

The Cross - Part 2

by Henry Blackaby

The sermon emphasizes the seriousness of sin, the necessity of repentance, and the central role of the cross in reconciling humanity to God.

Scripture: Isaiah 59:2, Matthew 25:41, John 3:36, Romans 5:6, Romans 6:23, 2 Corinthians 5:17-18, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 John 3:4

Topics: "The Cross", "Reconciliation"

Description

Henry Blackaby preaches about the profound impact of the cross as the Father's activity through His Son, emphasizing the weight of sin and the need for reconciliation. He delves into 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 and 21, highlighting God's act of reconciling us to Himself through Jesus Christ, who bore our sins to make us righteous. Blackaby stresses the seriousness of sin, including rebellion, lawlessness, and unrighteousness, and the necessity of repentance and turning away from sin to fully experience God's forgiveness and reconciliation through Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Transcript

Now I want to talk with you for these moments about the cross being the Father's activity through His Son. And the scriptures I want to bring before you, found in 2 Corinthians 5, I sort of going to let you feel the weight of some scriptures, then I'll want to go back just sort of look at the impact of them, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 and then were going to verse 21, I love in the time that I go to God's Word not to miss one solitary word. The Apostle has a wonderful way of starting a thought, then he sort of inserts a bunch of things in between. and by the time you got the insertions you maybe not felt the impact when he picks it up again. Now not that what he says is not relevant it is profoundly relevant, nothing, not one word should not be there. But some times to catch the impact of something I sort of skip down so I'm going to do that, I'm going to put these verses together from verse 18, or 17, lets us start at verse 17, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, in union with Him, he is a new creation and old things have passed away." Now that is what I have just been talking to you about, there are some things that pass away, "and behold all things have become new." Now here is the two verses and 21 I want to put next to each other, "Now all things," how much is included in all things? "all things are of God who has reconciled us to Himself," who did the reconciling? God reconciled us to Himself. How did he do it? "Through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation," that is, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation." Now in my mind I said how did God do that? In verse 21, "He made him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might become the

righteousness of God in Him."

Now another way of saying that, if you would turn with me to Romans 5:6-11, now remember what he said in that fifth chapter, "For when we were still without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die, but God demonstrated His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. Much more than having being justified," how? "by His blood we shall be saved," from what, "wrath". The scriptures says the wrath of God comes against all sin, and that is your sin, the last verse 36, in John 3 says, "that he that believeth in Him shall life, but he that does not believe in Him the wrath of God abides on him." This scripture says, that through the death of Jesus Christ the wrath of God when you believe in Him is removed. "But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, much more than having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God," how? "through the death of His Son. Much more having being reconciled we shall be saved by His life," and not only that, "we also rejoice in our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have received the reconciliation."

The passage we read to start with, God reconciled us to Himself. It was God who was in Christ who reconciled us to himself. Not imputing, placing, attributing, ascribing our sins to us, and then committed to us the word of reconciliation. But later I am going to just say a word about, at least try to say a word about, what really happened on the Cross. What really happened when God reconciled us to Himself, through His Son. He made Him sin for us! But He knew no sin. But God made Him that way, in order that we might be made the righteousness of God when we enter into a union with Christ Jesus.

Now there is a very strong need in our day to come to a fresh understanding of some of what the Bible means by sin and its effect. There are a number of terms that are used for sin, which produce sins in our life. That is, when there is a nature call sin there is a life that practices sins. And God has to deal with both. But in the essence there is a number of terms the Bible uses. One of them is rebellion, it is a whole spirit that just rebels against the will of God. Could I suggest to you, that rebellious spirit in the heart of a Christian is gross sin!

You may say well, "I just sort of wrestling with God", no you not your rebelling against God! I have said many times, I've come away from messages going back and asking the Spirit to search my heart to and see if what I had said was right but I can not remember a time that I have rebelled against God. I can't remember a time that I clearly knew what God was saying and there was a rebellious spirit in my heart against Him. I fear God enough to know that perfect love never makes a mistake.

