

Glory Only in the Cross

by Gary Wilkerson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the cross and recognizing that righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ, rather than seeking glory through human strength and effort.

Duration: 42:19

Scripture: Isaiah 53:5, John 3:16, Romans 5:20, Romans 7:9, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 6:14, Ephesians 2:8-9, Philippians 3:3, 1 Peter 2:24

Topics: "Cross of Christ", "Righteousness through Faith", "Theology of the Cross"

Description

Gary Wilkerson emphasizes the necessity of understanding the significance of the cross in the Christian faith, arguing that true glory comes only from the cross of Jesus Christ. He contrasts the theology of glory, which relies on self-righteousness and human effort, with the theology of the cross, which recognizes our complete dependence on Christ's sacrifice for righteousness. Wilkerson highlights that many people, even in the church, are seeking fulfillment through self-improvement rather than embracing the transformative power of the cross. He calls for a shift from self-reliance to a reliance on Christ's work, urging believers to acknowledge their need for grace and the righteousness that comes through faith alone. Ultimately, he invites the congregation to embrace the cross as the source of true freedom and identity in Christ.

Transcript

Thrilled to be here at Times Square Church with Pastor Tim and Cindy and the elders of the church and the worship team. Just God is moving here so richly. It's such a new and fresh wind of the spirit moving and that is a God thing, right church? That's a God thing, we're so thankful for it.

Let me pray and then we're gonna be talking about glory only in the cross. It's the afterglow of Easter. It's a pastor who loves teaching the word up here in the pulpit saying, I really wanna make sure that we understand why Jesus had to die.

I really wanna understand the power of it because it's one thing to sing the glorious songs, even when we sing tonight, I am free. And then if we were to ask you, why are you free? You might say, I feel free or I think I'm free or but maybe there's some truth, some doctrine, even some, here's a bad word in some circles, even some theology. Theology simply means the study of God.

Who doesn't wanna study God? I mean, he's brilliant, he's wonderful, he's amazing. And so there are various types of theologians and we're gonna be talking about that tonight. We'll start in Galatians chapter

six, if you have your Bible, Galatians chapter six and verse 14, let me pray for us first.

Heavenly father, I thank you for the grace that might come upon me tonight to proclaim your word in such fashion that our minds would be open to revelation, our hearts would be palpitating with the vigor and vitality of the newness of life that has been received through the blood of Jesus, through the cross, through the death, through the burial, through the resurrection, through the ascension, through the being seated at the right hand of the father. These things are all realities of this singularity that we call the cross of Jesus Christ and we only glory in the cross. We don't glory in our power, we don't glory in our eloquence, we don't boast in our own abilities.

We just know that it is all of you and I just thank you for the grace to proclaim your word in Jesus' name. Everybody said together, amen. Galatians chapter six, verse 14, only glory in the cross.

That's exactly what this verse says, but God forbid that I should glory only in the cross of Jesus Christ, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. Some translations say I boast only in the cross, others say I only glory in the cross. In 1518, a young monk was struggling with a very universal question, a question that all of us now 500 years later are still asking.

It's a question that's asked in the corridors of every university and high school campus, every family member, every person walking down the streets of New York City, everyone riding on a subway, really may not pay attention to this question, but deep down inside they are asking this question that this young monk was asking. Basically, this universal question was, what's wrong with me? Why do I have this nagging sense of not being complete? What is this thing inside of me that feels empty, that I'm not enough, not a sufficient person? I'm not adequate to live up to the calling on my life and as a result of that, this young man in the 16th century was depressed, he was self-loathing, he was a perfectionist who could never find himself doing enough. As a result, he was deeply unhappy and he was trying to find the root cause for his ailment.

