

Rev. 11:8. the Cross of the Lord Jesus

by Horatius Bonar

The cross of Christ is the central symbol of Christianity, representing the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the sins of humanity and demonstrating God's love and willingness to sacrifice His Son for humanity's salvation.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:17

Topics: "Salvation", "The Cross"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the profound significance of the cross of Christ, illustrating how it serves as the ultimate symbol of guilt, shame, and condemnation, yet simultaneously as the source of healing, love, and acceptance for believers. He explains that the cross is not merely a historical event but the central focus of salvation, where all evil was transformed into good through Christ's sacrifice. Bonar highlights that the cross is where God and humanity meet, offering forgiveness and reconciliation, while also serving as a stark reminder of the consequences of rejecting this gift. The preacher calls for believers to recognize the cross as the foundation of their faith and the source of their hope, urging them to embrace its power and significance in their lives.

Transcript

"Where also our Lord was crucified."--Revelation 11:8.

"The cross of Christ!"--1 Corinthians 1:17.

"The preaching of the cross."--1 Corinthians 1:18.

"Where also our Lord was crucified." The first of these passages strikingly identifies the Master and the servants--our Lord and His witnesses. They were to suffer as He suffered and where He suffered--one with Him in life and death, in shame and glory--one with Him on the cross, in the grave, in resurrection, in ascension, and on the throne. The words, 'Where also our Lord was crucified,' come with a strangely solemn power. It is the last reference to the cross of Christ in the Bible, and corresponds well with that frequent expression in the Revelation, 'the Lamb slain,' carrying us back to the 'the seed of the woman' and 'the bruised heel.'

The second passage is one of the many (nineteen in all) in which Paul refers to the cross and its meaning, the cross and its connection with the good news, the cross and the way of preaching it. In his estimation that cross stood out pre-eminently as the great center around which his faith revolved. It was the basis of

his hope towards God; it was the main article in his creed, from which all others shot forth like rays from the sun. It stood alone and unapproachable in the matter of salvation; as the altar of the burnt-offering--as the place outside the gate where the sin-offering was consumed--as the point where all the offerings meet.

It was not to Paul, the mere place of the great self-surrender, the example or model of self-sacrifice; it was the place of propitiation, the substitution of life for life--the Just One there suffering for the unjust--the Blessed One bearing our curse--the Holy One bearing our sin. In preaching this cross, the apostle dreaded and shunned the wisdom of words--human eloquence--lest thus the naked cross should be disguised and disfigured. It must stand out bare and unadorned, 'majestic in its own simplicity,' as the brazen serpent on the pole. That serpent and that pole need no ornament of man. There they stood, with the divine remedy for Israel. To cover them, to deck them, to paint them, would be to destroy their power to heal--to make them of none effect. So is it the naked cross that does the work of healing. To deck it with flowers, and rites, and pomp, and eloquence is to destroy its power--to grieve that Spirit whose office is to turn the sinner's eye to it as the health of the world. Look and be healed! Look and be saved! The virtue of the cross is drawn out by simply looking. Know and be blessed! For 'by His knowledge (the knowledge of Himself) shall my righteous Servant justify many.'

'The cross of Christ!' O world, this is your one hope. That cross contains all that you need of love, and healing, and peace. Under its shadow the chief of sinners may sit down and rejoice.

'Where also our Lord was crucified.' O Israel, O Jerusalem, here is your condemnation. O world, here too will be your condemnation, if you look not, and believe not! That cross will utterly condemn all its rejecters and despises. That cross overthrew Jerusalem, city and temple, for her rejection of the crucified One; it scattered Israel--what will it not do to each person who has slighted it? Round it the world's history revolves--on it the world's destiny hangs.

(1.) The cross was the place of GUILT and CONDEMNATION. (Matthew 27:22, 26, 28)--The condemned of men were there. The thieves were there; it was their 'own place.' Connection with the cross inferred crime, worthy of death.

(2.) The cross was the place of SHAME. (Hebrews 12:2) It was shame that was there; and each one who was sent there was treated as a shameful thing--one of whom his fellow men were ashamed, and who might well be ashamed of himself. It was the type of the shame and everlasting contempt in reserve for the unbelievers. Hence it was a 'reproach' and 'offence' (Galatians 5:2).