And if God says something it doesn't cross my mind to argue with God, that's sin! But there are those who love to say, "no that's normal for the Christian life," well unfortunately that's sin is normal in the Christians life. That when He gives a clear directive we feel its cute to argue with God. And that we begin to set up a whole lot of things to say, well Lord you understand all of these things are here would you sort of...and we start to argue with God. When God gives you a directive its absolutely right and it is based on perfect love and perfect knowledge, and the timing of God is absolutely crucial.

When God gives you a directive the timing is crucial. The will of God has a very, very narrow window which to go. You don't have all the time in the world and you can tell if there sin of rebellion in your heart with what you do instinctively when God gives a deep directive. When God gives a life changing directive, what you do spontaneously will indicate the condition of your heart. You say well I ultimately said yes, but

in the mean time you lost it. Because of the time it took for you to get around to saying yes, great dimensions of God's activity you will never know what could have been if you had responded earlier.

But we have a whole bunch of rebellious people around us want to comfort us in that sin of rebellion. "well I rebelled against God and He is still using me," don't ever listen to that godless talk. Because that person doesn't know what could have been! They may be on God's minimum, you don't want to be on God's minimum. You want to be on God's maximum. And that requires a heart that knows Him, and loves Him, and knows that when He's speaks the answer that is worthy of Him is, "yes Lord."

So one of the things the Bible defines sin as is rebellion. I John 3:4 sin is called "lawlessness". And I don't have time to go through all of this but I will touch on that one briefly. Sin is lawlessness, let me say it slowly. Sin is law - less - ness. That is your trying to live without any standard of God's word to judge your decisions. Your living outside the clear directives of the word of God. Your not familiar with the ways of God. You've not read the laws of God, the judgements of God, the commandments of the Lord. You have not taken seriously in your heart what God has already revealed in His Word as a command. That is not optional. A Christian who loves the Lord sets about immediately to immerse his life in the Ways of God and the purposes of God. But I can suggest to you are guilty of the sin of lawlessness if you do not have a serious time in the Word of God to determine the ways of God. Your trying to live without the guidelines of God. But you are doing it deliberately. You say, "well I just don't have time," that's the point Im trying to make! What ever replaces the serious relationship to God, is your god! He is God, and He has the right to give you directives and He has a right to expect, especially, that a child of God would seek the will of the Father. Jesus said, "I always do what pleases my Father," and he was always quoting scripture to guide him. I mean all the way through his life, scripture just immersed itself in the life of the Lord Jesus. But to be a Christian without reference to scriptures on a serious matter, is sin, its lawlessness. Living without the guidelines, and choosing not to know what they are.

Now even on the human level ignorance of the law is never and excuse. If that's true on the human level, how much more is that true on God's level. "Well Lord I didn't know," He said, "it's not you couldn't have known, you choose not to know." "Well nobody told me," He said, "My Word and the Holy Spirit could have told you." Could I say to you if there is ever a time where we need to do daily serious study of the word of God, to know the Ways of God, so that we do not live lawlessly. You see this passage in I John says that sin is lawlessness. Just functioning without a knowledge of the truth, but doing it deliberately. You see our lives are a product of the choices we have made. And could I suggest to you, no amount of books written by others will ever be a substitute for you personally studying this book. There are no books that can replace this one, and there are no amount of studies, that others have done that can replace the study that you must do with this book and the Spirit of God as your teacher. Otherwise you are guilty of the sin of lawlessness.

Well the scripture in Romans talks about sin being a transgression of the law. That is, there are some guidelines God has given us, there are some clear directives he has given us, and we cross over that line and we ignore them. Jesus talked about forgiveness didn't he? And we cross over that and we refuse to forgive. That's called transgression against the law of God and it's sin. Now could I also add an aside here, there's only one way to get rid of sin, once you have sinned, there has to be repentance. It is not a matter of God to forgive you, it's a matter of repenting, "Lord I have been going about without a serious study of you word, that's sin! Lord I knew what you said, but I transgressed that, I walked over that, I have sinned against you and impact of that is immeasurable. Lord I repent of that in my mind and my heart and life and Im going to turn around and God being my helper, the Spirit of God being my convictor I will not transgress

what I know to be the Will of God." We somehow feel that we can commit sin, that is we do what God calls sin, but we don't have to repent. You can ask God to forgive you all you want, but asking God to forgive you is not repentance! Repentance is acknowledging that what I have done is serious with God and I ask Him to forgive me and cleanse me of that and turn me around and help me in live in a way of life that is opposite to what I have been living. But don't try just to ask God to forgive you without repentance. He will not. Jesus said that repentance and the forgiveness of sins in His name.

