

Cross: Promise at the Cross

by G. Campbell Morgan

The Cross of Christ is the revelation of God's interest in us and the demonstration of His love and power, which gives us the basis for our justification before God and our separation from the love of God.

Scripture: Romans 8:31

Topics: "Redemption", "Assurance in Christ"

Description

G. Campbell Morgan emphasizes the profound significance of the Cross of Christ, illustrating how it serves as the central channel of redemption, offering pardon, purity, peace, and power to believers. He reflects on the questions posed by Paul in Romans 8, highlighting the assurance that nothing can separate us from God's love, as demonstrated by the sacrificial gift of His Son. Morgan encourages believers to confront their fears and doubts with the confidence that God is for them, and that through the Cross, they are justified and secure in their relationship with God. The sermon concludes with a call to embrace the Cross, recognizing it as the source of all hope and promise for both this life and eternity.

Transcript

WE NOW COME TO THE LAST OF THESE STUDIES AROUND THE Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, a series in which we have attempted to deal with some of the rich and gracious provisions of the Cross; here we shall consider some phases of that all-inclusive and plenteous redemption which God has provided for us through the Son of His love by the way of the Cross.

We have seen the Cross of Christ standing amidst human pain and helplessness at the very center of redemption, and as the channel of power.

We have endeavored to watch the progress of its work in the experience of the soul who surrenders to Christ.

We have first seen how pardon is ours, that we "have redemption through His blood . . . the forgiveness of . . . trespasses"; we have seen how purity comes to us by the way of the Cross, seeing that our consciousness may be "purged from dead works to serve the living and true God" by that same most precious blood; we have seen how peace comes to us by the way of the Cross, for He "has made peace" by the blood of His Cross; and, last, we have considered how power comes to us, for "the Word of the Cross," the Logos of the Cross, "is the power of God to such as are being saved."

Let us once more take our stand by this selfsame Cross, and observe how it flings its light out on all the future, and on all possible needs and contingencies that may arise.

This is an aspect full of value to us. We are all growingly conscious of our limitation, of the fact that there are more things in heaven and earth than have been dreamed of in our philosophies. This growing consciousness very often affects our thought of, and relation to, spiritual things, the things of the soul, the things of redemption. There are moments when the trusting soul trembles through its own limitation of knowledge and vision.

Have there not been moments in your own Christian life when the very consciousness of the unending ages has been almost too great a burden to bear, when the consciousness of the illimitable spaces that lie unmeasured and immeasurable around you has almost crushed your spirit? We have all had such moments, in which we have asked questions about those ages, those spaces, those infinite things round about us, and there have been moments when we have asked questions about our own relationship to God in the light of these things.

Let us go back to the eighth chapter of Romans, and if there has seemed to be something of the nature of speculation in my introductory words, I want you to listen to Paul. These are some of the questions he asked: "Who is against us?" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "Who is he that shall condemn?" "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

It is impossible for any who know the Lord Jesus, and have come into the blessings that have lately occupied our attention to read those questions without the tone of challenge creeping into the very reading of them. I am perfectly sure that this was in the mind of Paul when he wrote them. "Who is against us?" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "Who is he that shall condemn?" "Who shall separate us?"

Remember where the great questions occur in the scheme of this epistle; they do not come in the early part in which the Apostle is dealing with the need for salvation, nor in the central part in which he is laying down the plan of salvation, but in chapter eight, the chapter of the final triumph, in which life in Christ is so wonderfully described, life by the Spirit, which is life in Christ; the chapter which, as so often has been said, begins, "no condemnation," and ends, "no separation." Beyond the first part of the chapter, beyond the present experience of the power of the Cross, these questions occur. To pardoned, purified souls, at peace and having power, all these questions come sooner or later. Happy and blessed indeed are the men and women who can face them as Paul faced them, so that in the asking of them there is a tone of challenge, the great ring of a sure triumph.

"Who is against us?" What attack may be directed against our souls? "Who shall lay anything" to our charge? Can any other accusation be brought against us? "Who is he that shall condemn?" "Who shall separate us?" They are all questions born of the soul's consciousness of limitation. We are coming day by day to have a widening conception of life; we are living in an age in which the universe is a great deal larger than it seemed to our fathers. The discoveries of science--I say nothing of their speculations, I am always willing to wait while they speculate--have put the horizon back much further than it seemed to be. Theories which sounded like speculations to them are now ascertained facts; indeed, so great has the universe become that some men deny the relationship of the individual to God. All this is born of the ever enlarging sense of the universe.

