

The Cross of Christ

by George Kulp

The sermon explores the profound significance of the cross of Christ as a symbol of sacrifice, love, and salvation in the Christian faith.

Scripture: Exodus 12:13, Isaiah 53:5, John 3:16, Romans 5:8, 1 Corinthians 1:18, Galatians 6:14, Colossians 2:14, 1 Peter 2:24

Topics: "The Cross", "Redemption"

Description

George Kulp delivers a powerful sermon on the significance of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, emphasizing that Christianity without the cross is meaningless. He explores various crosses in history, highlighting the unique and redemptive nature of the cross of Christ. Kulp urges listeners to focus on the sacrificial love and salvation symbolized by the cross, encouraging them to find safety and deliverance in its shadow, as it represents the ultimate act of God's love and forgiveness towards humanity.

Transcript

Gal. 6:14 -- "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"

Christianity without the cross of Christ is a misnomer. Christianity without Christ is a farce. The symbol of Christianity is the cross. Men recognize this in various ways -- some by putting the cross on church steeples, others by wearing it on a watch chain. Strange to relate, there was a fashion that sprang out of the devotion to the cross. The Moorish Mohammedans wore smooth faces. They were bitter in their attacks upon Christians, and often when the Christians gathered for defense, they were unable to recognize each other. To make the distinction between the Moor and the Christian, the Christian men wore a mustache, and an imperial right on the chin, and that mustache and imperial was in the form of a cross, and when the Moorish Mohammedan began his attack, the men who wore the sign of the cross distinguished each other by it, and gathered for defense.

I want to call your attention to the distinctive, definite phraseology of the text: "The cross of The Lord Jesus Christ." There have been other crosses. The Lord told Peter the kind of death that he should die, being carried whither he would not, and the time came when he faced the cross; but deeming himself as being unworthy of dying as did his Lord, he asked them to crucify him with the head downward. I look back to that cross. It is not any more to us than the cross of a martyr. I admire his unflinching courage; I admire his fortitude, but that is not the cross to which the text refers.

Crosses have been quite common. The Jew in his blindness said, as he demanded the death of Christ, "Let His blood be on our heads." Whatsoever a man sows, that will he reap. They sowed one cross but they challenged Omnipotence. When Titus gathered the legions of Rome around Jerusalem the city fell, and Titus could not find wood enough to make the crosses on which to nail the Jews. They sowed a cross. They reaped crosses.

There is another cross. There is a penitent thief hanging on it, and he prays, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom." It took a stretch of faith, surely that did. Yonder he hangs as a criminal. Yonder he hangs, dying the death of a malefactor. But somehow or other, this poor dying penitent sinner sees the God-man and he cries, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." And he got the answer, "Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

I am interested in that cross. It tells me of a man plucked as a brand from the burning, to shine radiantly with burning luster in the crown of the Christ who is dying by his side. But I do not want you to get your eyes on that cross. The text says, "The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." I do not wonder the poet sings:

"When I survey the wondrous cross

On which the Prince of glory died,

My richest gain I count but loss,

And pour contempt on all my pride.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,

Sorrow and love flow mingled down!

Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,

Or thorns compose so rich a crown!"

Aye, he may well ask it. I want to call your attention to the middle cross. Men glory in their wealth, but wealth takes wings to itself and flies away. You can never take wealth with you into the world beyond. Men glory in fame; men glory in learning. This man of my text with this firm determination had the learning; this man was of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a member of the Sanhedrin. He had been fourteen years at the feet of Gamaliel. He puts the learning, puts all the past behind him, puts away ancestry and everything else, and says -- mark you he was a Jew, -- "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." In the cross of Christ, to the Jew a stumbling block, to the Greek foolishness, but to the man that believes it, "the power of God unto salvation."

