

The Cross

by Dick Hussey

The cross principle is a paradox of opposites or contrasts, where loss leads to gain, weakness leads to power, and pain leads to bliss.

Duration: 49:31

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 27:46, Luke 23:34, Luke 23:43, John 19:26-28, Romans 4:11, Romans 4:16, Galatians 3:7, Colossians 2:23, Hebrews 7:9-10

Topics: "The Cross", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the final moments of Jesus on the cross. He emphasizes the brevity of Jesus' spoken words, lasting less than a minute, but the profound impact they had on others. The preacher then moves on to discuss the significance of the silence of the cross, highlighting the sacrifice and agony Jesus endured. He also mentions the importance of the day of Pentecost and the sending of the Holy Spirit as a sign of victory and blessing. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the power of silence and sacrifice, using the example of Abraham's obedience and Jesus' own words on the cross.

Transcript

Now, the subject for this morning is sacrifice, and I'm going to substitute for a title, the cross, which is not a synonym for sacrifice, but there is something that is very akin to sacrifice. Indeed, the ingredient of sacrifice is found in the very heart of the cross principle. As we all know, when we speak about the cross, we're not literally thinking of hanging on a wooden cross and dying, but it's that principle, that reality that's in the word of God, something that's lain in the heart of God from eternity, and which is really built on a many-sided paradox, a paradox or paradoxes that really hang on opposites or contrasts.

I'd remind you in passing that God is a God of contrasts. Right at the beginning we find light and darkness, day and night, male and female. We find in our planet North Pole and South Pole.

We find the earth dry and static. We find the sea and the ocean in constant movement, and so we could go on. And this many-sided paradox of the cross, we can give some of these paradoxes and say that it's loss unto gain.

It is weakness unto power. It is pain unto bliss, sorrow unto joy, bitter unto sweet, and we could go on, subtraction unto addition and multiplication, less unto more, and ultimately, moving on through dishonor

and shame unto honor and glory, and ultimately I say death unto life. Now, on Calvary, our blessed Lord lived out and brought forth this cross principle so dear to God in his heart to the highest peak and degree of perfection.

But it's also true to say that in the whole of Scripture, we find that great stream running right through from Genesis to Revelation. In the New Testament, Paul was the outstanding exponent, apart from our Lord, of the cross principle, both from his experience and the rich, unsearchable depth of his teaching in his epistles, we find unending treasures on this vast and tremendous subject. But then in the Old Testament, working from back to front, we can think of prophets such as Hosea, Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Elijah, men like David, Job, Joseph, and Jacob, who in one expression, one way or another, just moved in this principle, in this wonderful thing that's always been in the heart of God that we know as the cross.

And having come to Jacob, I just move a little further back to his grandfather, Abraham. He is the father of us all, and I'd like to begin then, just for a moment, looking at a couple of scriptures that will introduce things better as regards Abraham. Would you turn with me to Galatians 3, verse 7? Galatians 3, verse 7, Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

Now, we know Romans 4, 16 and 4, 11 tell us very clearly that Abraham is the father of us all. And here we have a definition. I covered this about three years ago, but quite briefly I'd like to go over it again.

We must know whether or not we are sons and daughters of Abraham. And what happened to Abraham? He was like the pioneer of the heavenly way, as someone has put it. And we become his sons and his daughters by being of faith.

Now, that being of faith is, of course, not a mental, traditional, or religious faith. But it means that the living express personal word of God that came to Abraham. It has come to you and me in a different setting or circumstances altogether.

But having heard that word, believing it, receiving it, treasuring it, and obeying it, has simply done a twofold work in us. On the one hand, just like it did with Abraham, it cut him off from his old word, which was to be left behind forever. On the other hand, it joined him, it united him inseparably and eternally to that God who'd spoken that living word.

And from then on, the life of Abraham was joined to the God he now knew he'd found follow all the rest of his life in that new way joined unto his living God. I'm sure many of you can say aloud, Amen. It happened perhaps in a different way altogether, but you can lift up your hand and from your depth say, Yes, that's me.