These widening conceptions of life, this deepening sense of personal frailty, lead us to ask such questions. Can anyone be against us? I know some of the foes, but are there others of whom I know nothing? I read in my New Testament of "principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world," and all this phraseology has grown in meaning with the passing of the years. I do not say it means more essentially, but it means more to us than it did.

As one in this little planet, one in this ever widening universe, ever widening to human conception, how do I know what lies beyond in the dim distances? Who can be against us? Is there some spiritual antagonism I have never yet faced, ready to attack me? Is there some accuser who will rise up and set my life in relation with other laws? Shall I find myself a sinner in some deeper sense? Is there any accuser? And the final throbbing, agonizing question, until we come to the Cross for an answer, is, "Who shall separate?" Can anyone?

Every question is in itself a demand, a reverent demand, the demand of the soul; and when I ask, "Who is against us?" I am asking for defense against all possibility of attack. When I ask, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" I am asking that my justification shall be a justification in the presence of any and every possible accusation. When I ask, "Who is he that shall condemn?" I am asking that my acquittal at the bar of Infinite Holiness shall be from any possible condemnation that may arise. When I ask, "Who shall separate us?" I am asking that my communion with God shall be so arranged that all need arising from the new nature and the new conditions and the new demands shall be met.

I tremble on the verge of the eternal, I am, in my own poor personality, afraid in the presence of the immeasurable and the infinite that stretches out beyond. I stand, a man, a speck amid immensity, and I do not know what cohorts are hidden behind the distant hills ready to come against me. I do not know what traducers may yet bring charges against me. Can anything separate me from the love of God?

These are great questions. They do not always take this form, but they come to us all, sometimes very simply, and perhaps, therefore, the more subtly, with more far-reaching and deep-searching agony of soul.

In view of such questionings the greatness of my text is revealed. It is an answer to one of the questions, but I take it because out of it come the values that answer all the questions. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things."

I suppose every man who preaches the Word sometimes feels as though there is nothing more to say when he has read his text. That is certainly how I feel about this. Note its historic basis, "He spared not His own Son." Notice its logical conclusion, "Shall He not freely give us all things?"

When God gave His Son, He gave His best; and now human language must be imperfect. He emptied heaven of its richest; He had nothing more worth the giving. He gave in that moment not something better than the rest by comparison, but something that included all. The Apostle here says, in effect, when God gave His Son, with Him "He freely gave us all things." It is not merely that if He spared not His Son He will give other things. It is really that when He gave His Son He gave all. Take another statement of this same Apostle, from his Colossian letter, which deals with the glorious Christ, and remember his words about Jesus, "Christ, Who is the Image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in Him were all things created . . . and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." There is no far distant part of the universe of God that is not held together in orderly array by Christ. No mystic secret of the Divine procedure is unknown to Christ. No foe of humanity lurking in any of the infinite spaces that baffle and affright me is hidden from Christ. God gave His Son, and when He gave His Son, He gave the One in

Whom all things consist, from Whom all things came, to Whom all things proceed. In originating wisdom and creating force and upholding power, He gave the sum total of everything when He gave Christ, so that when I ask a question about the infinite spaces I am asking a question about the things that are as familiar to Jesus as are the few grains of sand that I can hold in my hand and look at, and far more familiar, for I cannot tell you the deepest mystery of the grains of sand, and He knows the last mystery of all the universe. When I ask my question about the days that are coming, I am asking a question about things that He will make, for He it is Who fashions not only the worlds of matter, but the worlds of time, the rolling ages as they come. God has given this Son of His love--Framer of the Universe in infinite wisdom, Upholder of it on its onward course to the final goal--given Him freely for us all.

Now, the Apostle says, "Who is against us?" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "Who is he that shall condemn?" "Who shall separate us?" Notice the questions again, and notice them as they are set against the great declaration.

First, "If God is for us, who is against us?" How, do I know God is for me? He gave His Son. There is no other demonstration. If you doubt the Cross you have no proof that God is for us. If you lose the sight of the Cross, and do not hear its message of the Divine good will and favor there is nothing in Nature to show you God is for you. Nature is red in tooth and claw. We are told sometimes that it is kind, and so it is if we are kind to it; but offend it, break its laws, and it will crush you with merciless severity.

And this also is a merciful provision, for the crushing of anything effete is good for the things that remain. God by salvation has not come to save effete things as effete things. He has come to save things from effeteness and make them new. Nature will laugh in sunshine on the face of your dead child; there is no message in Nature that tells you that the God behind it cares for you.

But this man, weak and frail, suffering the loss of all things, the pity of all worldly-minded souls, says God is for him. How does he know? "He spared not His own Son." That is the infinite proof. The Cross is the revelation of the Divine interest. If I have that Cross, there God has given, in the mystery of that dying, His own Son, and I am prepared to challenge all the universe. "Who can be against me?"

