

The Cross in God's Heart

by Alan Redpath

The sermon explores the profound implications of the cross in God's heart and our response to His love and sacrifice.

Duration: 33:55

Scripture: Isaiah 49:6, Isaiah 50:1, Isaiah 50:5-6, Isaiah 53:3, Matthew 11:28, Mark 7:34, Luke 9:41, John 4:6, Hebrews 5:8

Topics: "God's Heart"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the weariness and heartache that is prevalent in the world today. He emphasizes that God sent His Son to speak a word of comfort and encouragement to those who are weary in the battle. The speaker highlights the importance of Jesus' identification with our weariness, stating that he learned obedience through suffering and experienced every form of human exhaustion. The sermon also emphasizes the impact of sin on our relationship with God, noting that it is sin that hides the face of God from us. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the Father's commission to the Son and the Son's obedience in fulfilling the task of our salvation through his suffering and death on the cross.

Transcript

Man of sorrows, wondrous name for the Son of God who came, ruined sinners to reclaim, hallelujah, what a Savior. Lord Jesus, point us afresh to thy nail prints and to the work that thou hast accomplished for us at Calvary, and grant, O Lord, that there may be a response to thine own great love, which will glorify thy name and make it possible for thee to use each one of us in our lives. Shut us in with thyself and give us the grace of concentration upon thy word, and make the book live, and send us from this place with some burden lifted, and some doubts removed, and with a new glimpse of our victorious Lord.

We ask it for his name's sake. Amen. I would like you, dear friends, if you will, to turn with me this morning for our meditation in the word of God to the prophecy of Isaiah and the 50th chapter, which was read to us early in the service by Pastor Durie.

Isaiah chapter 50. Let me read to you verses 5 and 6. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.

I hid not my face from shame and spitting. This chapter in the word is the answer of God to a people who suggested that he had cut them off and ceased to care for them. True, they were in bondage, without an

altar, without a place of sacrifice, without apparent access to their God.

But it was sin which had put them there. The first verse of this chapter says, Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves. How often he had warned and pleaded and spoken with them, and yet there was none to answer.

Wherefore, when I came, says the Lord, was there no man? When I called, was there none to answer? His arm was not shortened, his power was no less. Only one thing had hid his face from them, and it's the thing and the only thing that hides the face of God from any of us, and that was their sin. How graphic is the language of the third verse of this chapter, I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.

Oh, the tragedy in the heart of God, the pang, the pain, the agony, the suffering when his children sin. That's what happens in heaven. We may think lightly of it, we may think it doesn't matter, we may excuse it, we may even justify it, but it clothes heaven with blackness and sackcloth.

Sin is the only thing that can do that. But God went even further than declaring his power to save his people from this. He revealed his willingness and the lengths to which he was prepared to go, that a people burdened with sin might understand that in spite of it, God cares, and he loves, and he has not forsaken.

For though God hates our sin, he loves the sinner, and he is never prepared to leave us to our fate, just though it might be to do so, without first of all giving us a clear revelation of his longing for our salvation. I want you, therefore, this morning, if I speak to some who listen to my voice, and who've made excuses, and because of it have felt themselves forsaken of God, I want you to catch the picture that heaven is in mourning over some of you today. The angels weep.

You may laugh it off, shrug it off, imagine that this is something that can be excused, or as I say, justified. Ah, but the harps have ceased, as it were, in the glory over your life, and the rejoicing that was there over a sinner that once repented and turned to God, has become silent. God has made sackcloth the covering in the breaking of his heart, because of the behavior of his children.

And in face of this, knowing full well the true facts, yet we complain and suggest that God doesn't care. Here is God's answer to a complaining people. Of course, in the mind and the vision of the prophet, we are moving toward the revelation of the one who was wounded for our transgressions, and who was bruised for our iniquities.