(3.) The cross was the place of WEAKNESS. (2 Corinthians 13:4) Christ was 'crucified through weakness.' It was the exhibition of man reduced to the extremity of helplessness. In order to save us who were 'without strength' (Romans 5:6), our Surety took our helplessness upon Him, and became 'without strength' for us.

(4.) The cross was the place of PAIN. (Hebrews 13:12) Anguish of body was there to the uttermost; and thirst was there; wounds and bruises were there. There is no pain like that of crucifixion. Here is the fulfillment of the roasted lamb of the Passover--here is the passing through the fire.

(5.) The cross was the place of the CURSE (Galatians 3:13) 'Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree.' The Blessed One was made a curse for us. He went to the accursed place, and there bore our curse, that we might receive His blessing.

(6.) The cross was the place of REJECTION. (John 19:6) 'Away with Him!' was the cry; 'not this man, but Barabbas.' Those who were nailed to the cross were the outcasts of men. Christ was 'despised and rejected of men' (Isaiah 53:3).

(7.) The cross was the place of HATRED. (Matthew 27:25) 'Let Him be crucified!' 'His blood be on us!' Here was human hatred speaking out. 'His citizens hated Him!' This is the heir; come, let us kill him!' 'They gave me hatred for my love!'

(8.) The cross was the place of DEATH. (Matthew 20:18,19) It was death that was there; here we read, 'The soul that sins it shall die.' Death, the death of the cross, was our Surety's doom. The place of death became the place of life to us. 'By His stripes we are healed.'

Such were the evil things connected with the cross, which by the work done by the Son of God have all turned into good. All our evils He took upon Him that He might secure for us all the good belonging to Himself. For condemnation, He gives us pardon; for shame, honor and glory; for weakness, strength; for pain, ease and comfort; for the curse, the blessing; for rejection, acceptance; for hatred, love; for death, life everlasting. He who believes has all these things! All the evil passes to Jesus, and all the good to us, on our crediting the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the cross and the things done there.

This cross, where so many evil things meet, is the place where all GOOD THINGS are to be found. God gathered all the evil to that spot, that He might utterly make away with it, through Him who took all the evil on Himself, that He might bring out of it only good. At the cross it was consumed by fire--it was buried out of sight. The crucifixion transformed the evil into good!

(1) It is the place of PROPITIATION. (Leviticus 16:15; Romans 3:25). The altar was there for the burnt-offering. The place outside the gate for the sin-offering was there. 'He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree' (1 Peter 2:24). The sin-bearing work was completed there, when the cry went up, 'It is finished!' The expiating blood was shed on the cross. The atoning work--the work that justifies--was consummated on Golgotha. Nor can justification be separated from the cross, or transferred to resurrection. "The chastisement of our peace was on Him; and by His stripes we are healed." 'He was wounded for our transgressions He was bruised for our iniquities.' The ending of His vicarious course on earth was the giving life for life. His death, instead of ours, satisfied the law. A divine death was the substitute for a human death. All the sacrificial virtue of the transaction, and all the value of the substitute, were transferred to us. Jesus died that we might not die. He was the propitiation for our sins. He was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The cross is the place of exhausted penalty and magnified law. That which covers the sinner entirely and shields him from wrath was finished there. That covering, that propitiatory covering, whose power and virtue are unchangeable throughout all ages, and underneath which we are secure from wrath, was wrought out there. The propitiation of the cross is the substance of the glad tidings which we bring. It originated in the love of God; it contained and embodied the love of God; it gave effect to and carried out the love of God; it brought home the love of God to us as sinners.

(2) It is the MEETING-PLACE. (Exodus 29:42) It is the place where we meet with God, and God meets with us in friendship, and love, and joy. It is the place where the Father meets the prodigal and embraces him. On this spot alone, and underneath this tree alone, can God and the sinner look each other in the face, without fear on the one side or displeasure on the other. There God speaks with us, and there we speak with Him. We take the Lamb, lay our hands upon it, present it as ours, confess our sins over it, that

so all the evil in us which stood between us and God may pass from us to Him, may be carried by it to the altar, and there consumed, so as no longer to hinder the meeting.