As I learn the lesson and repeat the challenge there will come into it, not merely a tone of challenge, but the tone of contempt for everything that is against me. Circumstances are against me; let them be! God is against the circumstances! Another man says, My parentage is against me. God becoming your Father cancels the evil inheritance with which you entered into life.

But these are things of to-day. What lies beyond? I do not know. What infinite forces will be born in the new ages, the ages that will come fresh as the morning from the wisdom of God? What forces may be born with new principalities and new powers? Perchance some of them will be against me. It does not matter, they will be born of God, and God is for me, and the man who stands by the Cross of Jesus and knows that that, is God's gift for his redemption knows that nothing can emerge out of the endless ages, or gather from infinite spaces, that can harm, because by that Cross he knows God is for him. Who can be against us?

As to accusation, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." We must interpret this word of the Apostle by his previous use of the word in the same argument. How does God justify? "Being, therefore, justified by faith . . . we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and . . . rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Who shall lay anything to my charge? It is God that justifies me. How? By that

Cross of Jesus. You may lay to my charge what you will. You may see in me the imperfection that contradicts your sense of law. I am talking in imagination to the principalities and powers which may be created fifty millenniums hence. God has justified me by the Cross, which does not mean for one single moment that He has covered and excused my sin, but by the infinite mystery of the pain borne in that Cross, He has made my sin not to be, canceled it, put it away, and in this justification God acts, not out of pity, but on the basis of eternal justice and righteousness.

I challenge all the accusers. Who are you? Lay your accusation. Yes, it is true, perchance even in the holy service of to-day, perchance even in the service of the ages to come, there will be the falling short somewhere. I do not mean wilful sin. Do you not know that God charges the angels with folly? When I measure my service, even in the infinite hereafter, by the compulsion and propulsion and constraint of the Infinite love, I think that we shall always have to cast our crowns at His feet and say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory." If someone shall lay a charge against me that the thing is not as high as it ought to have been, then in the infinite ages the Cross of the Christ abides, God's eternal provision, so that none can lay anything to the charge of such as He shall justify.

Or again, "Who is he that shall condemn?" "It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather"--hear the music of it, if death were all, the condemnation would abide--"yea, rather, that was raised from the dead," and in the mystery, and miracle, and marvel of that resurrection there is the demonstration of the truth that the dying was efficacious, that in the dying He accomplished the purpose of His heart, in the dying He put guilt away and bore sin so that I need bear it no more. "Who shall condemn?" The soul, afraid of possible condemnation, hides again in the cleft of the rock, and points to the Cross and the empty grave, and says for evermore, By virtue of that Cross and that empty tomb, there can be no condemnation to the trusting soul.

Once again, "Who shall separate us?" Paul always seems to me, at this stage, as though he had climbed to some great height and was looking out on all the dimensions. "Death," he puts that first, because that is what men are so often afraid of as a separating force. "Life," which is far more likely to separate us than death, even though men do not fear it. "Angels, principalities," the whole world and universe of created intelligences. "Things present-things to come," in simple sentences he sweeps through all the ages. "Powers, height, depth."

Notice carefully this final phrase--"nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Did you notice the Apostle's outlook on all these things? "Death?" That is a creation. "Life?" That is a creation. "Angels" and "principalities?" Creations. "Things present?" Creations. "Things to come?" Creations. "Powers?" Creations. "Height?" Creation. "Depth?" Creation. All had issued from God. How can created things separate me, says the Apostle, from the Origin of the created things, seeing I am bound to Him through the work of Jesus, His own Son? I cannot be separated by things created by the Creator, for the Creator has bound me to Him by giving His Son, and brings me back with His Son into eternal union with Himself. "Who shall separate me?"

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness

My beauty are, my glorious dress;

'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,

With joy shall I lift up my head.

Bold shall I stand in Thy great day;
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully absolved through these I am
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.
When from the dust of earth I rise,
To claim my mansion in the skies,
Ev'n then, this shall be all my plea,
Jesus hath lived, hath died for me.
Jesus, be endless praise to Thee
Whose boundless mercy hath for me-
For me, a full atonement made,
An everlasting ransom paid.
O let the dead now hear Thy voice;
Now bid Thy banished ones rejoice;
Their beauty this, their glorious dress,
Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness.