My God spoke to me a living word. It cut me off from all the old. It united me to my God and my Christ.

And since then, my way united to him is to go after him with all the love of my heart, with all the strength of my being. Now on to Hebrews chapter 7. A couple of verses that Ron read on Monday morning, I think it was. I'd like to look at them a little more closely.

Hebrews 7 verses 9 and 10. And as I may so say, Levi also who receiveth tithes paid tithes in Abraham, for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him. Now these two tremendous verses open up to us the great theme that is being spoken about and discussed and so much research has gone into about the genetic element.

The genes and the coding of the genes to use the modern language. But here what the writer of Hebrews is telling us, that at that point when Abraham, out of love for that Melchisedec, he'd come across. Without any compunction, without anyone urging him to do it, out of his free heart, he took the tithes of all the spoils and gave them to Melchisedec.

Well what the writer is saying, so to put it, it didn't actually happen because Levi wasn't alive yet. But he was in his father's loins. So what his father Abraham, who was actually his great-grandfather, did, not only forged, did something in Abraham himself, but it was inscribed or impressed upon the genes, upon the seed that he was carrying in his loins.

And one of those tiny little minute seeds was this man Levi, who was so marked by what his father Abraham did, that when he came into life it was inside him already to follow in the same footsteps and to do just the same kind of thing as his father Abraham had done. Now this concept to me opens up the life of Abraham in a very, very wonderful way. And I keep on saying to myself, and when I speak about it, encouraging others, that as we look at the life of Abraham, see all his doing and throwing, his battles, his lapses, his great victories, his moments of glory, that we should know that the seed of our new man was inside his spiritual loins.

And you and I were in Abraham so that whatever God did in the life of that man was impressed upon the seed of what's now our new man in Christ Jesus. So that in a living way, not in a mechanical, computerized way, but in a living way, it now all comes forth because it was simply planned in the heart of God that you and I should follow in the footsteps of this great, great man. And the name is not my own, I think it's the late Austin Sparks who referred to him with these words, the pioneer of the heavenly way.

So now may we turn to Genesis 22, where we see the great moment, the great point of time. And before we read it, just let me mention other things that happened to Abraham like that faith when the word of God came to him, no question but believing, receiving, and obeying. And then the intercessor who poured out his heart for others, the warrior spirit of a man who in the day of battle went and waged battle against kings and recovered all that had been lost, the covenant with the ingredients of sacrifice, fire and blood in circumcision, all that and much more.

These things that are the great truths of the Christian life, they're all somehow packed into the life and experience of Abraham. Shall I say, coded into the genes he carried, impressed upon the seed of our life so that in fullness of time, in our time, we should walk along the same path. And here we have God impressing upon Abraham and upon his seed the cross.

Verses 1 to 3, And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham and said unto him, Abraham, and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and claimed the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

Now God was asking for something tremendous, something that would have filled Abraham with perplexity, because in that son were contained all the promises he'd received. But he had a faith that if need be, God could raise him up from the dead. But the main point at that hour, the hour of the crunch, God putting his finger on the most tender spot in Abraham's heart, and painful, heart-rending as it was, our father Abraham, your father Abraham, my father Abraham, found it in his heart that he could not say no to

that voice that asked him for the dearest and the best.

And I bless God that when that happened, it was impressed upon the seed of every one of us who were carried in Abraham's loins, and if you, my brother, you, my sister, are indeed a son or a daughter of Abraham, you'll find something in your depth, in your blood, in your bones, in your innermost being, that in that hour, painful as it may be, shattering, but something inside will say, I cannot say no to my God and to my Jesus. I must go ahead, I must go through. Bless his name.

To me this is wonderful. May we turn for a minute to clarify a couple of points to Colossians chapter 2, Colossians chapter 2, and it's the last verse, the last verse of the chapter. Verse 23, Colossians 2, which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility and neglecting of the body, not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.

