

The Glorious Cross

by G.W. North

The sermon emphasizes the importance of looking beyond the visible to understand the eternal nature of God and His plan of salvation.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:5, John 1:29, John 8:56, Romans 3:25, 2 Corinthians 4:18, Galatians 3:24, Ephesians 1:4, Hebrews 10:1, 1 Peter 1:19-20, Revelation 13:8

Topics: "The Cross of Christ", "Eternal Truths"

Description

G.W. North emphasizes the significance of the crucifixion of Christ as a temporal event that reveals eternal truths about God's love and sacrifice. He explains that while the crucifixion was a pivotal moment in history, it is merely the visible manifestation of a deeper, eternal reality that has existed since before creation. North argues that all sacrifices, including those in the Old Testament, point back to the original sacrifice of the Lamb, which transcends time and is foundational to understanding God's righteousness. He encourages believers to look beyond the visible and grasp the invisible, eternal truths that the cross represents. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a deeper appreciation of the cross as both a historical event and a reflection of God's eternal nature.

Transcript

We have been told by Paul that we are not to look at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen. By refusing to look at the things which are invisible and seeing only that which is visible, men cripple their understanding of God and man. The reason for this is simply because the things which are seen are temporal (and therefore have only temporary existence in this world) but the things which are not seen are eternal. The temporal things of God can only give temporary expression to things which are and have been and shall for ever be; even now they are better expressed in invisible, eternal reality in heaven and God.

As an instance of this let us take the most precious thing of all, the crucifixion of Christ itself. The four Gospel writers faithfully record accounts of the actual happenings at Golgotha. Beside these, there are also frequent allusions to the historical event of the crucifixion throughout the length of the whole New Testament. To such good effect is this done by the inspired authors that our gaze is for ever firmly focussed upon that vital, indispensable and unique act. Yet it was only temporal; that is to say, although its import and implication and effects are eternal, it was enacted in all its tragic glory and outwardly seen by man only for a brief moment on this earth.

Necessary as it was, planned and prophesied in all its detail as it had to be, what was seen at Calvary was emphatically not the most or most important part of what took place there. If one may be permitted the use of such a phrase here, it was only the tip of the iceberg. As a matter of fact it was only the enactment and revelation at a certain point in time on the earth of the combined principles of love and sacrifice at the heart of the eternal being of God. It was a reproduction by God in flesh in history of what He had previously specifically done, and in principle had always been doing in another media, from and before the foundation of the world. The life continually yielded, the person continually sacrificed, the Lamb continually slain, became the Man eventually crucified. Beginning and end He is; His crucifixion was a manifestation of a permanent pattern of life in God; Calvary was the outworking and adaptation of Himself and His will against sin in perfect love for mankind.

Perhaps our limited grasp of eternal truth may be due to the fact that we have been habitually taught that all the righteousness of God which was imputed to ancient Israel was only as it were the shadow of the good things to come. This view presents the crucifixion as though it was the substance from behind which the sun shone, casting its beneficial shadow backward to Israel; it says that what God accomplished at Calvary covered all the millenia of sin since the fall, as well as the centuries of sin following the resurrection. The truth of this is vast beyond degree. It satisfies the understanding, explaining the whole range of repetitive temporal sacrifice throughout the ages. Moreover it has the backing of the scriptural words, 'the law having a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of those things'. But it fails to grasp the greater truth that long before ever an altar stood on the earth, whether built of earth or stone, or forged and fashioned from brass in fire, God had already slain His Lamb. All sacrifice since then, including Calvary itself, has been because of that original act and has significance only because of it and no value except in spirit it conforms to it. This is that which is invisible and eternal; all the other was temporal, even though it witnessed of the eternal.

Understanding this we see that all the righteousness imputed by God to man since the commencement of sin in the earth was projected forward from and was a result of the prehistoric sacrifice of the Lamb, as well as being a projection backward from Calvary. True it is that Jesus said, 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad', but whether Abraham understood all he saw is another thing. The patriarch built an altar, bound his son and laid him upon it, heard a voice from heaven, saw a ram caught in a thicket, slew and sacrificed it instead of his son. The sight and experience of it all brought him joy and gladness, but it was all so very temporal and momentary. Did his inward spiritual eye look forward to see Him who is invisible die in His day and rise again? Or did his faith look backward to see the slaying of the Lamb at the world's foundation? Is the working of this principle the hidden secret of light and day and is this what is alluded to by 'the dayspring from on high'? I wonder, but do not attempt to answer the question.

The whole enactment at Moriah was prophetic of Calvary; whether Abraham saw it all does not for the moment matter. It was most truly as much a reflection of the beginning of the earth age as a foresight into the end of the age of law. Altar and lamb were there on Moriah, but except it be dimly prefigured by the wood first laid upon Isaac and upon which he was later laid, there was no cross. Perhaps it teaches hearts eager to learn every precious lesson and to note every slightest token of Calvary that the cross became an altar. Even so, every foreshadowing sacrifice and every drop of blood spilt or burnt in promise of Calvary love could only be because the bodyless, bloodless sacrifice of deity was made before ever a body of flesh and blood was created or earth itself was formed.

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