The Cross of Jesus, the rough Roman gibbet, brutal Cross so far as man had anything to do with it; the Cross of nineteen hundred years ago, which was the manifestation of the great mystery and passion by which God redeems men, that Cross flames with a glory far greater than is needed to illumine the little while, and the here and the now. Its light fills all the universe; its glory rests on all the coming ages. At its birth every new-born age will be baptized in the infinite light that streams from the Cross of Christ. I do not know what they will have in them. One of the joys of the contemplation of the hereafter is that God is infinite in wisdom and power, and my own consciousness of eternal existence becomes bearable as I remember that there can be no monotony with God, always new ages, always new creations, always new manifestations of the one Eternal, incomprehensible Being Whom I call God.

And I do not know what, or how, how long, how brief, how great, how simple. But this I know, that by the Cross I have been brought into the love of God even though I was a sinner; and this I know that nothing He creates can ever separate me from Him Who does create. I know it by the Cross. "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." When? By the way of the Cross. Men may know the exceeding power and wisdom of God if they study Nature, but they never find His heart.

There is only one way in which men find that--by the way of the Cross. But when a man comes that way, he comes at last to the point where he can write such a chapter as the eighth of Romans, and looking out

from the midst of conscious weakness, out into the infinite spaces, as the questions throb through the mind, "Who? . . . who? . . . who?" He can answer them all with a quiet, calm assurance.

A man at the Cross challenges all attack, all accusation, all condemnation, all separation, and ends in the glorious declaration that none can be against, none can dare accuse, that none can condemn, that none can separate.

In conclusion, let me ask, what is the law of appropriation? There is no specific law of appropriation here; this aspect of promise leans back on God and the work accomplished in Jesus. Yet there is a law of appropriation; it is that of the realization of all that we have spoken of before. If I have never been to the Cross for its pardon, if I know nothing of the purity of consciousness that comes by it, if I am not now at peace with God, and within myself, therefore, if I know nothing of the power of the Cross in this life of probation, then the Cross brings me no promise, but condemnation.

The Cross of Jesus brings me all light, or banishes me to all darkness. Our fathers used to preach about the sin of rejecting Jesus. We do not hear very much about that to-day. And yet, believe me, it is the sin of all sins, it is the sin against the Holy Ghost. There is no sin so deep, so heinous, so awful as that. If I will not have its pardon, or its purity, or its peace, or its power, I cannot have its promise. Then if I ask this question, Who is against me? a myriad forces of evil charge on me to destroy me. If I ask, Who is he that lays anything to my charge? the great accuser stands before me and before God. If I ask, Who is he that shall condemn? the very God of love that would redeem, condemns. If I ask, Who shall separate me? I am separated by my own choice; and the question now becomes, Who can unite me? There is none can unite me if I reject the Cross of His dear Son.

Then let us rather come to the Cross, and in submission yield to its claim, and so receive its blessings.

Beneath the Cross of Jesus

I fain would take my stand--

The shadow of a mighty Rock,

Within a weary land;

A home within the wilderness,

A rest upon the way,

From the burning of the noontide heat,

And the burden of the day.

O safe and happy shelter,

O refuge tried and sweet,

O trysting place where heaven's love

And heaven's justice meet!

As to the holy patriarch

That wondrous dream was given,
So seems my Saviour's Cross to me,
A ladder up to heaven.
There lies beneath its shadow,
But on the farther side,
The darkness of an awful grave
That gapes both deep and wide;
And there between us stands the Cross,
Two arms outstretched to save,
Like a watchman set to guard the way
From that eternal grave.
Upon that Cross of Jesus
Mine eye at times can see
The very dying form of One
Who suffered there for me;
And from my smitten heart, with tears,
Two wonders I confess,-
The wonder of His glorious love,
And my unworthiness.
I take, O Cross, thy shadow
For my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine than
The sunshine of His face:
Content to let the world go by,
To know nor gain nor loss--
My sinful self my only shame,
My glory all the Cross.

The Cross is God's giving, and the proof of His giving. His giving, "He spared not His Son." The proof of His giving, "Shall He not freely give us all things?"

The Cross is the place of my receiving. I look back, and the Cross brings me pardon. I look within, and the Cross brings me purity. I look up, and the Cross brings me peace. I look around, and the Cross is the Word of power. I look on and out at the infinite and unknown possibilities of eternity, and the Cross is the message of promise. Here and now, as I know my own life, as I know my own heart, I have no hope for to-day or to-morrow, for life or death, for time or eternity, but in the Cross of my Saviour. I have that hope, for

In the Cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time,
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.
When the woes of life o'ertake me,
Hopes deceive and fears annoy,
Never shall the Cross forsake me:
Lo! It glows with peace and joy.
When the sun of bliss is beaming
Light and love upon my way:
From the Cross the radiance streaming
Adds more luster to the day.
Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,
By the Cross are sanctified;
Peace is there that knows no measure,
Joys that through all time abide.

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