And a simple point is that we cannot inflict sacrifice or the cross upon ourselves, we cannot take a big decision, Lord, I know sacrifice is important, and the cross is a living principle, therefore Lord, I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that. The thing must come from above, you must understand that your Lord requires it from you, otherwise if it's initiated by you or by me, it will have at the heart of it the self-principle, and in one way or another, perhaps veiled, but there'll be that ego wanting to claim a glory that must go alone to the God we love and honor. Now, John's gospel, chapter 21, very near the end of John, where the Lord speaks to Peter in verse 18, John 21, verse 18.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkest whither thou wouldest, but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. And here, I'd just like to simply think of the Holy Ghost as the one that girds us and carries us in this way of the cross. Our part is, unconditionally and unreservedly, to make it quite clear to the Lord and to ourselves that our life's entirely in his hands, for him to do with us whatever he deems right, to know that we're totally, unreservedly, unconditionally his.

And then it's for him, in his wisdom, according to his personal knowledge of our own style, our own strength, our own weakness, our own idiosyncrasy, and also according to the purpose which he has for each one of us to lead us along this way of the cross. There are times when the personal will and the choice very certainly come into it, and here I'll give a few examples, more than anything, because I often feel that the best way to explain something is by an appropriate example. With me, it's something that perhaps you'd all laugh about, but it's very real.

Many years ago, as some of you may know, I was passionately fond of chess. I had my books, I studied for hours, I played in tournaments, I dreamt with chess. Many years later, I know that had to go by the board, so I got hold of my chess set and all the books, they went into the dustbin, and for years I didn't play a game of chess.

But then, some eleven years ago, one afternoon when I had nothing particular to do, visiting a doctor friend in South Wales who had one of his new computers, he told me you could play chess with a computer. So I had a go at it, I first played at level one, and the game finished in no time. I said, let's try level eight, the hardest.

I played my first move on the computer, after nineteen minutes hadn't answered my first move. So I thought, dear me, I don't want to go on till the end of the century, so I turned it down to level seven, and that was a bit quicker. But even so, the computer had thought four and a half hours, I just thought half an

hour, and I was in a winning position.

I'd managed to swing the game the way I wanted to go, I remembered all that I'd known before. But then I went home that night, and my mind was running and running and running. Chess, chess, chess, chess.

And when will I have another chance to play the computer? And, you know, there's a book written by a man called Edward Lasker many years ago, chess for fun and chess for blood. Well, with me it wasn't for fun, believe you me, for me it's been chess for blood. It's the way I'm made, I can't do a thing half-heartedly, it's all or nothing.

And I realized it would be a definite hindrance, it was really like an alcoholic delivered, but having a good old swig for a change, and finding the damage it was doing. So I found myself to make a vow to my God, the rest of my life I will not play another game of chess, because I know the harm it would do to my spiritual life, and that must not be jeopardized in any way. And, in a small way, but that is sacrifice for me, because quite honestly, I remain a human being that loves chess, and these cold winter evenings I would love to get hold of a computer and challenge it to a good old game.

But I know I must not. But there are other times when the cross somehow appears in our path in an unexpected and in an inopportune way. Sometimes the cross is very, inverted commas, inopportune.

Again, examples. Sylvia was saved when she was 18 years old in one of these youth camps out there in South America. I was miles away doing my military service at the time, I didn't know her, but there was a precious missionary sister.

Her name was Peter Krieger. She was to preach that night, and that afternoon or that morning she got a heart-rending letter that really shattered her. I don't know what it was about, but in absolute anguish and heartbrokenness, she said, Lord, tonight you've got to take over.

I have nothing to say. I'm shattered. I'm broken.

I'm finished. And so she went with the word of God. Sylvia says she never remembered one word of what that dear woman said.