Men need to get a vision of the Cross. Oh, there are many things that are crowding it upon us! The world allures. When a man once gets a vision of the cross, everything else will pale into utter insignificance. A vision of the Cross, . and all your horizon will be filled. All else will shrink in the presence of the Cross of Christ. I do not wonder at that sanctified old tinker, John Bunyan, making his Pilgrim say, when he gets to the cross and stands looking thereon as his burden rolls off his back and down into the sepulchre,

"Blest cross! blest sepulchre! Yea, rather blessed be,

The Man that hung thereon and died for me!"

Say, beloved, it is a wonderful thing to get a vision of the cross. Men are after gold; they are after the honors of the world, after the things that perish. Give my soul a vision of the Christ above all this old world can offer. "Oh, the cross has wondrous glory!" Here everything else fades. The martyred McKinley lay dying in Buffalo, and they say that in the last hour he quoted,

"Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee,
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me;
Still all my song shall be
Nearer, my God, to Thee."

Not your Unitarian idea of that hymn, -- McKinley saw more than what the Unitarian sees; he saw the God-Man. Did you ever think of it? Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh. As McKinley lay there, with his own body lacerated with the bullet of the assassin, and with an experience born back at an old-fashioned Methodist altar, he had the vision of the Christ.

"E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me."

Garfield, another martyred Christian President, was dying the victim of the assassin's bullet. They took him from Washington to Long Branch, and in a cottage there he lay dying. The Surgeon General of the United States is there doing all that is possible for the dying man. Out in an adjoining room is his wife, whom he familiarly calls "Crete," and she begins to sing. He says, "Barnes, push the door open a little wider. Isn't that glorious? That is Crete singing!" And what was she singing?

"Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
Hold me by Thy powerful hand;
When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Bear me through the swelling current;
Land me safe on Canaan's side;
Sings of praises
I will ever give to Thee."

Oh, thank God, when you have a vision of the Cross you can face death, knowing that you are held in the hollow of His hands. To the child of God the cross of Jesus is an inspiration.

Here go the troops of Napoleon, Europe's chief butcher. The engineers told him there was no way across the Alps, and he said, "There shall be no Alps." He expressed a determination that no matter what it cost, he would scale the Alps, get to the other side, and down into sunny Italy he would carry the Lily of France. He made his boast good. He marches up the mountain side; he gets near the summit, and an avalanche starts. It comes rolling down the mountain side and, striking a little drummer boy, sends him hurling downwards. The little fellow holds on to his drum, until he stops at the ledge of rocks. The soldiers are marching by and they see what has happened. The little fellow has a heart cry, and he expresses it with his drum beat. Many a time has he beat that "relief call" for others; now he beats it for himself, but nobody comes. The hearts of the soldiers are touched, but they dare not move out of the ranks without orders from Napoleon, and he leaves the little fellow to die. What is one life to a man who sacrificed thousands of lives to gratify his ambition! Then the little fellow beats the death march, and it is his own death march. He knows that he is left to die. You and I were marching along life's pathway, and an avalanche of sin came tumbling down the mountain side, and rolled us down to where no human arm could reach us. But the Christ of Calvary, the Christ of the Cross, He saw and "O amazing love, He flew to our relief."

"With pitying eyes, the Prince of Peace

Beheld our helpless grief;

He saw, and O amazing love,

He ran to our relief;

Down from the shining courts above

With joyful haste he sped,

Entered the grave in mortal flesh,

And dwelt among the dead."