That's the supreme answer of God to all our complaint and all our suffering. We haven't got there yet, in our meditations, but we're coming. And the chapter breathes the whole atmosphere of this fact, that because we've sinned, there's a cross in the heart of God.

The thing that we've done, the thing which we've covered up, the thing which we've excused, has driven another nail into the hands of Jesus. Now, of course, we bear in mind, in our meditation upon this prophecy, that Isaiah is referring here to the servant of Jehovah, not Israel collectively, but our Savior personally. The one who, as the 49th chapter and the 6th verse reminds us, is to bring Jacob again to Him, and who is to be a light to the Gentiles and salvation to the ends of the earth.

And there are some things here, in this chapter, concerning our Lord, that we need to reflect upon very solemnly in His presence this morning, and in the light of them to consider our behavior. Do we say that

God doesn't care? Do we say that it doesn't matter to Him? Let me ask you to notice here what I have called the Father's commission. Notice the language of the 4th verse here a moment.

May I put this in the revised version for you? Morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as those that are taught. At the back of all our complaint that God forgets, and God doesn't care, is this thing that is described for us in this verse, weariness. Weariness.

That I should know, He says, how to speak a word in season to them that are weary. I suppose all of us know something at one stage or another of physical weariness, and all of us know something about mental fatigue, and all of us know something about being heart sick, just heart sick. But I think the greatest weariness of all comes upon a man who just gets weary in the battle of life.

The battle he has with himself, and his sin. Oh, how often you have longed, haven't you, that somehow you might make one mighty attack with the devil and be done with him forever. But instead of that, the conflict has been incessant.

To defeat him today only invites a renewed attack tomorrow, in some more subtle guise, perhaps. And it goes on day after day, and that ordeal is continuous, and beneath that ordeal, heart and flesh have often failed. Oh, God, is there no release for this, you have cried.

Oh, there's nothing new in that. Your weariness in the conflict against sin is not exclusive. My Bible reminds us in the 8th chapter of Romans, in the 22nd verse, that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain, until now.

Oh, the awful weariness of sin. And there's never been a day, perhaps, which it's so obvious and evident as it is, in this day in which we live, the sheer fatigue, and the sheer heart sickness with it all. But to such a word, the Father sent the Son.

And He sent Him to speak a word in season to them that are weary in the battle. The thought, of course, in this 4th verse, if you look at it, is that before the Son could speak that word to us, He must Himself be identified with our weariness. So we see His preparation for this great task.

Though He were a Son, says the book, He learned obedience by the things that He suffered. And He passed through every stage and every sphere of human exhaustion. Let me remind you.

Think of it. Let the Holy Spirit speak to us about this concerning a God that we say has forgotten. Being wearied with His journey, He sat by the well.

He looked up to heaven and sighed because of their unbelief. Oh, wicked and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Heart sickness. And the weariness in the battle with the thing that has defeated us.

Weariness in this spiritual conflict that one day in the end of it all made Him stumble under the sheer load and fall as He walked up carrying His cross, that green hill. And all through His life, He was constantly learning. Morning by morning, says the scripture, morning by morning, He wakeneth.

He wakeneth mine ear to hear as those who are taught, as the disciple. Recall again. A brief snatch of sleep, somewhere on a mountainside, somewhere in a lonely valley, somewhere by the lakeshore, for occasionally maybe in a home at Bethany.

Just a break, a brief snatch of rest. And then waken. And then the voice, speaking from the glory, morning by morning, speaking and bringing to Him constantly the shadow of the cross from which there was no escape.

Never man spoke like this man, they said. And every day, every morning, as He wakened, the Father spoke again. And what He heard in the ear, He proclaimed upon the housetop as the Lord Jesus prepared for this great task of our salvation.

The Father's commission. Look at the Son's obedience in verse 5. The Lord God opened mine ear, I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. Every day the Father poured into the ear of the Son the picture of Calvary.

He must suffer, He must die. He could never be God's answer to my weariness and to my sinfulness, merely by His enduring hardship. He must go all the way, He must bleed, He must be made sin.