With sin thus transformed from us to the divine victim, thus carried away and consumed by fire, we are no longer afraid to look up to God, and no longer stand in doubt of His favor towards us, and His willingness to bless us. Ten thousand times a day we sin; but as often as we sin, that sin passes immediately away from us to the sacrifice, which, once offered and accepted eighteen hundred years ago, is better than ten thousand times ten thousand sacrifices to keep up the reconciliation, to secure perpetual forgiveness, and to maintain unchanged the security of the meeting place--the place of communion and fellowship between us and God.

(3) It is the place of LOVE. God's love is there, shining in its full brightness, unhindered and undimmed. 'God so loved the world' gets its interpretation at the cross. On the one hand, we see how much man hated God, and, on the other, how much God loved man. Herein is love! It is love that has found for itself a channel whereby to flow down to us; love that has opened a well of blessing gushing forth from the foot of the cross.

(4) It is the place of ACCEPTANCE. Here we become 'accepted in the Beloved.' Here the exchange takes place between the perfect and the imperfect. Believing in the perfect One, we become 'complete in Him.' Conscious only of evil, we take refuge in Him in whom there is no evil, that we may be represented by him before God, and so treated by God as being without evil, even in the eye of His holy law. Feeling our utter lack of goodness, we flee out of ourselves to One in whom there is all goodness--who is absolutely perfect; so perfect, so infinitely perfect, that He has enough and to spare of His perfection for us. The fullness of evil that is in us is thus not only covered over by the atonement of the atoning Son of God, so as to become invisible, as if it were non-existent--but is supplanted by the fullness of all goodness, is exchanged for the perfection of another, even of the perfect One, so that God, looking at us, sees only our Representative, and deals with us according to His excellency and preciousness. What we should have received, in the shape of punishment, He gets for us; what He claims and deserves in the shape of reward, and glory, and favor, we get, as represented by Him, and treated by God as entitled to all that to which He is entitled.

Our consent to be treated on the footing of this foreign merit, this perfection of another--is what God asks of us. Such is the proposal which the gospel makes to us. This is substantially the meaning of our believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Receiving the divine testimony to the sin-bearer as true, we give our consent to be represented by Him before God. Thus we exchange places and persons with Him. He was made sin, we are made righteousness; He takes the curse, we take the blessing. We hear the cry upon the cross, "It is finished"--and we know that the work which justifies is done. All that follows--resurrection and ascension--is the result of the completed work; not the completing of it, but the fruits of its completion. 'He was delivered, because we had sinned; He was raised, because we were justified' (Romans 4:25). As it was 'by the blood of the everlasting covenant' that He was brought from the dead (Hebrews 13:20), so was it because our justification was finished on the cross that He rose from the dead. The knowledge of this brings to him who knows it forgiveness, acceptance, justification--we become 'accepted in the Beloved.'

The cross accomplished such things as the following--

(1.) The cross removed the wall of partition. (Colossians 2:14) Between Jew and Gentile it threw down the middle wall of partition. It rent the veil in twain from top to bottom. It swept away all that hindered a sinner's access, and said, 'Come boldly to the throne of grace;' 'come unto me.'

(2.) The cross made peace. (Colossians 1:20) The great quarrel between heaven and earth, between God and the sinner, it made up; for it removed the ground of that variance, and provided a righteous basis for reconciliation and peace. The peace is made. It is paid for. It is finished. It is a true and righteous peace.

(3.) The cross has secured oneness. (Ephesians 2:15-16) Thus oneness is not simply between Jew and Gentile, but between both of these and God; between them both, because between both and God. Both are reconciled in one body by the cross, the enmity being thereby slain. He was 'numbered with the transgressors' (Mark 15:28), that we might be numbered with the righteousness.