As he began to explore what this thing that was ailing the deepest part of the recesses of his heart, he came to a crucial reality that all of these questions he was asking actually have their root in one question. And this one question became, he said, the fundamental question we are all asking is, how can I arrive at the righteousness that will enable me to stand before a holy God? What he's saying is that all these other questions are subsets of the deepest question that oftentimes theologians, and again, everybody here is a theologian, even if you're an atheist, you're a theologian, you're studying God in the sense of saying he doesn't exist or you're studying him in the way of saying that he is good or the way, whatever it is. And so he's saying this fundamental question comes down to, are we righteous before God? And the atheist or the agnostic or the lukewarm Christian probably doesn't really understand they're asking that question, but they are asking it because we know you're asking it if you're asking these other questions.

What's this thing inside of me that doesn't feel right about myself? Why do I wake up sometimes in the morning on the wrong, we call it what, the wrong side of the bed? Who would think that those things are attached to this deeper root question of what does it take to stand righteous before God? How can I be accepted by him? How can I be in right standing with him? How can I stand before him one day at the judgment seat and him say to me, well done, good and faithful servant? Again, these are not questions that are formed and articulated by everyone, but they're in the heart of every man. God says that eternity is set in the heart of every man. So we are all asking this question.

The root of all these other nagging questions that disturb our souls are this one thing. How do I become righteous? How do I get right with God? This young man in 1518 had a spiritual breakthrough that set his soul free, that turned his mind to a calm and accepting mind. His acceptance before his holy God had become secure.

He answered the most fundamental question, how can I become righteous before God? And his heart was set on fire and joy filled his soul and a song entered into his heart. He began to study the word and preach the word with a freedom and a victory. And he began to write songs about it like one that you may have sung growing up in the church, a mighty fortress is our God.

And he could realize he could put his trust in the righteousness of Christ to redeem him from his lostness and heal his brokenness and restore his corrupt mind and get rid of his depression and his anxiety and his fear and his stress. That fundamental question that we're all asking was answered by him in one thing, it is found in the blood of Jesus Christ that makes me righteous. What a glorious spiritual breakthrough he had.

And what he proposed is revolutionary. What he proposed, I would suggest to you is probably the most important reality and truth ever discovered in the history of mankind. More important than gravity, more important than the nuclear bomb, more important than any other scientific or psychological or relational reality.

This one thing that he, this revolutionary idea that he proposed, I would argue is the single most important message even for this generation over 500 years later. And he went to a city called Heidelberg in Germany. And there he met with his other monks.

There was about 30 young monks who were with him and he began to what is called dispute with them. He brought out about 25 different points that basically rocked the whole Catholic world. In that audience were some young men who at the power of this revolutionary message were set free themselves and joined Martin Luther in a revolution called the Reformation that is still the roots of this church, these messages, these songs, this prayer meeting, you're being saved, you're being set free, you're coming to know Christ has its roots.

Yes, in the New Testament church, more importantly in the gospel, but it was the reforming or the revival or the reawakening of these simple gospel truths that we are justified by grace through faith alone in Christ alone. And this revolutionary idea came down to this. He told these 30 monks or so, came down to these two things.

There's two types of theologians. And again, these were all theologians, these monks, but everyone here tonight is a theologian. And everyone in this room has either one of these two types of theologies in your life.

Every church has one of these two theologies. First one he called is a theology of glory, theology of glory. The second one he had was called the theology of the cross.

And he was saying that the invitation was that all of you men, I want you to become, to turn away from being a theologian of glory and become a theologian of the cross and bring that to your church, bring that to your nation, bring that message of the cross of Jesus Christ to the world. Now, when I speak of the glory, not boasting in glory or not glorying anything except the cross of the Galatians passage we started with tonight, I'm not speaking of honoring the glory of God, praising the glory of God, singing the glory of

God, getting on your knees and honoring God. That's the kind of glory we are to pursue.

But what Martin Luther was talking about here is a theology of self-glory, of how to become a person that has glory, that gets glory, that obtains glory. Men and women are created in the image of God. And our first parents, Adam and Eve, were created in the garden, filled with the glory of God, the presence of God, the honor of walking with Him daily in the garden.