I John 5 says, "all unrighteousness is sin." Unrighteousness simply means the opposite of righteousness. Whatever the scripture calls righteous, to leave that out is unrighteous. To practice the opposite is unrighteous. And any of that the Bible calls sin, and sin is serious with God. Now the scripture in the Old Testament, can you remember the saying, "the soul that sinneth will struggle." Is that what it says? "The soul that sinneth will be hampered." "The soul that sinneth will die!" Is that true of a Christian? Absolutely! The soul that continues to sin dies in those areas of relationship to God, and what God intends to do. That's why I, because I have been on the road a while, and have related it to many who feel called to ministry and missions and I have a real heart to help them. I seen many who have a soul that sins, and they have died to the call that God gave them. And no amount of repentance seems to restore that. "Well I have repented and God has forgiven me why can't you," and I said, "watch to see what God does," "well there is no door opening," I can say, "My Brother let me tell you why there is no door opening, the Christ has closed the door, and when He closes the door no man can open it. And I'd be fearful to try and force it open if I were you." Does that mean your life can be no use of God? It has nothing to do with that, your life can be a great use to God. But there are some things that when you sin against God that one dies. You cannot be restored. There may be other things of less import that god can re-arrange you and re-establish you. But I think we better be very careful that we don't ignore what the scriptures says about sin. The souls that sins, it will die.

Now I going to add God provision, Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is limited life?" "No, the wages, the payoff, the payday, is death! but the gift of God is life through Jesus Christ Our Lord." And you've got to respond to God's gift. We will come to that in a moment.

Well, I believe we got to take seriously what the scripture says about the soul that sins. With God, He absolutely Holy and by His nature he mst deal with your sin. He cannot overlook sin, nor will He, his nature as holy demands that He deal with it. And you either let your life respond to what God has done in Christ to reconcile you or you will experience the full consequences of the holiness of God as he absolutely has and utter, irreversible, hatred of sin. That's true in my life. Now Brother Roberts will lay a foundation for us. The scripture in Jeremiah say, "Should you not tremble when I speak?" And one of the saddest pictures in Jeremiah is God say, "my people no longer tremble when I speak." They somehow don't believe me when I say that the soul that sins, it will die. Or the wages of sin is death. By His nature He has got to deal with sin. You either let Him deal with in his Son, or He will deal with it in you. But He will deal with it! His nature requires it. God is absolutely just. And when God deals with us He deals with us in absolute justice. And there are several ways in which He expresses in the New Testament, one of them is, the measure you measure to another is exactly the measure that God will measure back to you. He plays no favorites, He makes no exceptions. His nature as a God of absolute justice requires it. And our sin is very serious to God. And His nature must deal with it. And I have seen so many, many people wonder they are experiencing in their life certain things, and Ill say, let me help you. Why don't you go back and take a look and see if what you are experiencing at some point you were dealing with others that way. I think probably three of the most dramatic of these is Moses, one Moses, he treated the people of Israel with disdain,

when he had a word from God and he struck the rock and put the people Israel in jeopardy by what he did, because he was modeling to them that you can do opposite to what God's says for you to do, and no harm will come to you. What an affront to the people of God. And God's absolute justice says, "Moses you disobeyed me, you will not enter into the promise land." Now Moses thought he came up on the blind side of God a couple of times and got into His good graces and when he thought he was really in God's good graces, he said, "by the way Lord could I go into the promise land?" And it comes, one of those severe moments, when God's says, "Moses, don't you ever, don't you ever bring that up to me again, that one is settled. My justice requires it."