(4.) The cross has brought life. (2 Corinthians 13:4) 'He was crucified through weakness, yet He lives; we are weak in Him (as He was on the cross) but we shall live.' His weakening and emptying on the cross gave opportunity for the whole life-giving power of God to flow in. We, thus weakened and emptied (when, in believing, made one with Him), are filled with the same life-giving power. The cross, the place of weakness and of death, thus becomes to us the place and fountain of life. From a crucified Lord life flows to the dead.

(5.) The cross contains power. (1 Corinthians 1:18, 23) It is 'the power of God unto salvation.' Power for us, for the weak, for the sinful--'the power of God'--is there. Omnipotence has made its dwelling there. The cross is its storehouse or treasure house. There is the hiding of divine power. There is the arm of the Lord revealed.

(6.) The cross is the focus or center of all wisdom. (1 Corinthians 1:24) The wisdom of God is there. It is the fullest and most glorious exhibition of Jehovah's wisdom. Here is the perfection of wisdom; and all the wisdom which the sciences exhibit--(astronomy, anatomy, or the like)--cannot to be compared with this. The world thinks it foolishness. God thinks it wisdom; and every soul that has come to know its own needs and sins thinks the same.

(7.) The cross crucifies the world. (Galatians 6:14) To the believing man the world is a crucified thing. There is now enmity, not friendship--hatred, not love--between the woman's seed and the serpent's seed. The cross has produced the enmity. It has slain the world, and made it altogether unlovable. One sight of the cross strips the world of its false beauty and attractiveness!

(8.) The cross furnishes a theme for glorying. (Galatians 6:14) Paul gloried in it, counting it the only thing worth boasting of, worth admiring, worth caring for. The cross is the scorn of the world--it is the glory of the saint. It is the theme of the church's song, the theme of her praise. She glories in the cross.

(9.) The cross is the model and test of service. (Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23) It calls us to liberty, yet to service also--the service of liberty. Thus it both liberates and binds. It takes off one yoke to give another (Matthew 11:29). It gives us the perfect example and pattern of obedience and service, in Him who was obedient unto death--the death of the cross. It tests our service by giving us a cross to carry; not Christ's cross--that no man can carry--but a cross of our own. Each man must take up his own cross and follow the great Cross-bearer. Self-denial, self-surrender, self-sacrifice, are all exhibited there. There especially 'Christ did not please Himself' (Romans 15:3). "Not my will, but Yours be done"--is to be our motto, as it was His. Looking unto Jesus and His cross fits and nerves us for this. 'Follow me' is the voice of the cross.

(10.) The cross is the badge of discipleship. (Luke 14:27) The disciple is not above his Master. He is a cross-bearer--a 'crusader,' in the true sense of the word. No cross--no discipleship. He who is ashamed of the cross is ashamed of Christ. The daily life of a disciple is to be a carrying of the cross. He who does so will find few admirers and sympathizers. He will know the loneliness of his Lord and Master.

(11.) The cross is God's way of salvation. (Acts 10:39-43) Pardon is written on the cross; salvation; eternal life. The saved thief, who went from his cross to paradise, is the great illustration of the saving power of the cross. For salvation we know nothing, except for Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). The glad tidings are written on the cross--good news of a free salvation to the unsaved--salvation through Him who came to seek and save the lost--who upon the tree of death bore their guilt in His own body, and now sends out the glorious message--the tidings from the saving cross! The love of God is written on it--no, 'God is love,' is the true inscription for it. 'God is love' beams out from every part of it--and to know this to be saved!

(12.) The cross is the measure of Christ's endurance and obedience. (Philippians 2:8) He descended from the highest heaven, that He might take flesh, and in our flesh endure and obey as man. It was a vicarious endurance and obedience--all His life long. He stood in our stead from Bethlehem to Golgotha. The cross, with its agony, and shame, and death, was the extremity of His willingness to do the Father's will--to bear our burdens--to drink our bitter cup of wrath and woe. Thus the 'perfection of our substitute' not only covers our imperfection, but is legally and judicially ascribed to us by God Himself. The law lets go its hold of us--and deals with our Substitute.

