

The Work of the Cross

by Richard Langworthy

Richard Langworthy emphasizes the centrality of the cross in Christian theology and its implications for faith, family, and finances.

Duration: 50:46

Scripture: Matthew 11:28-30, Mark 8:34, Philippians 1:19-21

Topics: "Cross of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of a crucified life in the gospel. They argue that removing Christ from the gospel and putting man at the center is a distortion of the true message. The speaker discusses the concepts of repentance, giving one's life, and surrender as integral parts of the gospel that lead to freedom and faith. They also touch on the interconnectedness of faith, family, and finances, with the cross at the center. The speaker aims to bring clarity and understanding to the significance of the work of the cross in the lives of believers.

Transcript

I want to share with you today on the centrality or the significance of the work, what we call the work of the cross, so basically the gospel of Jesus Christ in our lives. There's a few things that have prompted me to do this, and what I'm going to do this morning is very simplistic, I'm not going into great detail, but at the same time I'm trusting that I will help a lot of us see what we believe in a whole different light. When we talk about the work of the cross, it's a term that we use.

There's no magic form in a wooden cross, you understand that? Sometimes you see pictures of these Catholic dudes holding up their cross and scorching a demon. It doesn't work like that. The work of the cross is simply a term that we use, because it's easy to use, to signify our identification with Jesus in his death.

So to say to someone continuously, we need to identify with Christ in his death to surrender our lives, it becomes a bit of a mouthful. So we talk about the power of the cross. The cross simply means that we believe that Jesus died for us, he rose again, phase one.

Phase two is that we need to, as Christians, identify ourselves with him in his death upon the cross. Now, that is fundamental for me, for all Christian theology. I'm going to, Mr. Ben, you're going to have to come and help me here.

I want you to take this little cross, and I want you to carefully clip it somewhere in the middle there, in the middle of the wheel. There you are, there's your paper clip. Have fun.

Don't watch him, watch me. Okay? No, no, middle, Ben. Yeah, you put it to one side, like this.

Okay? Don't tell anyone you're a teacher at Morningstar, because they will, okay? Clip it like that, but I want it in the center. However you do it. No, this is fine.

So long as it doesn't fall off. There we go. All right, now you've got a few more to clip on the edge, but I'll call you when I need you.

All right, this is going to be an exciting morning. The reason I've chosen a bicycle wheel, and the reason I've chosen to put that little emblem of the cross in the middle, is for this very significant thing. The strength of this wheel is based on the fact that everything is joined to the hub.

All the spokes are connected to the hub, and the strength of it is the tension that lies between the hub and the room on the outside. And in our Christian theology, the death of Jesus Christ and his resurrection is the hub and the center of everything we believe. If you take this, and we call it the work of the cross, the power of the cross, the death of Christ, you take this out of our Christian theology, and you ignore it, all the doctrines that we have no longer make sense.

But the modern theology has removed this. And so, if I were to put things on the end of this little object, on the end of this wheel, and I were to spin it, and they weren't attached, they were just resting there, they would all fly off. And so does our theology.

Modern theology has removed the centrality of a crucified life out of it, with the result that we have little Christian doctrines floating all over the place. We run around and we follow them without understanding that they don't make sense. And therefore, it tends to produce a lot of confusion.

I had someone come and see me just the other day, and asked me this question. Very simple question, but it went like this. And that is, are we bound by the words that we speak? And so, if you go to write an exam, and you're not too sure, and you say to your friend, I'm not sure, maybe if I'm going to pass the exam.

Does that mean you're going to fail? But you didn't speak. The only thing you can speak when writing an exam is you've got to say, I'm going to pass, I'm going to pass, I'm going to pass. If you don't say that, you will fail, because you are bound by the words that you speak.

Because death and life are bound in the power of the tongue, as Scripture says. Now, there's three quarters of the preachers on TV out there are talking that garbage. You understand that? And it's only what you can call it.