There was David, he used the sword to take another mans life. And the judgement against David, now, you see we have, we have such a distorted picture of what God does when He forgives. We feel that when God forgives He removes all the consequences, that is not true. He does eternally, but that is another matter. But did God forgive David? He did forgive David, but He turned to David and said, "David you used a sword against Urriah, that same sword, will not depart out of your house the rest of your days." The measure that you measured, is going to be measured back into your life and your whole household. And regardless of the wonderful intimate relationship that David had with God after he was forgiven and the joy of God's salvation being restored, a sword never departed out of his house.

The third example which is my own way of thinking, I've not read it anywhere, I'll have to check with our resident theologian here. But the only person that I know of, apart from Stephen that was stoned, was the apostle Paul. I wonder why? You see as Saul, God says, my justice that you measure to another will be measured back. And in His own time, and in His own way. Barnabas was not stone who was with him, but Paul was stoned. And Im one who believes maybe the thorn in the flesh was the result of that stoning. Forever to remind the apostle Paul that the measure you measure is and absolute with God. It will be measured back. I talked with someone not long ago and I brought this truth out, and I used the scriptures that Jesus gave, "be very careful how you measure to another because that measure will be returned." But you say, "Well I asked Him to forgive me," well none of us want to have the judgement of God. But you don't have an option on that one. That ones not for negotiation that one will come. He will forgive you, and He will cleanse you, but there are some things that He will leave as a permanent reminder. That the measure you measure to another, so if you have anger against a brother and you will not be reconciled that is a most dangerous position for you to be in with God. I would not want to be in that relationship with God. Coming to Him and asking Him to forgive me when I will not forgive my brother, He will say didn't I tell you in my prayer, that I told my Son, for he told you the Lord's prayer, the disciples prayer, did he not say let me tell you how to pray, "Father forgive me my sin, in the exactly the same way I forgiving others who sin against me." Did not my Son tell you that was an absolute? But now you asking Me to forgive you but you still have an unresolved broken relationship with your brother. And you will not be reconciled cause you got all the reasons why you are justified in doing it. There is absolutely, absolutely not justification for being unreconciled with a Christian brother, none. And the justice of God calls for an absolute response to our Savior.

Now the scriptures says, you and I don't have a chance of getting right with God on our on. And if God was to give us what we rightly deserved...the pictures, if you concordance, look under darkness and outer darkness. All the way through the life of Jesus. He talks about those who are not right with God are cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. An enormous separation from God from light, from life, forever. Totally, radically, into outer darkness, and in one place in the 25th chapter of Matthew, he says, "as a matter of fact it is the place that God has established and reserved for

the devil and his angels. That's where a person who has not let God reconcile him to Himself is destined to go. Sin is that serious with God! Now you say, "that's the sin of an unbeliever," no sir, all sin is that serious with God. That means that sin in my life is that serious with God. So when you come to the cross, you are coming center of God's heart, you are coming to the center of everything that were about.

The scriptures says, it was there that God reconciled, brought back, settled the account. And I not one that's an authority on reconciling financial accounts. I leave that the Marilyn and we sort of say, are all the checks in? And what does the bank says our balance is? Well we accept that. But there are those who want an absolute reconciliation, and the debts and the monies need to come together, and there has to be a zero balance when everything is reconciled. It needs to come together in absolute harmony otherwise there is condemnation. And one of the terms, and tonight we don't have to time to talk to you about the many, many terms. This is so serious with God that He uses scores of terms, word pictures. He talks about a ransom for many, He talks about a substitute, He talks about justifying, He talks about reconciling, He uses every possible figure of speech and terminology that has to deal with that which is not right, making it right. So that you and I understand that what sin has done against God, is of such a serious nature, that for God to remain God, He either has to put that penalty on us, or has to deal with it Himself on our behalf. But that is the most serious thing that the heart of the love of God has ever revealed to mankind. God so loved the world that He released and literally chose to give His only begotten Son that whoever would believe in Him would not perish...perish. What would have happened had He not given His son? We would have perished! No hope what so ever! With no possibility of ever making up what we had done to God in our rebellion and in our lawlessness, in our transgression, it was against a Holy God. And that has to be dealt with by the nature of God. But the Scriptures says, "in His love he reconciled us to Himself." In other words, God Himself had to come between His justice and the punishment that is rightfully deserving in our life. He chose to do it not because we deserved it, but simple because He loved us.