They found love and they found acceptance, they found a completeness, they found a peace and a joy, a contentment with God and with one another. They needed no marriage seminars, they needed no marriage counseling, they needed no revival or spiritual awakening because they were complete in God and walked with God in the garden. And then as we know the story, they fell into temptation in the garden and then they fell into sin and the sin brought separation and brokenness in relationship with God and relationship with one another.

You see, immediately they begin to blame one another. They begin to cover themselves because of the shame and there was a brokenness of the glory. Many, many years later, Paul writes about this that we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

We're no longer walking in that glory, we're no longer experiencing the fullness of that glory. There's something missing in our heart and I would suggest to you that this loss of glory, it's that sense of something deeply missing in our hearts. There's something we once had that we say, I wish I could obtain that again, I wish I could get back to the glory, I wish I could get back to the presence, the joy, the painlessness, the sorrowlessness, the contentment.

I want that kind of life. So what we are longing for really is glory and ever since the loss occurred at the fall, there has been in us an attempt to claw back to that glory or to climb that ladder and say, what is missing in me? I will do anything to experience that. Some will take drugs to experience it, some will live a life of sexual immorality to experience, some will try to get rich to experience, some will attend church to experience it without really understanding that their righteousness is not in a church service, in a prayer meeting and singing songs, it's in the blood of Jesus, cleansing us from all sin and becoming righteous in Christ.

And so we are attempting, as I said, to claw our way back. A theologian of glory is someone who is seeking glory through human strength to enter back into the garden after the fall. We came from glory, here's how it goes.

We came from glory, now we're temporarily derailed, but we believe it's only a slight setback, it's just a temporary inconvenience and it could be remedied. So clearly, if we could just have the proper human effort or willpower or striving in our own strength or proper religious understanding or religious activities or moral obligations or duties, if we could just do it right, if we could just do life right, we could get back into this glory. And that's why even many churches are more about doing life right, 10 steps to a better marriage, how to be moral, how to overcome this problem, how to do better at this.

They're preaching a theology of glory that you can pull yourself up by your bootstraps, by human will and moral effort, you have the ability in yourself. Yes, you could be aided by God's presence and power and grace, but substantially you could do it yourself. And so there's a pursuit of restoring self glory.

And it says this, I can access this glory through human efforts, through self-achievement, through self-fulfillment, through self-will and the Bible has a name for this, it's called being self-righteous or another verse we'll look at a little bit later, putting our confidence in the flesh. Basically we're saying, I want that former glory. Basically it's saying, I know I can get it.

It's basically saying, I know how to get it. And then it's basically saying, I know what it takes to achieve this glory that my heart longs to be restored. A theologian of glory believes all we need to answer this nagging question of what's wrong in the deepest recesses of my heart and life is positive reinforcement or bolstering a sagging ego or a constant voice surrounding us of optimism.

You can get your glory back by believing in yourself. You can get your glory back by believing in God. We are bombarded by this message from our parents.

When we are children and we paint the ugliest picture and they put it up on the refrigerator saying, you're going to be an artist. And then we sing a song and it's totally off key. And they say, maybe you're going to be the next Beyonce.

That we're bombarded with this optimistic message. And then we go to our schools and they're putting gold stars on our F grade things. And in our sports, they're no longer keeping score.

When I see my grandson play, I am in my own mind keeping score. We're winning 13 to five. And so we're bombarded with this message of glory.

You're glorious, you're worthy, you're wonderful, you're amazing, you can do anything. And then we go to church and God help us. We're hearing messages that I could hardly tell whether it's Oprah preaching or Joel Osteen.

Hardly can tell the difference, same message. You can do it. Just try hard enough.

Just smile more. Just be happy more. Just claim your inheritance.

Just believe in yourself. Just know that you, it's heretical. It's false teaching.

It's what Luther said was killing me. It's killing me. It's killing the church.