He must be identified with the horror of it and the filth of it and the evil of it. It all must pile into Him at the cross. He must take it all.

And from His birth to His death, Calvary, Calvary, Calvary, constantly, constantly spoken into His heart. And He anticipated all the suffering. The shame, says the Scripture here, the spitting, the scourging, the cross.

But He was not rebellious, neither did He turn away back. And He set His face steadfastly toward Jerusalem. My friend, when you and I sin, we sin against that.

We sin against that. Ah, God forgive us. We say He doesn't care.

We say He's forgotten. Heaven mourns and the angels weep and we go on living like that. And He turned not away.

He was not rebellious. Because He loved. Amazing that He loved.

The Father's commission, the Son's obedience, the servant's suffering. Look at the sixth verse of this chapter. I gave my back to the smiters, my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.

I hid not my face from shame and spitting. Obedience involved for Jesus, suffering like that. Insult, shame, cruelty, contempt and finally murder.

But He endured it and He endured it voluntarily. Look at the word, I gave, I gave my back to the smiter. And He looked down two thousand years in His mind.

And He had you and me in His heart. And He saw the life we lived. And He saw the sin we committed.

And He saw our failure and our breakdown. And He saw our excuses of it and our justification of it. He saw us and listened to us saying it doesn't matter.

God's forgotten. He doesn't care. I can get away with this.

I can live like that. Nobody knows. Nobody minds.

And He bore His back to the smiter. For you and me. I gave my back.

But one flash of His majesty and power and authority. Those who would have captured Him fell on their faces to the ground in front of Him. They could have had no, they couldn't have touched Him if He hadn't consented.

They blindfolded Him and buffeted Him and struck Him and spat in His face. And He saw through the bandage. And said, Thou couldst have no power at all against me.

Except it were given thee from my Father in heaven. And I see my precious Lord Jesus exposing His dear lovely face. That dear sweet face that wept with prayer and tears for you and for me.

And for a sinning world. A face the like of which humanity has never gazed upon. In its beauty and loveliness and strength and power and meekness.

And I see His lovely face exposed to the shame and the spitting of that crowd. The face from which, says my Bible, when He comes in glory and majesty and power. The face, the face from which heaven and earth will flee away.

The face which will make people cry out for the rocks to hide them and to fall on them. The face of Jesus. And as I think of Him and I excuse myself.

I think of His suffering. And somehow I know that it wasn't the nails that bound Him to the tree. But it was a passion for the glory of God at any cost.

And an undying love for men who were utterly revolting to Him. Because He was holy. Was it the nails, O Savior, that bound thee to the tree? Nay, it was thine everlasting love for me.

For me. And you say God has forgotten? And you justify your conduct? Let me say to you with such terror in my heart as I do. Let me say to you.

If you don't look up into that lovely face. Quickly. And say, Lord Jesus, I'm a sinner.

And I've been hiding it and cloaking it up and covering it in the name of religion. In the name of Christian profession. In the name of sympathy for other people.

I've allowed myself to be carried away into the worst form of failure and sin. If I don't look up Him, His face, and tell Him the whole story. And watch Him look back at me with love and grace and forgiving mercy.

One day, one day, those eyes like a flame of fire will look into the depths of my soul. And I'll run away in vain from them. It'll be too late then.

Let me tell you that God is going to have the last word about your sin. Not you. Lord, have mercy on us.

The son's obedience. The father's commission. The servant's suffering.

The Savior's victory. Verse seven. The Lord God will help me.

Therefore shall I not be confounded. Therefore have I set my face like a flint. And I know that I shall not be ashamed.

The Lord God will help me. Therefore shall I not be confounded. Therefore have I set my face like a flint.

You notice that the tone is changing now in this chapter. His previous words were full of submission, surrender, patient suffering. We've been, as it were, into Gethsemane there.