Now, tomorrow night I am going to talk to you, "What is the implication of the way we live, if we ever understand what God did on the cross?" What is the only kind of response that is worthy of the one who gave His Son? But I want to just drop into your thinking that 21st verse, and no combination of speakers, no combination of wise people, no combination of spiritual people can ever plumb the deeps of what that verse really means. Oh, I have tried to ask God to open my understanding, and there are times when He begins to touch the fringe of an understanding, and I find myself weeping with in-expressible pain just thinking about it. "He who knew no sin, was made sin for us." What's the implication of that? The spotless Son of God, the one who spent eternity with the Father, love profoundly by the Father, beyond any description that we have on human love. The intimacy for eternity, the creator of the worlds. God gave His own Son and His Son freely said, "Not my will but thine be done," and then the agony of Spiritual death began to take Him to into deepest recesses of God's judgement on sin. God made Him sin. And then He dealt with sin in an unrelenting wrath that feel on His Son. He withheld nothing that would have been required for you and me from His son.

With Abraham offering his son, God stopped his hand. And did not let death fall, but when it came to His Son there was no holding back. All that the holiness and justice God required must pass on our sin, passed on His Son. Many have tried to do theological gymnastics within individual verses and there are some that says that he spent three days in hell preaching to those in hell, and people want to know that. I tell you one thing that I go to think about, the Heavenly Father dealing with Hos Son in the light of pure sin, my heart is overwhelmed, because I know it was not only to deal with sin, but to make it possible that I

could forgiven. If I saw my helplessness and believed in His love in what He did, and let His Son carry my sin. And when some have asked me about that, and I have had the question asked for years, I'll tell you one thing, that is one verse, and when I think about it I lay it aside, and say Father I don't know if I can take that. Father it is enough for me to know that you made Your Son to be sin, for me when He knew no sin. And then all that would have fallen on me because of my sin that would be necessary to settle the account. For God to stamp over my life and my soul, "Paid in Full, you are now free to be restored," all that was required fell on His Son, and the blackness of that moment I cannot describe. And when I try to ask the Father, I simple hear Him say, "Henry if I ever had to show you what I had to do to My Son, you couldn't take it. You couldn't stand it, you couldn't carry the knowledge of it, but it is enough to know My holiness My justice required that your sin be laid on someone, somewhere. And I choose that it be laid on My Son, and Henry I want you to know I held nothing back, it fell fully."

My mind went to the Old Testament cause all the way through the Old Testament, He gives figures of speech that were to try to help us come close to help us understand that moment. And you remember on the Day of Atonement, there were two things that happen. Two spotless lambs, not sheep, lambs. Innocent, loving, responsive, were brought forth and the priest took one of them and pressed his hands upon the head of that little lamb and there God said I want you to transfer all the sin of the nation onto that one innocent lamb. And then I want you to take that lamb and take him out as far as you can into the wilderness where that little lamb cannot hear the voice of the other sheep, and he cannot hear the voice of my people. And then I want you to leave him there to die. And he will carry all the sin of the people in his death. And one thing about a lamb, they cannot find their way home. A lamb and sheep is of such a nature that they wander aimlessly, they have no pattern. And once there are lost they have no sense to come home. A dog can come home after miles of being away. A cat can come home, and ox can come home, a donkey can come home, but a lamb has no instinct to find its way home. And God said to His people, I want you to watch the helpless lamb and to pressed down on his head and place the sin of the nation and then take him out and let him die.