It's rubbish. And how many Christians are walking around, trying to believe that we control our future by the words in our mouth? And I'm going to look at some of these things. But we watch all these TV evangelists, and like little fish, we swallow all their nonsense.

We just swallow it. Because he's on TV, he must be a man of God. He doesn't mean that.

He's probably a cowboy. And he's looking for money. And he's preaching something that was found on the moon.

But he's not preaching fundamental, basic Christianity. I'm a bit skeptical about most of our TV evangelists today. And what worries me is the majority of Christians put their TV on, and we watch all these channels, and we swallow the nonsense.

And then we wonder why we fall apart. We wonder why our lives are going to struggle. My endeavor this morning is simply to put this work of the cross back in the middle of our theology, and then to touch on a few things.

Because you know, when we share with you, we will take different topics. But sometimes in your mind, you don't relate them. And very simply, just put some things on the peripheral here, and show you how everything is related back to a crucified life.

If you take that out of the equation, you don't have a true gospel. And then you listen to TV, you're going to realize what they have done. They've taken Christ out of the gospel, and put man in the center of the gospel.

And that's where we are going. All right. So we're going to have a look at a few things.

First of all, this is turning me to Mark chapter 8. Very simple one. We know the verse, and we're going to read from verse 34 here. And when he called the people to himself, with his disciples also, he said to them, whoever desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's sake will save it, or find it. Jesus was very serious when he said that. And he meant it.

And basically, it's one of the very basics of our Christian faith. Contrary to everything we hear preached today, the foundation of fundamental basic Christianity is that not only did he die for us, but that after I get saved, getting saved is one thing. Coming to the point where I have given my life to Christ, he's forgiven me, he's become my Lord and Savior, is phase one.

Phase two is discipleship. Phase two is what do I do with the new life that he's given me. Phase two is very simple.

Either I'm going to live for myself, or I am going to do for him what he did for me. He gave his life for me, he turns around here, and he lays down a very simple requirement. He says if you want to follow me, you've got to do something that the natural man is not comfortable with.

You've got to be willing to give me your life without hesitation, wholeheartedly, total surrender. You give me your life, you die to your rights, and in exchange, I will give you the fullness of the Spirit. I will give you the fullness of my life.

But you cannot have the fullness of my life as long as you hold on to your rights. Now, a lot of what we hear today reverses that. So Ben, just come up here.

We're going to take a look at a few things now, and I'm going to put up a couple of subjects. Subject number one, I want you to put it on the top there, somehow, is the topic of faith. And I've chosen this as one because, for me, it is one of the key and most important issues of our Christian faith, because it affects everything else that floats around.

Well done, Ben. Floats around on the outside of this. If we get this one, you can sit down, I'll give you a shot in a minute.

If we get this one wrong, we're going to get many of the other ones wrong as well. Why is faith so important? Paul, in his definition of faith, looks to Abraham, and he says, and Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Abraham didn't take God outside.

He didn't meet God in the book of Genesis, meet the angel, and say, let's go for a stroll. Now, God, you see up there in the sky, all those stars? And God said, yes. And Abraham said, well, God, I don't have a kid, but I have a dream.

One day, I'm going to have lots of kids. And so, God, I have faith that you're going to give me lots of kids. And God said, amen, Abraham.

Good idea. Good idea. I'm going to give you some kids because you have faith.

Does the Bible read like that? Then why do we act like that? Because that's how our modern TV evangelists preach it. Faith is now. Now is faith.

Dr. Fred Brass. I have faith in my faith. He actually said that.

He doesn't need Jesus. He said, I have faith in my faith. I don't need God.

That's heresy. Okay? So what do we do? No, God took Abraham outside and said, Abraham, come here, old man. You are 70 years old.

You're beyond having kids. I want to show you something. Do you see all these stars? He said, yeah.

He said, Abraham, in spite of all that you are facing, I'm calling those things that are not as though they are. You are going to have a child. It was crazy.

