they even talked of putting Mr. Darby out of fellowship for that. But I think you'll find that therein the ingredient elements of that precious death are taken to pieces, a little bit like the burnt offering, and laid in all in its pieces upon [00:19:01] the altar. How far do you think you and I live as we were singing under the shadow of that cross?

His soul was troubled. Now is my soul troubled. His spirit was troubled. Troubled in spirit. He was so amazed. He was very heavy. Mr. Darby gives deeply depressed. He was sorrowful. He was exceeding sorrowful. Now is my soul troubled, exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. And then [00:20:01] we find the climax in Luke's account, and being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And he's saying to you and me this afternoon, what? Could you not watch with me one hour? You might think, you know, that this sort of preaching isn't suitable. Let's turn aside from Mr. Darby for a moment and have a look at Mr. Spurgeon, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Sermon number 1199. Preached at the Spurgeon's [00:21:07] Tabernacle, 14th of October, 1874. What did he take up? He took up the meaning of the Greek words in connection with the agony of our Lord in Gethsemane. Do you think perhaps that we've got a little bit superficial? A little bit superficial at the supper? A little bit superficial in our preaching? The preaching that rocked England at the beginning of the past century was preaching that was near to that center cross, or that we could be recovered to it. To learn there the pulsations of his loving heart, and the movements of the heart of God that would enable him to go [00:22:05] through everything, in order that God's glory should be maintained, and the blessing should flow out to man. I could say more, but I think it would be a pity. I'm gonna leave you to do a little exploration, because herein I believe we have a field of the richest pasture. I commend it to your studies. I can't study it for you, you can't study it for me, but if the Spirit of God moves us in relation to these things, I believe we'll make progress indeed. Now the third little point I'd like to dwell on a little bit, is what is heaven's assessment of the cross? [00:23:08] What does God think about it? We are so apt, you know, to look at it from our point of view. Let's look at it from another point of view. Sins were taken up by the Lord Jesus, doubtless, but we hear him say, don't we, I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gave us me to do. True it is upon the cross, he could say, it is finished. Usually in the gospel we take it up in relation to our need, but I think primarily that cross had in view God's need. [00:24:08] He was manifested to undo the works of the devil. Once in the end of the world he hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, for by one sacrifice he hath perfected forever them who are sanctified. He tasted death for every man, everything. In the types you will remember

that that blood on the day of atonement was seven times before, but only once on. Once for God, seven times for you and me. And if we could only capture the teaching of scripture, [00:25:02] behold the Lamb of God, the taker away of the sin of the world. If we could see that sin has been removed from the eye of God, we'll have no difficulty, my friends, in singing that hymn, my sins, my sins, oh the bliss of this wonderful thought. My sins not in part, but the whole, were nailed to the cross and I bear them no more. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, oh my soul. Let's see sin first of all removed from the eye of God. Sins past, sins present, sins future, sins in their totality, dealt with, gone. And that is heaven's assessment of Christ's finished work upon the cross. But there's something more. It's not only sins are gone, but sin is judged. Knowing this, [00:26:14] that our old man has been crucified with him. I remember, was it two years ago, some of the young people crowded round and said, what do you mean by the old man? Well, I've given it a little bit of thought since then. And if you follow up Bishop Asher's chronology, since Adam there been something like 200 generations. The population today is about four or five billion, isn't it, in the world? The old man is the personification of every feature of Adam's race that is objectionable, [00:27:02] ugly, violent, corrupt. There he is, have a look at him, what a monster he is. And there'll be no peace so long as that monster's alive. But I learned from Romans 6, knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with him. God has dealt with the matter at the root. Not only sins, but sin. And we do well to take this to heart, that our old man, it could not be mended, so God ended it.

And that negatively is what has been accomplished at the cross. But positively, having made peace [00:28:02] through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto the Godhead, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven, even in him. We're introduced in Colossians to one great enough, all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in him, great enough to bring in a scene that's not only cleared negatively of what is objectionable, but positively, that which is for the pleasure of God. The cross is a wonderful thing, not only negatively, but positively.

And there he is, the leader of a newborn race. What's more, the personnel are brought in through [00:29:03] the cross. Strong man armed, keepeth his palace, goods are in peace. But if a stronger than he come upon him, he taketh away all the armor in which he trusteth, and he spoileth his goods. Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, the lawful captive delivered? We're set free. Individually, we're taken to the same place where he is. Jew, Gentile, both reconciled through the cross. And now we have not only the personnel, but the assembly, a company who are associated with him in heavenly glory. On what basis? On the basis of the cross. And what's more, the one who's done the work is the one who's the leader of the praises. God hath not despised nor abhorred the [00:30:13] affliction of the afflicted. When he cried unto him, he heard. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up the everlasting doors, and the Lord of glory shall enter in. And we find, don't we, that God has given him his heart's desire. He has made him blessings forevermore.

He's put a crown of pure gold upon his head. Honor and majesty has been laid upon him, and he's been made full of joy by God's countenance.