(13.) The cross is the pledge and standard of divine love. (Romans 5:8) The Father's love is here--for God so loved the world that He gave His Son. Christ's love is here--the love that passes knowledge, the love which many waters could not quench, nor the floods drown; love to the uttermost; love grudging no toil, nor pain, nor weariness, nor reproach for us! If you want to know how much you have been loved, look to the cross of Jesus! That meets and answers all our doubts.

(14.) The cross is the revelation of God's character. (1 John 4:10) In the person of the God-man, 'the Word made flesh,' God's character is contained--all that is in God is there. In the life of the God-man there is the unfolding of that character as the gracious God. In the death of the God-man upon the cross there is a yet further revelation of the character of 'the God of all grace.' Here the divine perfections came out in full harmony--all that seemed discordant being here reconciled--truth and mercy meeting--righteousness and peace kissing--God just and the justifier of the ungodly--infinitely holy, yet pardoning the unholy!

In the cross God has given us His true name, and the true interpretation of that name. His whole character and actions are here announced, explained, and harmonized. Let us listen to the testimony which the cross gives respecting God's gracious nature--His loving heart--His compassionate purposes to sinners; and in accepting that testimony all blessing will flow in. Let us accept God's interpretation of His own character in the cross! Let us beware of misconstruing Him. Let us acquaint ourselves with Him.

(15.) The cross is God's lamp of light. The world is dark. The cross is light. The cross shines with the very light of heaven. He who is the God of light hung there! That which the cross makes known concerning God and His love is the light of a dark world. Only from the cross can the sinner derive his light. 'They looked and were enlightened,' for He who hangs there says, 'I am the light of the world.' And never was He more its light than when He was nailed to the cross in helplessness. From the cross that light still shines out to a dark world. Let us walk in the light of the cross. God says to us, 'Arise, shine, for your light has come!' 'The

true light now shines!' 'The day has broken, and the shadows have fled away.' The ever-burning lamp of the cross is sufficient for the darkest child of a dark world--in his darkest day and hour!

(16.) The cross is the universal magnet. (John 7:32) 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.' Here is the true center of gravitation. Here is the great attraction, or attractive force. The Christ of Bethlehem attracts; the Christ of Nazareth attracts; the Christ of Bethany and Nain attracts; the Christ of Sychar and Jericho attracts--but most of all, the Christ of Golgotha! There is that in the cross which wins the sinner's heart. The cross beckons him; it calls him; it invites him; it beseeches him; it draws him. A crucified Christ, the uplifted Son of man, is the one universal magnet! Its magnetic power is irresistible; yet it is the irresistible of love and not of law. Law compels; love attracts. Law crushes; love lifts up. And all love is in that cross--the fullness of God's forgiving love.

(17.) The cross is the universal balm and medicine. The cross is the balm of Gilead--and the crucified Christ is the Physician there. From that tree distills the healing for the sons of men. The leaves of it are for the healing of nations. Its medicinal properties have been tested by time--and have been found divine. There is no disease which is able to resist its medicinal powers--they flow out on all sides, and flow down everywhere. He who approaches, he who touches--no, he who 'looks', is healed! Eternal health is yonder. Let it flow in. The world is sick--sick unto death. Here is healing for it. Will you be made whole, O man? Go to the healing cross--go to the divine Healer and become whole!

(18.) The cross is man's estimate of sin. Not only was the deed of crucifixion a denial of sin and a defiance of God, but it was the setting up of a new standard of sin. It was man saying, We do not need a Sin-bearer; we are no such sinners as to need a Substitute; sin is not such an evil as to require expiation. This was 'the way of Cain;' it was Cain's rejection of the burnt offering, his refusal to acknowledge the evil of sin, or to own himself worthy of death. God's intention in the cross was to declare the evil of sin; man's intention was to make light of it, and to defy its consequences. For man, in making light of sin, despises God's threatenings against it, and braves the divine penalties.

(19.) The cross is God's verdict against sin, and His estimate of it. (Romans 8:3) Here is God's condemnation of sin--of the flesh--of the world. Look at that cross!--and learn how God hates sin! How He unveils the flesh with all its lusts--how He strips off the world's mask, and exposes its deformity. When disposed to make light of sin, or to indulge the flesh, or to admire the world, let us hear God's voice bidding us look to the cross, and to Him who was nailed to it by that sin, that flesh, that world.