But at the end, she knew that she was face-to-face with Jesus hanging on that cross and just asking her for her life. And so, she was burst by this dear, dear woman, and personally, I have a great debt of gratitude to her in bringing forth for Christ in these birth pangs of the Calvary road, the one that to me is and has been a great treasure, my precious wife and the closest and best friend to me here on earth. And thank God for a woman, a handmaid of the Lord, walking along that blessed Calvary road and birthing with her death, her brokenness, her broken heart, life and bliss and blessing to others, myself very much included.

I'll give another personal account. The Reading folk know most about this, but the inopportune cross. I was booked to go to Spain in late May, and it was to be one of the most hectic tours, chewing and throwing all the time, and two or three days before, I caught a bug, and I couldn't sleep, and I felt so, so, so unwell.

And I know that God is in control of all, and yet it seems so strange, Lord, when one should normally leave rested and fresh to go into the battle, and the very opposite is happening. And believe you me, my throat was raw inside. The idea of teaching and preaching seemed madness, but I knew by this still inner voice, I

couldn't scrub and cancel that trip.

God required of me to go, and I was quite willing to go, but I had to drive my car into Winchmore Hill in North London, and feeling utter weakness, feeling ever so unwell, my throat raw inside, and no strength in me, I just staggered down those stairs with my hold all, my briefcase, got into the car and went forth. And I thank God that immediately, while I was at home, while I stayed at home, nothing happened, but when I moved, the grace of God began to move. That night I had very refreshing rest, and I went to Spain, and in Madrid, I was received the next morning a long trip to a United Gypsy meeting, back at midnight and so on.

Then on Tuesday over to Valencia on the East Coast, and there again meeting the Gypsy brethren. Arrived about 3 or 3.30 p.m., 5 o'clock, first meeting with the leaders, 7.30 the church, 10 p.m. the leaders and pastors again, and you know with the Gypsies, you can't speak low, they always wanted loud and clear, and they wanted long, and the amazing thing that somehow my voice, my throat in such a state, but when it came to speaking, I could hear myself speaking as clearly as I am now, and much louder too. And you know the wonderful thing about it, because it meant a lot to me, being in such a state of weakness and sickness, just to go out in faith.

Number one, not one single commitment had to be cancelled. In fact, a few additional ones were added. But also, you know what these dear Gypsy brethren did? They booked me in a five-star hotel in Valencia City, and in that lack of luxury, which even in my best days in the business world, I don't think I've ever known such luxury, it was something like the sweetness of Father stroking and caressing me, saying, yes, I know all about it, but here's a cuddle, here's a stroke of my love to know I'm with you.

And then I went to the leader and I said, my brother, you can't do this. You're not exactly rolling in money, but there are so many other needs. You know what he said to me? Dollar, you're giving us your best.

And I had to agree, I was giving them my poor little best. So he said, we want to return it, and we want to give you the best we can. And that was very precious.

And I mention this because the Calvary sacrifice brings those divine, exquisite comforts of God that those who have not known the Calvary road know nothing about. And in turn, it forges love and fellowship links with other Calvary warriors that are wonderful beyond words. Bless the wonderful name of the Lord.

I want to take for a few minutes now three shadows or three shades of Calvary. And the first is the silence of sacrifice and of the cross. You know, we're so made that if we have to suffer, if we have to be martyrs, all right Lord, I'll suffer, but oh God, let others know about it.

And oh God, let me prove my point and how unfair this is and how right I am. And I would say that in some senses, the last bastion of self that has to be really annihilated is that tongue that would always justify or speak or diverge or spread it. You notice in the few words we read about Abraham, God putting his finger on the most tender spot of his heart.

What did Abraham say? Not one word. He moved in that silence of sacrifice. The Lord hung on the cross for nearly six hours or about six hours.

And then very many times I've done a little simple exercise having a look at my watch. I'm now going to read word by word what the Lord said while he hung on the cross. Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise. Woman, behold thy son, behold thy mother. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? I thirst.

It is finished. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. I look at my watch and it's all with the same conclusion.