It's causing this nagging sense of something wrong in my soul. And what it is, it's that this glory hunger inside of me thinks that I can obtain it myself without the cross of Jesus Christ. Without the glory of God being present in my life.

And so we have pop psychologists, we have a whole self-help industry. And I would suggest to you, many of the most popular preachers today try and prop us up with self-esteem, with unceasing optimism, optimistic platitudes, pronouncements and pleasant sounding melodies of praise. Calling us good when we're walking in evil.

Not calling out sin any longer. Not calling out unrighteousness. Not calling out our hopelessness.

Not calling sin, sin. Yet more and more people seem to be, the more we prop up people through praise and adoration and affirmation and optimism, the more we prop people up, even in our churches, the more depressed people are becoming. The more self-esteem they're lacking.

We're getting lower than ever in self-esteem the more we try to raise up self-esteem. Because we don't understand to live is Christ and to die is gain. We got it backwards.

We think we're trying to live. We're trying to get that glory back rather than the, later on, we'll talk about the theology of the cross. And don't hear me as unsympathetic, even though oftentimes I can be.

But hear me as one who's saying that optimism has its proper place. I learned a new word last week. It's called penultimate.

I'd never heard it before. Have you heard the word penultimate? Basically, penultimate is when something is ultimate, penultimate is right behind it in second place. It's not like unworthy or not good or worthless or to be abhorred.

It's like right there, but not quite. It's not the ultimate. And so optimism is good.

I don't want people walking around me saying, you're lousy. You're worthless. You're no good.

Who wants that, right? Raise your hand if you want that. No, don't raise your hand if you want that. Optimism has its proper place, but it's penultimate.

It's close, but it's not the best. We really need something more than that. We really need more than a pep rally or pop psychology.

We need to get to the core of this nagging question of what makes me righteous before God? What makes me acceptable? Because once you get that right, then all these other questions fall into place. We're no longer feeling all those things. There's something wrong with me.

Why am I worthless? Why am I no good? Why am I not satisfied with life? Why do I need more stuff to make me happy? All those questions fall to the wayside when we answer this one question of being righteous through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The danger we have in our life, in our schools, in our churches, in our culture, is that secondary things such as optimism become primary and the primary thing becomes secondary. And so the theology of glory becomes primary, even in our churches.

You can do it. Be better, be stronger. Optimism cannot cure or nor answer the nagging question nor fill the missing place of the heart.

It cannot go to the ultimate need of the question of how do I become righteous? A theology of glory operates under the assumption that what we need is optimistic encouragement, some flattery, some positive thinking, some support to build self-esteem. It operates under the assumption that we are not seriously addicted to sin and that our improvement is both a necessary possibility with a little boost in our desire to do good and to be good, we can do anything we set our minds to. Real quickly, I'm gonna be careful not to go over time here but I usually have six pages of notes and I have 10 tonight so I'm gonna go fast.

Wow, I have never been applauded for that before. Usually people start getting their phones out. No, that's gonna be a long one.

Let's see what's on the internet. Very briefly, I believe in our society there are at least three or four current prominent ways that we are pursuing being a theologian of glory. The first is moralism.

Philippians chapter three, if you have your Bibles, look at Philippians or it'll be on the screen. Philippians chapter three and verse three, it says, we glory for we are the circumcision which worship the spirit of God and glory, where does it say to glory? Glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. A theologian of glory puts confidence in the flesh and you even go to churches and hear sermons about really they don't guise it this way but it has to do with putting confidence in the flesh.

You can do it, you can make it happen. If you'll go to some of the most popular websites of the most popular preachers and the most popular churches today, you'll find a plethora of sermons, things like you can have the most healthy marriage in your life, you can become wealthy with these three easy principles, you can find your destiny, you can find a problem-free life, you can find your future, the brilliance of your future. I have done this, I've looked at several websites and I found that probably 95% of these places that are theologians of glory, every sermon starts with a you, you can do it, you can make better, you can make it, you can have it, blah, blah, blah, blah, I get so sick of it.