He drew us with the cords of a man. In our need He reached down -- until He reached us in our lost condition, and lifted us back and made us at one with God. This cross is to me an inspiration, for it tells me that the Christ who died thereon died in my stead, and in yours. Archimedes said -- wondrous old philosopher that he was, he knew the power of the lever -- he said, "If I had a fulcrum I could lift the earth to heaven." What Archimedes longed to do, Jesus did. His lever was the love of God; the fulcrum was yonder hill called Golgotha; and there in His own humanity He pressed down on the lever until He raised our earth, till men born of this sin-cursed earth can sing a higher song than angels ever sang, for they have been lifted up on a plane above that which angels ever knew. They have felt not the creative power alone, but the redeeming power of the love of God. I am believing in the cross of Christ. I am believing in the Cross because it reveals the love of God. The poet sings, "Love divine, all love excelling." The cross shows us the heart of God. I heard a good thing this morning of a young man who exchanged his mother's heart for his desires, and as he cut out her heart and was running away with it, he stumbled and fell, and the heart of the mother said, "Son, did you hurt yourself?" That was a mother's heart; but here is the heart of God. I have said it again and again; that parable that the men who divided the Bible into chapters, and put a title above the pages, and called it the "Parable of the Prodigal Son," I do not believe that Jesus ever

taught it with that idea; I believe it was to show us, not the depths to which the prodigal went, but to show us the heart of the Father. It was the Father who was looking out for the prodigal; it was the thought of the Father's house that drew him back home. It was the Father, who stood looking for the boy to come back. It was the Father who ran to meet him. It was the Father who so smothered him with kisses that he could not get out his confession. It was the Father who had the robe and the ring and the shoes, and it was the Father who ordered the feast. It was the Father who said, "This, my son, was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." That parable shows us the heart of God. The heart is the seat of the affections and out of the heart comes love. I can read the thought of God in the starry heavens; I can read the wisdom of God in the passage of the planets; but it takes Calvary to show the heart of God, the love of God.

What we need to see and know is one who has a heart of love. I believe in the wisdom of God, the power of God. What we want is to know the love that He commended when He gave His Son to die in our stead. How can we glory in the Cross? Because Jesus bore it for me and for you. In our place condemned He stood, bought our pardon with His blood. Hear that crowd at the Cross. "Give us Barabbas?" "No!" "Well, what has this man done? I have examined Him and I find no fault in Him, I will set Him free." "No, no; give us Barabbas!" And Barabbas was given to the rabble, while Jesus goes to the cross. Yonder He hangs. The blood is running down over His face, over His hands, His feet. But here comes a man up the road, and he walks deliberately up the hill and stands before the sufferer. It is Barabbas. "Stranger, I do not know who you are nor from whence you came, but there is one thing I do know, you are dying in my stead." You and I can get our eyes on that cross, and there is one thing that we do know -- and if we do not know it, God help us to get the knowledge -- He died for us; He died in our stead.

That cross is an inspiration to every child of God because it tells of the spirit of sacrifice. Here are the old signers of the Declaration of Independence. They are coming up and putting their names to that document and they say, "Every man who puts his name here knows he is risking his life." But every man there puts down his name. One wit among them said, "We'll all have to hang together or we will hang separately." They risked their lives when they signed that paper. Jesus did more than this. He came, knowing that He would die. He always had the shadow of the cross on Him; it fell on His very cradle; it followed Him all through life. He steadfastly set His face toward Jerusalem. He said, "I am going up to be delivered into the hands of the chief priests and the scribes, and to die." Men could not apprehend this, nor the angels. There is a celebrated painting called "The Angel of the Cross." The Christ has been taken down. The body lies over there in Joseph's tomb. Here is a crown of thorns lying on the ground, and there is a nail that has been drawn from His hand. There is the bloody thing lying on the ground, and the angel picks it up, but does not understand it. He picks a thorn out of that crown of thorns. He presses it against his thumb. He cannot understand it. Angels desired to look into it. It was only desire and it never was satisfied. But you and I stand at the very same cross. We look up into the very same face, and we say, "He died for me! He died for me!" I do not wonder that the man who met the Christ on the Damascus Road said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ." How can we glory in the Cross? The love of Christ constraineth. He loved us and gave Himself for us.

When you get the spirit of sacrifice that impelled the Christ toward the cross (He dipped His fingers in His own blood and wrote, God So loved the world) ; when you get that touch of love that urged Him to the Cross, constraining you to go out after others, and to die if need be for others, then you get the spirit that will stand you good until angels wrap their white wings around you and take you up to your Father's house; and that is the very spirit we need, and must have, if ever we reach the world that needs to see Jesus in us. When the love of Christ constraineth in this manner, then you have something that will last throughout

eternity.