What a wonderful thing the cross is, putting out all that which is objectionable, bringing in all [00:31:15] that which is pleasurable. Not only this wonderful sphere of blessing, not only you and me brought into favor and nearness, but himself as giving character to the whole. Point number four. The cross, my dearly beloved friends, is the glory of the Apostle. Now it's always difficult, you know, as a second speaker, not to appear to be putting a tick there. You're right, dear brother. And across there, you're wrong, dear brother. I would just like to add [00:32:05] a little postscript to what came before us this afternoon. I'll take as the glory, Galatians 6, God forbid, that I should glory save in the cross of our

Lord Jesus Christ. I won't attempt the mistake that Mr. Gale so carefully sidestepped. The cross, my friends, comes before us three times in Galatians. Galatians 2.20, I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. This is a verse where we learn that the Apostle individually appropriates [00:33:02] to himself the truth that we have in Romans 6. In Romans 6, knowing this that our old man has been crucified with him, general statement, Galatians 2.20, I am crucified with Christ. He applies it to himself. His links with Adam's race, this I, this guilty I, it's been crucified with Christ. Galatians 5, verse 24, ye that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. It's not only that the old man has been crucified, but all that comes out of the old man has been dealt with at the cross. Galatians 6, verse 14, by whom the world is [00:34:04] crucified unto me, and I unto the world. Is this the Apostle's experience? No. Ah. What do I mean?

I mean that the Apostle Paul here is agreeing with what God has done. God has put the cross between not only me and the old man, not only between me and flesh with its affections and lusts, but God has put cross between me and the world. And the wonderful thing in the sixth chapter of Galatians is that the Apostle is up to it. In his own experience he's able to say, [00:35:01] thank God for it. I'm crucified to the world, but the world is crucified to me. The world's got as much room for me and my faith as it had for the Lord of Glory. They didn't want him, they don't want me. But the little point that we've got to see is that the Christian can't live in a vacuum. It's no good seeing that which is negative only. We've got to have that which is positive. And the next part of the verse goes on to say, in Christ neither circumcision availeth [00:36:04] anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. The cross comes in to clear me of what holds me back. The new creation comes before me positively to show all that I've been brought into. And you can't have one without the other. We're glad to be finished with the old man. We're glad to be finished with the affections and the lust. We're glad to be finished with the world if we've got something positive to take its place. And the Apostle gladly embraced the cross in order that he might be set free to enjoy positively all that he was brought into. Things which the eye hath not [00:37:05] seen, nor the ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man. He was glad to embrace them. And would God through an eye could do so more. Now point number five is, what does the cross mean to the disciple? You can't be a Christian without the blood. You can't be a disciple without the cross. Hating father and mother, wife and children, brother and sisters, our own life, taking up our cross. Where we read in the ninth chapter, taking up [00:38:02] our cross daily. Now I've looked at this verse and I expect you have in the past. And I suppose that your conclusion was the same as mine, that if we take up the cross daily it's going to affect us in all departments of our lives. Yes, so it does. When you go for a haircut, when you go to buy a suit of clothes, the sort of job you have, the kind of wife you marry, the house that you set up, the children. Yes, the cross will affect all these departments of our lives. If you're a disciple, that is. But as a matter of fact, I think taking up the cross daily goes rather deeper than that. We can look at the cross, thankful for the relief that we get to our spirits, when conscience [00:39:12] charges, now guilt has to be dealt with, we look to the cross. Or we can look to the cross to take home to our hearts the wonderful love of God, the love of Christ. But I believe that the cross supposes that the claims of the cross are owned in our lives. And I can't see that the claims of the cross are anything less than walking in the steps of the Lord Jesus. I venture to say that it'll affect every word and every work if we really take up our cross daily. When Zinzendorf, I'm [00:40:19] nearly finished, was halted in his tracks one day, you remember those icy cold conditions, he went into a place to find lodging, and there on the wall was a painting. And there was a painting of Christ hanging upon the cross. And the Spirit of God wrought with Zinzendorf, a wealthy man, given up to pleasure. But as he looked at that cross, and the Spirit of God riveted his eyes upon the cross, and something of the message of that cross came home to him. He had a look at [00:41:06] the caption, and under the painting was written those words, All this have I done for thee. What hast thou done for me? Zinzendorf became the founder of the Moravian

missions. It wasn't a Christianity built up on negatives. It was a Christianity built up on positives. It was a life devoted to Christ, and he walked in the steps of his master. And as I finish, I ask my own heart, why is it that this plain message of the cross, we know it so well, many of you in this meeting, [00:42:05] could give a far clearer exposition than I've done this afternoon, on the matter of the cross. Why is it that it's affecting our lives so little? I venture to give you this answer. In the garden of Gethsemane, who was there? Where were those 120 who were gathered in Acts 2, the day of Pentecost? Where were they? Where were all those multitudes in Israel, subsequently converted? They kept the Passover doubtless. They'd gone comfortably to sleep in their own beds. The apostolic band was reduced from 12 to 11. Judas wasn't there. At the gate, eight of the disciples [00:43:09] were left behind. They didn't witness Gethsemane. It was only those who'd been to the Mount of Transfiguration, who'd been into the death chamber of Jairus' daughter. There were only three, and the Lord was withdrawn as it were a stone's cast, and those three fell asleep. I'm afraid, dearly beloved brethren, we have to take a stock of ourselves as to the kind of stuff we're made of, and I'm afraid in the light of that, we have to cry to the Lord to have mercy upon us. Oh, will not thou revive us again? Revive thy work, and wouldn't the language of your heart be the [00:44:07] language of mine? Revive me. Well, I take it as from the Lord that he's been speaking to us this way today. Wouldn't it be wonderful if there was something coming out of these meetings that'll be for his glory? I believe it'll only be as the deep message of that cross comes home to our hearts in the Spirit's power.