I don't wanna talk about me, I wanna talk about Jesus. I don't come to church to get improvement or self-help or feel a little better. I can go to the bookstore and read a thousand books about how to have self-improvement.

I don't come to church for that, I come to hear about Him, about the cross, about Jesus, about His power, about His life. And so this confidence in the flesh is basically, again, what Martin Luther talked about, the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation has two truths in it. One is the law and the other is the gospel.

And we need to learn to distinguish between the two because if you're living under the law, you're going to be a theologian of glory. What he's saying there is if you're living under the law, you're going to hear, do this, try harder, become that. And the law, Scripture makes it so clear to us, the law demands, the law requires, the law speaks actionable things into our life, but it never gives us the power to do them.

And if we're living under the law, we're going to always be under this weight, what's wrong with me? Why aren't I righteous enough? And what the stirring in our heart will be is, I'm going to have to try harder, I'm going to have to repent more, I'm going to have to pray more, I'm going to have to read more, I'm going to have to go to church more, and I'm going to have to give more, and I'm going to have to go on more missions trips, and I'm going to have to witness more. And none of that should ever be anything you have to do, it should be, I want to do. And that's the difference between law and the gospel.

Law is, here's the cross in the middle, and I'm on the law side, trying to earn my way to get to the favor of God on his cross, I'm going to get righteous by doing all these good works, and then I get, yay, I made it to the cross, and now Jesus accepts me, his blood is finally working for me because I did all this stuff. And the reality is, on the other side of the cross is where our power comes from. Jesus finished the work, it is done, it is complete.

And now on the other side, on the other side, these good works become righteous, good deeds. On this side, Paul calls them filthy rags. Exact same work, giving on this side, filthy rags.

Giving on this side, the joy of the Lord, the blessings of the Holy Spirit. Trying to love your wife on this side is law and is strife, and it's a burden. Loving your wife on this side, still a little bit of a burden, but much easier.

It's the opposite wives to their husband. I'm gonna hear it from my wife tonight, she's sitting over there. The confident assessment of the theologian of glory is that good works and self-righteousness and effort done by obedience to the divine law must be the way back to glory.

And I can do this, I can keep God's law. But you see, God's law was never meant to be kept in one way on this side of the cross. God's law was meant to show you that you can't keep it, that you're insufficient, that the problem isn't in your inability to keep the law, the problem is that you're a sinner.

The problem isn't that you don't feel good enough about yourself, the problem is you don't know how bad you are. The problem isn't you're working to get free of sin, the problem is you don't know how bad a sinner we really are, that we really need help. This is not a self-help project.

This is out of our control, this is far beyond us. And until we understand that, we can sing till we're blue in the face, but these songs about the cross and the power of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ will be encouraging, emotional, but they won't have the depth of meaning that this is what this means. I once was lost, but now I'm found.

I was blind, but now I see that he saved such a wretch like me. And then we live in a culture that churches wanna change the word because they don't like the word wretch in there. So such a one as me, it's happening in churches all across the world.

The law only produces a powerlessness in us. Galatians chapter 3.10, let's look at that on the screen here, says, if you rely on the works, not only are you not making a reality, making it happen, but what does it say? You're cursed, everyone who's under the law is under a curse, all right? So these two distinguishing features of law and the gospel, those who are trying in their own strength to be a theologian of glory, not only are striving and stressful and anxious, but you're cursed. It is under the Deuteronomy 28 curse.

Everything that, every sin that you commit is going to be punished. The wages of sin is death. And I will never be able to phantom the children of Israel when in Deuteronomy 27, 28 and nine, Moses gets up there and says, here's the law of God.

And I'm gonna repeat the laws to you. And when I'm done, you say, amen, we will do everything written in the law. And he says, you shouldn't lust after another woman or commit adultery.

Amen, we promise we'll never do that. And if we do that, we're under a curse. And he goes on and on, all these different laws.