Abraham looked at God and said, I believe. Whatever you have put in front of me, whatever you ask of me, I believe you are God. My life is not my own.

I believe what you say. And God said, there's a righteous man because he trusts me with his life. You see, there are two kinds of faith.

The first one comes when I'm, I'm having a little problem with that I talk about, which comes from Hebrews, Hebrewsians, without faith, is it possible to please God? And it's turned around. And so what we do is we take the cross out of here and we put man in there. Instead of this, we're going to have man.

And on the first idea of faith, it goes like this. If you have faith, then God will do something for you. Have you heard that preached? All the time.

Amen. So, so whose responsibility is it to have faith? Does God move because he's sovereign or does God move because our faith has moved God? Now there's a place, please understand me, and I'm dealing with this in a, in a simplistic form this morning, that we actually do have a sense of faith and we can trust God for things. And he does respond to that.

There's a relationship we have. I'm not knocking that, but it goes to an extreme. And the extreme is this, that if you want a Mercedes Benz and you have faith, God will give it to you.

If you want a new house, just put some money in the offering. And if you have faith, God will do it. So it is your faith that moves the hand of God.

So the whole thing is at the end of the day, it's very subtle and it sounds so good. But what we've done is we've taken this out and we put man at the center and we've made God man's servant. So people go to church to get blessed.

They go to church for God to do something for them. They go to church because we have a big enough dream and a big enough vision. Then Jesus will come along and do what we want.

God becomes our servant. It's called humanism. It's putting man at the center, reversing the roles and making God subservient to man.

Very subtle. We use a lot of scriptures. You don't notice that at first.

It sounds so good. It appeals to our flesh, but it's a reversal of true faith. True faith is a little different.

True faith puts Christ at the center. True faith comes along and says, if you want to have true faith, you first come to the cross and lose your life. You won't understand true faith while you live for yourself.

You won't. You won't understand true faith while you're serving God with conditions. You won't because your flesh is wildly alive.

True faith says, deny yourself, pick up your cross, come and follow me. And then God comes along and he starts to speak to us. And he asks us of things.

He challenges us with things. His word will come to our lives. And our faith is so that we can respond in obedience to what the Lord has put in front of us.

It's faith in him that I may please him and serve him for what he wants of my life. Are we on the same page? Okay. That's scary stuff.

That doesn't fit in to what we hear coming off the TV screens today. I can promise you it doesn't fit in. It fitted in in the days of Wesley and the days of Wigglesworth and the days of the old fashioned preachers.

It fitted in then. They understood that. That was how the early church and the revivalists lived.

But the modern church has reversed it completely. And so we spend a lot of time watching these things on TV, coming out with the idea that if I want to do something, I have to have enough faith. It's like a spiritual muscle.

I get up a bed and I work it up. I pump it up until it's strong enough that I can get God to do something for me. And invariably we come to the conclusion that God doesn't do something for us.

Have you noticed that? He doesn't because he doesn't play games. But what happens is when I come to the cross and I'm willing to lose my life, the Holy Spirit comes along and he starts to put a challenge in front of me. He starts to show me his plan for my life.

He starts to challenge me what he would like of me. And when I see that, I have to come to the point of surrender and I have to have a faith in him that will allow me to come to find his grace to do what he set in front of me to do. It's what Samuel said to Saul.

Obedience is better than sacrifice. Philippians chapter one. Let's have a look at the Apostle Paul.

The cross is the center of our lives. Right from verse 19. He says, For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Now he's in jail when he wrote this. According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed. But with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. That's a man who's come to terms with the fact that he no longer owns his life, that Christ is the center, that Christ is the essence, that Christ has a preeminence, and that he's brought himself and laid his life down in complete surrender to Christ that he may live his life to please the Lord beyond anything else. Once that is clear, faith comes into focus.

Amen. Are we on the same page? You're not so sure. All right, Ben.

Number two. Oops, I had one here. Here you are.