Forty-five, fifty seconds at most, never even as much as a minute. And a tremendous, shall I say, devastating conclusion on that cross where the Lord agonized. For he went through that unspeakable abyss of moral and physical anguish and heartbreak.

He spoke for less than one minute words of love and consideration for others. And for five hours, fifty-nine minutes, there he hung in the blessed, wonderful silence of the cross. May I just repeat these words to you for you to ponder them as the Lord leads you.

The silence of sacrifice and of Calvary. Now to the second shade, and I may even finish before time. Revelation chapter twelve, and we'll read the passage from verse seven to eleven.

Revelation twelve, seven to eleven. And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not.

Neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world. He was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ. For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.

And they loved not their lives unto the death. As you all know, World War II ended ultimately when Japan capitulated because of the atomic bomb. And at that stage there was this amazing discovery made beforehand.

Before that, it was simply a matter of the more gunpowder, the more explosive power, the bigger your bomb, the more effective, the more devastating it was. But in laboratory research, man began to find, to his amazement, a reverse principle, by which instead of amassing more matter and power, they proceed to what's called disintegrating matter. Now, I'm not by any manner of means a physicist.

As many of you know, I haven't even got an O-level to my name. But I know that the basic principle is reducing matter to its lowest, its most minute expression. And so once you've reached the molecule, then you go further and you separate the nucleus from the atoms.

And then it was found that at that point, releasing that smallest, the most minute particle of matter, man was capturing something completely unknown, a power that was devastating, that was tremendously greater than all that had ever been known. And that put an end to World War II. Japan surrendered very shortly after Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

And I would like to submit to you that in the cross of Christ, there was something of this nuclear or atomic principle behind and underneath it all. We see here a picture by which the devil and all his fiends

somehow have gained a fortress in heaven, and there he is accusing the brethren day and night. And it would seem that because of the fall of man's soul unto sin and unto Satan, his position is impregnable and there's no way of dislodging him and removing him.

But our blessed Lord comes and the great eternal God who filled all the vast expanses of space contracts himself, becomes ever so small the little babe of Bethlehem. He lives as that Jesus of Nazareth, and then comes the cross, and on his way from Gethsemane right through to Calvary, in the anguish, being spat upon and being flogged and beaten and blasphemed and mocked, possibly not a mouthful to eat, possibly not a glass of water to drink, possibly not a mattress or a pillow to lay on for an hour's rest. I dare say, our Lord, not that he was ever overweight, I'm sure, but lost weight on that path from Gethsemane to Calvary.

And there he now, nailed to that cross, hangs immobile. You know when you're in bed sick or in pain, one of the reliefs is at least to be able to change your position. Turn from lying on your back to your side, and at least for a few minutes you get some ease, some respite.

But not even that was given for our Lord. And during that time, from the moment that those four nails went through his hands and his feet, I submit it to you that God was disintegrating himself, that that eternal God was now simply disintegrating into those atoms of God. For it was not only the blood of Jesus Christ, but the blood of God, one drop at a time, spilling on the ground.

What seemed a great contradiction, what seemed utter folly and madness, and yet God, in some way contriving and bringing forth, it seems a bad word to use, but his atomic weapon for the end-time battle. And where it would appear that there was nothing else that could drive the accuser of the Brethren out of heaven, when that omnipotent weapon of the power of the blood of Christ was brought to bear, all the diabolical fortresses in heaven were dynamited and blasted up, and they had to quit the place. And by the grace of God, the voice of the accuser of the Brethren is no more heard in heaven, and instead the voice of the blood that speaks better things, as Wesley puts it, that speaks of sons and priests and kings.

And here I see the great paradox of God's weakness, utter impotence, unto irresistible, invincible, omnipotent power. And I'll come to the last one now, and this is a very, very simple thing. I find simplicity somehow a delightful thing.