Well, amen, I'm gonna do that one too. That's not just the Israel church, right? That's you and me. Amen, I'm gonna keep that law.

How about Luke chapter, I think it's 10, maybe 12, where a man comes to him, he's a lawyer. And he says, what must I do to receive eternal life? That's grace, that's the message of the gospel. But Jesus doesn't answer him with the gospel.

He answers him with the law. What does he ask the question, what does the law say? You see, because the law had not finished its work in the scribe yet. He still thought he was good.

I've kept all of these laws. Yes, Lord, I can do all those things. If I was Israel, if I was a man, I would not make any of those promises.

If I say yes to this and I don't do it, a curse is coming upon me. A curse, like my fingernails will get mildew under it. My ears will explode.

I don't know what the whole curses are, but those were not some of them. I was trying to be funny and did not succeed. But I would not want to be under any of those curses.

I wouldn't make those promises because I've learned enough about myself to know I don't keep my promises before God. I don't keep his divine law. And so there's a curse in Romans chapter seven, verse nine.

Not only is there a curse, but under the law, it says here, I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive, or another translation is that sin revived and I died. The law kills me. It makes me miserable.

It makes me feel no good about myself, but it's meant to drive us to a solution that's not of ourselves. And lastly, Romans chapter five, verse 20. And it says there, now the law came in to increase the trespass, or another translation says to increase the sin.

Isn't that amazing? That the law actually, when it does its work in you, it increases your sinfulness. Number one, it increases it by saying to you, here's some sins you didn't even know were sins and you're committing them. Secondly, it also increases the sin you're trying to stop.

I remember when I was a young man and I was having problems with pornography, I would look at pornography and I'd feel so guilty. I'd just be so ashamed. And I promised God, I'd never look at that again.

I just, that's so bad. And I'm so miserable, I hate myself. And those bad feelings made me need it even more.

Does that make sense? Like, hey, I feel so bad about myself. Pornography makes me feel good for a little while. Maybe there are others that's drugs make me feel good for a little while.

Lying makes me feel good about it. Cheating on my income tax makes me feel good for a little while. But the law makes sin increase.

Like for a drug addict, the law is this. Thou shalt not use drugs. Thou shalt quit.

The law is good, right? What I just said, is that not a good thing for an addict? It absolutely is a law of good. But it's powerless to set the addict free from his addiction or her addiction. The law proclaims something to be done, but doesn't give us, doesn't show us, doesn't empower us, doesn't grace us with the ability to accomplish the thing that God calls us into.

And it's intentional. God is doing that to get rid of the theology of glory in your heart. That no one should boast in the flesh.

That no one should boast in their self will, their self power, but that righteousness comes from God and God alone. I'm gonna pass that one. I'm gonna pass that one.

And I'm gonna start just real briefly. Materialism is one of the things. I'll feel good about myself.

I'll return to glory if I have enough money, success, fame, fortune, that seeped into the church and made a thing called the prosperity movement, where it's a secular idea. I'll feel good about myself when I obtain enough wealth and success. And then now that's absorbed into all types of things that are happening in the church.

Another one is Christian nationalism. It's a move from personal prosperity and faith into a national sense of morality. It's taking the law and saying, America can become great again if we just have morality and if we just get the bad people to do good things.

I don't want bad people just to do good things, although I want that because I'm a good American and I have patriotism. I still cry at the national anthem. I still put my hand on my chest.

I love America, but I don't believe the hope for America is a moral revival. It's a spiritual revival. It's an awakening of the soul.

The hope for sexual immorality, the hope for perversion, the hope for addiction, the hope for violence is found in Christ Jesus, not in taking the theology of glory and put it on a national scale to get those things done. So lastly, as we get ready to close, I want to talk about the thing I really came for tonight. I hope I've convinced you that a theology of glory is not a sufficient way to live your life.