The Cross was a symbol of sympathy, and sympathy meant something. The root meaning of that word "sympathy" is "to suffer with," and Jesus suffered with. He gave Himself; He knew that His coming meant death for Himself. q hey have a sample of the sculptor's art in Westminster Abbey -- the Princess Alice. Her little boy was dying of diphtheria. The physician said, "Do not kiss that little fellow; to do so would be fatal." The boy was rolling with delirium, and the mother came near and put her hand on the fevered brow. Her hands were so cold; the chill was creeping near her heart as she watched that darling boy dying. When the cold hand touched that brow it seemed for the moment that the fever was rebuked, and the eyes of the little one looked on the mother's face. He said, "Mamma, kiss me," and she stooped down and kissed him, holding him in her arms of love. But she took the disease and died. Gladstone went into the House of Parliament and told the story of Princess Alice's death. He said, "The doctors said she must not kiss the child; it meant death for her; but that cry from the heart of that boy touched the mother's heart." And Gladstone said, "Where is the mother that would not have died?" But hear this: Jesus Christ came and He knew He would die. He knew He must go to the cross, and He went deliberately. Oh, men and women, for whom Jesus died, you who are bearing the name of Jesus, never shun the cross. I believe what that Scotch saint Rutherford said, "There was nobody to get under it but Him." When He hung thereon others left Him; two or three were near, three Marys, but His disciples stood afar off. But Rutherford said, "When a cross comes to us, He always comes along with it," and he says, "the heavier end for me." There never was a cross came to you but He came with it. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now another thought before I close, and that is this: I glory in the cross because I can live in its shadow and be safe. It is a symbol of salvation. Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee. In the shadow of that cross the promise comes, "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Look at that blood. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." Go away back into Exodus. Read it: "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." Here is a bill of charges against the whole race. It was a custom in Eastern countries when one was indebted, that when the bill was discharged the creditor would take the bill of indebtedness which he held and nail it over the door of the residence of the debtor. The bill would be receipted and, being placed over the door, it meant that the debtor was free. The handwriting was against us. Sinai's rolling, thundering, rumbling tones, declared "the soul that sinneth it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." It was the handwriting of the law that was against us; but when they nailed the Christ to the Cross, on His hand were the ordinances that were against us, and they drove the nails through His hand and ever since, beloved, we have been free because He paid the price. He took them out of the way, nailing them to the cross in His own blood. I glory in the cross because it reaches back to Eden, goes way back to the very gates of Paradise, goes back to Paradise lost, comes down by Sinai, comes down by Golgotha, on beyond Joseph's tomb, away down to the end of the race, until we come to Paradise regained. It covers all our sorest needs. Oh, when I see some precious souls, how they are burdened, how they cry, saying, "I have sinned against God and God has given me up," I feel like saying, "Get in the shadow of the Cross. There is deliverance, there is safety under the blood." Away back in old Egypt God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you;" and today, under the shadow of the Cross of Christ, there is a Man who is a shelter from the storm, a shadow from the heat, and men dwell there in perfect safety. I thank God for the cross of Jesus Christ by which I am crucified unto the world and the world is crucified unto me. Have you taken refuge there? Are you hiding behind the cross? Hell has no centimeter guns that can pierce your hiding place. Nothing can reach you through the blood. Has the devil got you discouraged? Are you crying for help? There is a Helper near at hand, and He came by way of the Cross.

One sight of the cross and your soul will be at perfect liberty. Rutherford says, "There have been thousands of heads pillowed on the bosom of Jesus, but there is always room for you." Will you get the thought -- there is room for you?

"His arms the whole creation reach,

So bounteous is the store,

Enough for each, enough for all,

Enough for evermore."

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