And we've watched Him going up that green hill. We've seen it all. Oh, but the eternal God lets us peer, as it were, into the very heart of the suffering Jesus.

Lets us listen to what was going on in His soul as He went alone up that cross, that lonely road. As in His heart He is saying, the Lord God will help me. Therefore have I set my face like a flint.

And I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me. Who will contend with me? Let us stand together.

Who is mine adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me. Who is He that shall condemn me? Lo, they shall all wax old as a garment.

The moth shall eat them up. You tell me that God doesn't care? My God, why hast thou forsaken me, was the central cry upon the cross. And here, here is the echo of it.

But in it all there's a ring of determination. Listen to Him as He treads the winepress alone. As He trudges that weary journey up to the cross.

As He bears the agony of it all and faces that last stage of the conflict. That last stage of the battle. As He takes the cup the Father has given Him to drink it to the very dregs.

That there might not be left one drop for us to drink. That we might be free from all judgment. Thy will not mine be done.

He'd said. He could have called twelve legions of angels to deliver Him. But He faced it alone.

And repeating in the face of all the shame of it. Just picture it in Pilate's hall there. With Peter outside denying Him.

With the disciples running from Him. And Judas has kissed Him and betrayed Him. With all his profession of belief.

And there's Jesus standing there with all his shame. And in his heart this is going on. The Lord God will help me.

I shan't be confounded. I've set my face like a flint. I know I shan't be ashamed.

Picture it. He's near who justifies me. He was sure in that uttermost of the depths of the moment which meant our redemption.

He's gone right down there to prove to you that He cares. He's sure of victory. Absolutely confident of it.

His confidence is based upon His Father's help. And that faith in His Father's help was based upon obedience to His Father's will. Listen.

The whole life of Jesus at that moment as He was down, down, down. Facing sin and being made sin for us. That whole life of Jesus constituted a claim upon God that He could not deny.

There is absolute confidence of triumph here. The possibility of failure at the last minute never occurred to Him. The Son of Man must suffer many things.

Must be killed. Must be raised again. For the joy that was set before Him.

He endured the cross despising the shame. He sat down in the right hand of God. Yes, the cross was always before Him, but so was the empty tomb.

Always sure of His ability to fulfill the purpose of His coming. To give His life a ransom for many. The victory of the Lord Jesus.

Sure that God would vindicate Him. He is near that justifieth me, He says. And the word is, He is near that vindicates.

Not justifies in the sense of making Him righteous, but vindicates. Vindicates His name. He is near that does this.

Through all that suffering and all that bloody trial. And all the way up that road to Calvary. He stayed Himself.

He stayed Himself. By saying, He is near. Who is He that condemns? It is God that justifies.

The world had said of Him, He's a friend of sinners. God justified Him by saying, if He is the friend of sinners, He's that in order to make sinners saints. The world had said He was mad.

God justified Him and has done so ever since by making the teaching of Jesus Christ to be the light of every soul. That's trusted in. The world said He got a devil.

God vindicated Him by giving Him the power to cast out every devil. The world said He blasphemed when He called Himself the Son of God. God justified Him, vindicated Him by raising Him up from the dead.

So that He's going to come one day soon in the clouds of heaven. With great glory. What is this to say to my heart and yours this morning? I don't know how to say it.

My heart is so deeply stirred as I think about the cross today somehow. So glad we're breaking bread in a few moments. That's probably the greatest appeal, far greater than anything you could hear from me.

All I want to say to you, beloved friend, if you can go on sinning in the light of that, God have mercy on you. That's what it cost Jesus. That's what He thought about sin.

That's what it meant to Him to face it. That's what He went through and you say He's forgotten and He doesn't care and He'll overlook it and excuse it. What is the appeal to my life in this? Well, I think it's, I think it's twofold really.

In the first place, I think it's an appeal to identification with our Lord. There are limits, of course, beyond which no human being can go. But I think the Lord is saying to my heart and yours again this morning, this was the way that the Master trod in preparation for His commission.