What is the alternative? Luther talked about a theologian of the cross or a theology of understanding that is at the cross of Jesus Christ, that I find my hope, that it's not in self-help, that it's not in the movements of our own flesh or in our own ability, but it comes from the grace that is found in Jesus Christ as the cross. The cross is dying to every form of self-merit or of glory aspiration or ever being thinking that it's possible to obtain it by self-effort. The cross puts those things to an end.

Theologians of the cross know that they can't be helped by mere optimism, by appeals to seek glory or strength or wisdom or positive thinking because these things in themselves are the problem. And the cross is striking at the root. The cross extinguishes the flame of self-achieved righteousness.

It burns the flesh out, the confidence in the flesh, leaving us helpless and hopeless and desperate for the alternative, which is the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross is the only true right means to restoring what is missing. Righteousness is found not in self-worth, but through Christ's work in us.

The cross of Jesus Christ. The cross does not coddle false optimism, but calls sin, sin, and it calls sin to be put to death. And it calls the sinner to be put to death so that new birth becomes a possibility.

It's not tinkering with or fixing or some self-improvement project that it's actually a death, that we become crucified with Christ. But nevertheless, then we'll live, not I live, but it's Christ who lives in me. That is the work of the cross.

Theology of the cross tells the truth. It tells the truth. When you look at the cross, it tells you the truth, that you feel bad.

This question we ask ourselves, why do I feel bad about myself? The theology of the cross is the only way that tells you the truth. It's the only message that tells you the truth. You feel bad because you are bad.

And no one else will tell you that. They'll try to convince you that you're good, and then your self-glory gets rekindled inside of you. The cross says, no, there's no hope for you.

And we live in a culture now that we don't understand how lost and rebellious, how we are sinners of enmity with God, that we are dead in our sins, that we are hopeless, helpless, lifeless, truthless, and that there's a total inability to live righteous or to strive for righteousness in acceptance with God by our own powers. It shows us how broken and truly unfixable we are. No matter how good we are, how successful we are, how moral we are, or the nation we live in, we cannot restore glory of the righteousness unless Christ does something for us.

The cross is actually God's attack on sin. The cross is God's attack on sin. Two types of sin he attacks.

Number one is unrighteousness, vile sins, sexual immorality, perversion, murder, divorce, child abuse. He attacks unrighteous deeds of evil men and women. The cross does that, but the cross has a second attack that we don't like to hear about.

It's one that we wanna close our ears to. It's not the attack on unrighteousness, but to the attack on self-righteousness. And self-righteousness is more insidious and more dangerous because it confuses us and it oftentimes convinces us that we're okay, that we're kinda right, that we're kinda, we can make it, we can do this, we're good enough, we're strong enough, we're happy enough, and it gives us false hope.

So therefore, the cross has to do a deeper work in those of us who struggle with self-righteousness. That's been my lifelong struggle. Not so much unrighteousness.

I've never committed adultery, I've never done fornication, I've never done drugs, I've never been drunk in my life, but I've been full of self-righteousness. I can do this, I can be better, I am better. I am better than you.

That's self-righteousness, and it's abominable to God. It's more dangerous. Jesus did well with the unrighteous.

He had a big difficulty with the self-righteous. He had a hard time because they would not come to him for the work that he could do for them. And therefore, we live in a culture that doesn't understand the depth of our sinfulness.

And not only do we not understand it, but we, in our safe zones, wanna do away with difficult words in the scripture. Words like sin, like law, like accusation, judgment, condemnation, wrath, guilt, repentance. If we get rid of those words to try to make us feel better as theologians of the glory, we get rid of half the scripture.

And we don't have the full word of God. And we don't have the cross because without understanding who we are and the trouble we're in, the cross is not supplying all that we need for the resurrection life that Christ gives to us. Worship team, if you'd come back, the theology of the cross is an offensive theology.

It offends the righteousness that we want in our own strength, the confidence in the flesh. It attacks us in saying, we're saying we can do it. And the cross attacks us and says, you cannot do it.