The cross says--Oh, don't do that abominable thing which I hate! If God thought as slightly of sin as man does, would that cross have been needed? Would Christ have needed to suffer? Would any expiation have been needed, beyond a few tears or sighs? God points to Christ's cross as the proof of His hatred of sin!--and when man would treat it lightly, He bids him listen to the expiring agonies of the Sin-bearer! Or when man would excuse himself, or palliate his guilt, God answers--Did your sin crucify my Son? What do your sin deserve, though other sins might be light?

(20.) The cross is man's estimate of the Son of God. Already He had been valued at thirty pieces of silver. But here we have a still lower estimate. Here is the value man sets on His person, His life, His teaching, His blood. God asks us--"What do you think of Christ?" Our answer is the cross--"Crucify Him!" Here is man erecting the cross, the nailing the Son of God to it! Such is the heart of man! Such is man's rejection of the Christ. The cross is the standing proof and witness of man's rejection of God's beloved Son and His salvation. To this day the cross is foolishness and a stumbling block to man. He both hates and despises

it!

(21.) The cross is God's interpretation of law and its penalties. Not merely grace, but righteousness is unfolded here--the righteousness of law--of the law. God here shows us what law is, what law requires, what law can do, how law can avenge itself, how law can vindicate God, as well as how God can vindicate law. In this aspect it is truly law that planned and erected the cross; law that demanded the victim's death; law that cried "Crucify!"; law that nailed Him to the tree! In the cross we see how holy, and just, and good is that law, (Galatians 4:4). The cross had undertaken to answer law's demands for us--He was seized by it and led out to the place of execution as the worst of evildoers. If the law were not holy, and broad, and pure, why did the Son of God--the giver of the law--hang on the cross? Why was He forsaken by God there? Why did He die there?

Thus interpreted by the cross, how perfect does the law appear! God has given us many interpretations of it, but the cross is the most explicit, and clear, and complete. In the cross, God protests against all attempts to undervalue or dilute the law. Man may think it too strict. God does not; and in proof of this points to the cross and His Son there, bearing our penalty. Would the Father have laid these burdens and pains upon His Son--unless the law had absolutely required them? Would he who most honored the law have been punished by the law--unless He had been bearing sin? Let those who speak of the gospel being a modified law, by obedience to which we are saved, look at the cross. Is there any appearance of a modified law there? No! we see the law in all its undiluted perfection exhibited in the life, and in all its unmitigated strength and penalty, in the death of the Son of God! The gospel is founded on a fulfilled and unmodified law--a law unchangeable and inexorable. Our pardon and salvation are all legal and righteous, springing from law--as truly as from love. Our life comes from the substituted death of another!

Thus we see in the cross, an epitome of the Bible. The whole revelation of God is there! From the cross we hear the truth, 'where sin abounded, grace has super abounded.' All the love of God is there. The sinner's condemnation and the sinner's pardon are there. God's invitation issues forth from it, to the chief of sinners. 'Come!' 'Look unto me and be saved.' God's eternal purpose is here unfolded--'the good pleasure of His will.' The fountain opened for sin is there. The rest for the weary is there. The relief for the conscience is here. The refuge for the guilty is there. The balm of Gilead is there. Peace to the troubled is there. There God meets with man, and man meets with God--heaven and earth embrace each other. Herein is love! It is love that takes in the worse--love that took in the dying thief--love that knows not bounds--love that looks for no qualifications in him who comes, but that he needs it--love which is yearning over the lost, and stretching out its hands to the most rebellious and unholy--love which offers not merely pardon, but the perfection of the Son of God to the sinner--with all which that perfection can claim!

Yet in the cross also is the doom of the unbeliever! He who takes the cross for what God tells him who it is, is saved, and no amount of sin can hinder its virtue from flowing out to him perpetually! He who refuses or neglects the cross must not only bear his own sin, but the sin of rejecting God's salvation. That cross will be the millstone tied round his neck to send him to the lowest hell! When He who hung upon the cross ascends the throne, where will the rejecter of the cross appear, and what will he say for his rejection?

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