The Lord hath given me the tongue of those who are taught. That I should know how to speak a word in season to them that are weary. He wakeneth me morning by morning.

He wakeneth mine ear to hear as those who are taught. If I have faced this question about which I've been speaking to you in relation to my own life, if you have, if you've come to the cross for forgiveness and cleansing, you must come to it also for identification. I have been crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. And this means I must tread the Calvary road too.

He wants to give you and me the tongue of those who are taught. He wants to give me and you, both of us, all of us, the ability to speak a word in season to the man who's weary in the battle. And to do this, He wakens you morning by morning to speak the word of the cross into your ear.

And He expects you to share with Him as you take the scoffing and reviling and persecution of other people and you make yourself a doormat for Jesus' sake. I think it's an appeal to identification. But I think it's also appeal today to those who say that God has forgotten to put their trust in this Lord.

For do you notice the language of the tenth verse here? Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his guard. I wonder if you're in the dark this morning. And you're in the dark spiritually just because of the attitudes about which I've been speaking.

Well, the scripture says, Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks, walk in the light of your fire and the sparks that you've kindled. This shall you have of mine hand, you shall lie down in sorrow. Yes, you can try and get out of that by escaping and evading the real issue and make your own spark and your own light.

But there's another way. There's another way. He that walketh in darkness and hath no light, let him trust in the Lord.

For the Lord God will help you, and therefore you will not be confounded. And therefore you, like Jesus, may set your face like a flint. And you too, like Him, will know that you shall never be ashamed.

Listen, if I'm prepared honestly, do I see this principle to accept as Jesus did, this whole life of utter submission and preparation that He might be made sin for us. If I submit as He submitted in obedience to the will of God, then just as His life made a claim upon the power and intervention and ability of heaven, so will mine. So will mine.

If I walk that Calvary road today, if I recognize that I've simply been excusing myself, justifying myself, and I stop this, and I repent, and I turn to God, and I trust Him, and I submit to Him, and I work with Him, then, beloved, I tell you, that constitutes a demand upon the throne in heaven. It's the man who's repented and broken with the whole business that is guaranteed the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon his life constantly. No one else.

No one else. If ever, if ever there came, comes to you from this pulpit, any other pulpit, a measure, in some measure, of a word that has behind it more than human words and eloquence, but has behind it the conviction, burning of the Spirit of God, this is because the man who preaches to you has had to face this principal person. And I would beg of you, dear Christian friends, I would beg of you, for Jesus' sake, in the light this morning of the picture of all that He has suffered in your place, I beg of you to reflect upon the life you live, and to ask Him, by His grace, to take you the path of submission, the path of obedience, that He might, might enable you to speak a word in season to the weary, that He may make you walk the Calvary

road with Him in obedience to Him, and that your life in submission to the will of God might constitute a claim upon all the power of the risen Lord, which He died and rose to make possible and available to you, in order that through you there may come the authority of Jesus.

I cannot tell, says the hymn, how silently He suffered, as with His peace He graced this place of tears, or how His heart upon the cross was broken, the crown of pain, to three-and-thirty years. But this I know, He heals the broken-hearted, and stays our sin, and calms our lurking fears, and lifts the burden from the heavy-laden, for yet the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is here. Shall we bow together in prayer, a moment of quietness, before we sing our concluding hymn, O, that I might reflect and you might reflect upon how we live, in the light of this picture of what it meant to Him to bear away our sin.

Let him that walketh in darkness trust in the Lord, for in Him there is everlasting strength. O God, for Jesus' sake, may Thy Spirit so move in our hearts that there will be an uttermost repentance to the uttermost of Thy love, that therefore in our life there might be acclaim upon heaven's resources. Poor and needy and helpless we would be before Thy feet, Lord Jesus, for that's the place where Thou canst pour out Thy blessing and power.

Grant it, Lord, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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