Only Christ can do it through you. Only the power of the cross. Jesus died to deal with these two things.

Our unrighteousness, that's the sin. There's a debit. And we can't merit getting out of that sin.

In Luther's time, they tried to do that. Your sin is way down here, pay penance, do some good works, do some good deeds, and your unrighteous deeds will be cleansed. The problem with that is only half the

battle.

You see, you're still not righteous. You're just, you just don't have a sin that needs to be forgiven anymore, although you actually do. So you're just at level ground, but you're not still acceptable for God.

And see what Jesus did is on the cross, he took your sin upon himself. And what he also did is dealt with our self-righteousness saying, you can't be self-righteous and get to heaven in yourself. You need perfect righteousness.

If you're gonna obey the law, you have to keep it perfectly, every 100% of it. And if you fail in one thing, you're under a curse. Your sin increases in you and you are lost and will die in your sin under the law.

And so Christ comes along and says, not only did I die for your unrighteousness to forgive your sin, but I lived a perfect life. I did what Adam could not do. I lived sinless, spotless, kept every single law, ceremonial law, civil law, moral law, the divine law of God.

I kept it all perfectly. And so now when I come to the cross, I have no debt to pay. And so I can use my merit to give to somebody else.

And that merit has been given to you. And we've been talking about theology here today, but I wanna close with an illustration I heard from another pastor. It's not my own, but he was talking about when Jesus died on the cross, we celebrated that this past weekend.

And when Jesus died on the cross, there were two thieves next to him, two criminals, and one cursed God and the other said, don't stop cursing him, he's a righteous, he uses the word, he's a righteous man. And Jesus says to him, today you'll be with me in paradise. And the story goes, what if we were there in heaven when this sinner on the cross who was a thief and really didn't know much, when he gets up to heaven and he says, the angels in heaven say, what are you doing here? And he goes, I'm not real sure.

He goes, well, how'd you get here? I don't really know. Well, do you understand justification by faith alone? I don't know what justification is. Do you know about substitutionary atonement that Christ died in your place? I don't really know what substitution.

Do you know what Pastor Gary was talking about tonight, a theologian of the glory or a theologian? Nah, I'd never heard about either one of those. And the angel says, well, how are you here? And the man simply says, I don't know, but the guy next to me on the cross said I could come. Isn't that amazing? Yes, that's the cross, his sufficiency, not yours.

Him saying it is finished, not I'll finish it. Him, that is the ultimate. Stand with me if you would, please.

And all over this auditorium today, I want to give an invitation, an invitation for you to say, I probably, if I'm real honest with myself, I probably walked in here, and I'm not asking whether you're a Christian or not, but you're honestly assessing yourself. I probably walked in here as a theologian of glory, but I wanna walk out of here as a theologian of the cross. I've been trying to my own strength and it's made me miserable, but I wanna lay all that down and let Jesus say to me, it's finished.

He's made me righteous. He's answered that nagging question. And if that question has been nagging in your soul, I want you to step out of your seat right now.

Don't wait till the music starts. Come now, and I wanna pray for you that God would do a miracle in your heart today. I'm believing him for a miracle of freedom.

We sang it today, but I believe you're gonna understand it like you've never understood it before. Come on down now, and we'll just pray for you in a second. Don't be afraid, come on ahead.

Come on down, come up closer. Hang on a second, hang on a second. I'm not trying to boost the numbers of righteousness, I'm not trying to boost the numbers of people coming forward here.

That would be the glorying, that would be self-glory. Oh, I want bigger numbers. But I'm just gonna be real blunt with you.

There's a whole lot more people here that are dealing with self-righteousness, that are trying to earn it themselves, that haven't really come to lay it all down at the cross. And I really want you to receive this today. So come on ahead, we're gonna sing this song, and as we're singing it, step out of your seat, and let us see this miracle take place in this house today.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/30/SID30833.mp3>

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