Stick it up. Next one you want to look at is called family. You won't spend a lot of time on these, but I want to touch on it.

Family. Christian bookstores are full of books on the family. You can go and buy hundreds of them.

How to love your wife, how to buy her roses. They get more serious. How the psychology of a Christian family, the psychology of raising kids, the psychology of, you know, how to have peace in your home, the psychology of how to do this, how to do that, the principle of this, the principle of that, and it's all good common sense stuff.

It's only one problem. It doesn't work long term. What we have done is we've taken human secular wisdom and we have taken one very simple thing.

We've taken this out and we put human secular wisdom in there, added a few scriptures and called it family counseling. And a lot of it's good. You can look at it.

It'll work. You can apply it. I'm not saying it's not necessarily good, but I would say what I am saying is we're building on the wrong foundation.

But what happens when we put this back in the center? In all the books that you read, you're going to not find Ephesians 5, 25 written in the same way as I'm going to tell you right now. Husbands, tolerate your wives. Be kind to them.

Have a bartering arrangement when you have something go wrong so that you can, you know how to, you know your wife's weakness, you know her strengths, you know how when things aren't going too good, how to walk on, how to walk around her. She knows how to walk around you. And so you come to this amicable agreement.

What a, what a, what a, what a, what a, what a, what a rubbish. Husbands, love your wives. And here's the hard part.

Because they are beautiful creatures. Hey man, buy her makeup, give her pretty dresses. Is that what it says? No? Do that anyway.

Husbands, love your wives. As Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. You're not going to find that in any book on marriage.

Very few. There's only one way we're going to build a marriage. When the husband and the wife lose the right to their own lives.

And especially the man. It starts with the man. It doesn't say wives, love your husbands as Christ loved the church.

It says wives, submit to your husbands. Husbands, love your wives as the way Christ loved the church. The sad thing about that verse is that Jesus actually went and died.

He didn't come to earth and gather around a bunch of disciples and say, I want you to call you my church. I want you to love you very much. Special people, by the way, whoopee, I'm off.

Resurrection, gone. It wasn't empty words. He came, he gave his life and he laid his life down.

And the end of the day, only after giving, giving his life to that extent was the church born or possible. The world has reversed the role of the man to an egocentric Prince King in his own house. And many Christians have the same problem.

Many fathers are still unapproachable. Here we go. When we put the cross back, boom, back in there, the man has got to face his state.

Only when a man loses his life, can he give his life for his family as a servant? Can he give his life for his family as a priest in the home? And only when he does that, will he have faith to cry to God for his weaknesses so that he can love his wife as Christ loved the church. Yes. You take this out.

What do you have? Secular wisdom, good wisdom, but not necessarily going to produce the miracle of a Christian home. You put the cross back identification with the cross back. We have a painful experience.

We are going to have to lose our lives. That makes sense spiritually, but it's not good preaching. It's not good preaching.

Joel Osteen last Sunday said a statement. He said he took a scripture and he said, I think it was last Sunday or very recently. He said this, he said, my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Therefore we preach a light gospel. He said that Jesus does not want us to have a heavy gospel. He wants us to have a light gospel.

We mustn't place a burden on people. No one wants to place a burden on people, but words like repentance and words like giving your life and words like surrender are not a light gospel. They are going to pierce the heart of a man and bring him to the point of, of seeing his state so that he comes to the point where he will surrender all that Christ may be all in all.

That's the yoke that Jesus spoke about. The yoke of the cross. And so when you come to that yoke, you'll find freedom.

When you come to that yoke, I will set you free, lose your life. You will have faith, lose your life, and you'll know what the power it is to build a family in the spirit. All right, let's move along.

Touch on another one. But Levi touched on just now, Mr. Ben looking very shook, shook this morning, huh? He looks good in his tie, doesn't he? Let me just share a secret with you. I hate ties.

All right, it'll stand. There we go. Finances, faith, family, finances, and in the middle, the cross.