It can be disarming to the complicated, sophisticated, tangled way of man and the human mind without the Spirit of God. But I saw this quite a few years ago. After all, what is the cross? The cross is really two strokes, the simplest of drawings any child in kindergarten will learn it.

One stroke is a horizontal one, the other a downward one, a vertical one. That's what the cross is. But those two strokes have a particular meaning.

God's, yes. The horizontal stroke or stroke is Satan's, no. It was so from the beginning.

The serpent comes to Eve, and she says, Yes, we may eat of any, but the one that's in the middle of the garden, not that it was really in the middle of the garden, the tree of life was in the middle, it was in the middle of her imagination. But anyway, she said, so that we shouldn't die. And immediately came that poisonous, blasphemous, no, thou shalt not die.

And with it went, God is not telling you the truth. God is not real with you. And so Eve and Adam swallowed that no of Satan, and it got right into the blood of man and woman, and it runs right through society and the whole wide world.

Whether you take nations, the world situation, it's just one big no. You get men and women outside of Christ, there's no way for me. I can't overcome drugs.

I can't get on with my wife. I can't give up smoking. I can't be the man I'd like to be.

There's no way of it, yes, not me. And there's that big, big no. Even hospitals full of men and women lying flat in that horizontal position to say sickness has got hold of me, and I can't stand up straight, and I'm lying here overcome by sickness.

And ultimately, death and the grave is the final no-stroke. In most places, you get buried horizontally, like the devil writing on the grave a final no-stroke. You have not been able to go on living.

Death has caught up with you. That's the horrible, satanic no. But God is the God of the downward and the upward, of the vertical stroke.

And praise his name from heaven above. He sent his blessed son, and he came and he lived upright. He lived vertically unto father.

And he never feared, he never got sick, and he never got tangled with sin or lying in any way. And even in his death, bleeding and agonizing, but he didn't die lying in pain in bed. He died in that vertical, that upright stroke of the Godhead.

And then he went right down to the depths of the earth. He took the gates, the keys of the gates of hell, and he rose again in a second vertical, this time upward stroke, first to planet earth, and then to the highest of heavens, far above all principality and power. And then to conclude it.

The day of Pentecost fully come. God opened up heaven. And in another blessed, wonderful, vertical, yes stroke, he sent down the Holy Ghost to say, yes, there is a way through.

Yes, this Jesus life can be relived in you. Yes, there is victory. Yes, there is blessing and abundance.

Yes, there is glory in that great, great unfolding of the heart of God. That is a God in whom we find that all he says is yes and amen to the glory of God the Father. Now I find it difficult to preach without some way or other preaching, and I just want, not that I'm going to ask anyone to move or anything of that sort, but I want to drive this truth home to you, that cross, in its utmost simplicity, is a negative stroke crossed by a positive one.

And that makes the minus a plus, the negative a positive. It makes the impossible possible. And the way for you and for me is not to run away from the negatives which surround us, that would be more negative and cowardly, but simply to stay put exactly in that Calvary, that sacrifice, that blessed Jesus path, but there align ourselves with God in his blessed downward, upward, vertical stroke.

And this is what I want us to do now at the end. And I'm finishing a good seven or eight minutes ahead of schedule. I'm setting a good example, aren't I, Norman? But simply recognizing this.

There's a going through, my brother, there's a going through, my sister, and I don't know what the no factors in your life are, but I do know that that blessed downward and upward stroke of God's yes is final and conclusive, is written into the cross, and it's for you and for me. So many times we can just stay in the negatives, in the no, and I can't, and I can't, but oh, in the cross, we come out of that, we align ourselves with God in his big yes, and so the cross makes the impossible possible. It makes death life.

It makes what seems shame and defeat. It makes it honor and great triumph and spire. Shall we just rise before the Lord, every one of us? Stand vertically before God and extend your yes stroke, lifting up your hands to heaven, just to tell God Almighty that at this point of time, you align yourself with his big, great, vertical stroke, the yes of God cutting across all the nose of Satan, circumstances, and adversity.

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