The other Lamb was taken to the alter of sacrifice and there he was slain, and his blood was poured out for the sins of God's people. And God was saying there would come a time when I'll provide for Myself, My own lamb. and I will press down on Him the sin of a world. And I will take him out into outer darkness, and there He will carry your sin, and I will slay My own Son. And His blood will be enough, so that you could be made my righteousness, if you ever enter into a relationship with My Son. You will have said to me, I believe that when you took the life of Your Son as Your lamb it was enough, it was complete, it was total. And when you turn to me and say, "Oh my sin, Oh my sin was responsible for that moment for God to bring me back. He Himself had to be in Christ reconciling a world unto Himself. So that he could exchange my sin, and place on me His righteousness. That's the cross, that's where He dealt with our sin. And where we see the seriousness of our sin, and we literally forsake sin. I always very nervous when I hear a person say, "is I accepted Christ," I want to say, "Oh my brother, what did you do?" "Well I accept Christ, I asked Him into my heart" "What did you do with your sin?" "Because salvation is preeminently what you do with your sin! Did you recognize that the death of Jesus was for your sin?" "And do you understand the magnitude of that death? Not sleep, but Death! for the sin of a world was placed on the son of God and all of its magnitude and the wrath of God fell on Him and with His strips we can be healed." "Did you understand that?" and I am afraid there are many who have never turned from their sin, that just want to quote, "accept Jesus" and go to heaven when they die. There is no possibility of a person being saved if they have not dealt with their sin. Because repentance is number one and that has to do with our sin.

So when I come to God I say, "I have sinned against you, and you only. Oh, God I can't make it up but you told me Your Son made it up for me, I believe you. And Oh God I cast my sin on the Saviour and I ask you to forgive me, and the basis of His death and His penalty for my sin I even come and ask you, Oh God would you forgive me of my sin. Not because I am worthy but because He died for me. And you cast yourself on the mercy of God, and the love of God, and grace of God. At that moment He takes your sin and it is laid on His Son, and He takes His righteousness and He lays it on you and the transaction is enormous. That moment when you are delivered out the kingdom of darkness and put into the kingdom of His Dear Son is so radical the scripture calls it, "you have become a new creation," you have entered into a relationship with Jesus Christ in His death and His burial and His resurrection and His ascension for your sin. You have entered into a relationship with Him and the transaction is settled and God changes the heart. He changes the whole being, and its so radical says "it's a new creation the old is gone and the new has come," and even commits to you a ministry of reconciliation.

So my question is, have you been radically born from above when you dealt with your sin and when He laid it own his Son and you believed Him and He exchanged you sin for his righteousness? What a moment, the cross is the heart of the Christians life! He lives a cross orientated life. Can you ever argue with a God that loves you like that? Can you ever fuss with any demand He will make in your life? You owe it all to Him. From that moment on that some passage says, "He died for all that those who live, should never live unto themselves but unto Him who died for them and was raised again."

I want to take a moment quiet, in our own hearts. I want you to let the God who alone can interpret His Word. His Word said that He reconciled us to Himself in His Son for He made Him sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God when we enter into a union with Christ Jesus. What has He opened to your understanding? Is there a seriousness concerning sin in your life? Do you need to ask Him to restore unto you an understanding? God may have brought you here, and you have never, ever turned your sin over to God. You have been trying to get right, you've been trying to do better, but you only sense your getting worse. But you didn't understand its not you trying better, its you believing that God knew you couldn't so He let His Son carry the sin of your life on Himself and He paid the penalty fully for your sin. Now he wants you to believe Him, that he really did and cry out Oh God, you paid it therefore I give you my sin. Forgive me cleanse me, restore me, save me, that cry. He changes your heart instantly. God I repent, I turn from trying myself to receiving what you have done in Christ. You Father reconciled me, to Yourself through the death of Your Son, I believe you. You maybe among those who ever heard was go forward and accept Jesus and no one ever told you to deal with your sin. And you have wonder why there has been no victory in your life. You have wonder why sin has such a hold on you. Maybe He has never broken the hold of sin over you because no one told you that God in the death of His Son was dealing with your sin. But you have never asked Him to forgive you and to make you a completely new person because He places His righteousness over your sin. Removes your sin for its on His son, and gives you His permeant righteousness but you have never known that. You're a member of a church but you have never known that. Oh, quickly hear that scripture, say Lord I believe, Lord I believe that, I release my sin and I receive your righteousness. I'll give you a moment just to respond to Him.

Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe,

Sin had left a crimson stain,

He washed it white as snow.

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