Isn't it annoying? Why can't we take it out? You see, the idea behind giving is very simple. I give God some money, take my dollar out of my pocket. I put it in the basket.

I give him 10%, whatever it is, I've given God some money. I have, I have, it's what I've given the Lord. It's, it's something that's, I've blessed God with, and what happens to the rest of the money? It belongs to me.

Yippee! That's right. I've given God his tax. I've paid him what is due.

The rest is mine. Great idea. Wrong.

It's a great idea in religion. It's a great idea if you want to live under the old covenant. It's a great idea if you want to live just as a religious person, but it's not the gospel.

In the gospel, God is not interested in your cash. He's interested in your life. So instead of buying God and bribing God and trying to get favors because I've given God money, which you're going to hear men talk if you want.

There was a, a, a, a preacher in Malawi and he stood up and he, he got the local apostle to stand on the platform and he told the people, this man of God has needs. It's your responsibility to meet his needs. When his needs are met, God will meet your needs.

Now where are you going to go blind looking in the Bible for that verse? It's not there. But how can we manipulate people with a lie like that? Since whenever other people is it, is it responsibility of the poor to take care of the man of God who, by the way, in that particular case, wanted a new four by four. And because he didn't get enough money from that offering, he then took the building fund money from the church to make sure he got his four by four.

He stole from them. I know the whole history of what goes on there, but he's a man of God. And my question was, if you as a man of God, haven't got faith for your needs, why must you ask the people to meet your need? Why can't you be an example? Why can't you give to the church? You see, we have it reversed.

But the story is this, if you bring money and you give something to God, then you have paid a debt. God will give something back to you. Now I understand that God is no man's debtor.

Please understand that. That's clear. But we're not talking about paying God something so that because I've given somebody in the offering that he is going to pay my grocery account.

That's not scriptural. What is scriptural is this, you bring him your life. When you bring him your life and you're willing to lay your life down, you actually lose the right to your finances.

You take home what you've got and you bring it before the Lord and say, God, this is not mine. It belongs to you because I don't belong to me. I belong to you.

Now I'm talking scary stuff now. Scary stuff. And you can't understand that unless you have.

This kind of faith only comes from a crucified life. This kind of faith only comes from a man or woman who have become to Christ and know him as someone who is the center of their lives. This kind of faith, this kind of talk you won't have a lot of people say to you.

And so you come before the Lord and say, here is my life. Here are my finances. What do I do? You say, I can't do that because if God asked me to give my money away, then I will starve.

God will never let you starve. Am I clear? It's not that. It's a case of Lord, here is my finances.

And God says, I want you to take something and bless that sister over there. And what about helping a brother over there? And what about your time? And what about other things of your life? It's not just about money, but finances are an integral part of our lives. They measure something in our lives, don't they? But what God wants is a freedom where he is the source of our lives.

I don't see myself as my source. I see him as my source. And I'm willing to walk in obedience to what he asks of me.

It's only on the other side of the cross that what I am saying will make sense. As long as we hold our lives, we will never do that. As long as we hold our lives, finances become a contract with God.

Finances are something we don't trust God with. Finances are something that we just give God a little bit because we don't know where we stand. It's only when we lose our lives that we start to experience this kind of faith, that we start to understand, whoops, on this side, we start to understand the significance of finances with a surrendered life.

All right, let's continue. I'm not going to go and get all these details. I'm just highlighting some of these things.

We've got two more. Next one, Mr. Ben, the church. Ben sticks it up there.

We got to talk about the church. And again, we got to put the cross in the center. We have grown up with a history, grandfathers, grandmothers, grandparents, whatever it is, who grew up in the Anglican church, the Catholic church, this kind of institution, where you became a member of the church when you got baptized as an infant.

You were christened as an infant, and that entitled you to become a part of the church. And so without realizing it, these institutions, what they have done is they've created in many of our minds the idea that a church is a place I go to. It's a building.

It's something I join. It's something I'm part of. It's an institution.

But the church is not an institution. The church is the body of Christ. The church is made up only, the church is not on Sunday.

This is not the church. This is simply us meeting together. Church means that wherever we are on Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday, the church is still there.

You see, the church has got nothing to do with you coming here on a Sunday in the sense that it's good to be together, and we call ourselves the church because we can physically see each other. But the true idea of the church is that it's not a place I go, it's not a building I attend. The church is that we are separated unto Christ as His body, and our lives are there for His service.

I live for Him, and because of that, I work together with those who live for Him. We are called out for His purposes. We are called out to glorify His name.

We are separated unto the Lord, a people taken apart and set apart for the purposes of God. That's the church. It's great to come together and have fellowship on a Sunday.

We need to, it gives us some form of identification and that kind of stuff. But if in your mind, this is church, and you leave church to go home, problem. But we always have that when this is missing here, and we have the idea of, I go to church to get blessed.

I go to church because of what's going to happen. And we take this out and we put building or institution in there. Now, just some little examples.

Please understand our hearts in this, but 80% of my work as an elder in this church, and along with Levi, 80% of our time is given to doing what? Motivating Christians to be Christians. Come on. Most of my life, what do I do? I'm sitting behind Christians, encouraging them to do some small work of service for God, because it's not natural for them to do.

That was a rough blow, wasn't it? Amen, brother. Come on, you come to my house, say amen. But it's true.

If anything the church is involved in as a community, what we're doing, we have to rustle up the troops to get anyone to participate. Now, that just took my popularity ratings and plummet them below freezing, but that's not a problem. Because if we understood this, we understand that there's a priority for our lives.

We want to give our lives to what God considers important. But if it's not a priority, and we have the sharks playing the blues this afternoon, then we're not going to come and help clean. Forget about the sharks.

Highlanders are playing somebody else. We're not going to come and clean. Because church is something I do on the sideline.

It's something I give my spare time to. It's not my life. Now, we can't make it your life.

No one's going to control you. But here's a key. When this is in place, I see church as a privilege.

I see it with different eyes. You will not understand me while you hold your life. You won't.

You'll think, who's that old guy out there beating his gums trying to manipulate me? No one is trying to manipulate you. But the reason that I live for the church, I do not do this job because I get paid for it. That's right.

We actually do extra things to help support ourselves so we can be here. I'm here because I love Jesus. And I love you.

And the church is the beginning and the end of my life. It's the only reason that I stand here and take the abuse that we take and the pressure we take and all the rest. There are a hundred other things I would prefer to do.

One of it being aircraft engineer because they don't talk back. It's nice talking, making little airplane engines, fantastic stuff. There comes a point where we're going to understand the church for what it should be.

It's the body of Christ. It's the life of Christ that we have a privilege on this earth to serve him, to take the gospel to men who do not know him. The church must be our lives.

But it's only possible when the cross has become central to me and I'm willing to lose my life because only in the loss of my life does the light go on and revelation come to I see things in the spirit and not in the natural. Last one. I'm going to quit giving you guys a hard time this morning.

This one here I got. I chose this one. There's others we can talk about, but this one I want to touch on.

Religion. Put it right at the bottom. It's a bad one.

Religion, a term we often use. Religion for me can fall into different categories, but religion for me is simple. It's people who believe in God, who will tell you in many cases they love the Lord with all their hearts, they love the Lord, but they're not prepared to go all the way.

But they are prepared to incorporate the things of the world as part of their faith. There's no separation from the world unto Christ. They want to serve the Lord, but they want to keep, and they do, keep in touch and bring things from the world into their Christian faith in every different form all over the world.

It's like that, okay? They bring it into their Christian faith. Now I want to read you a little scripture here. When Jesus spoke to these Pharisees, Matthew chapter 15, it says, and then from verse 1, then the scribes and the Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus saying, why do your disciples transgress the traditions of the elders? These were Jews, but they'd added things to the law.

For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread. And he answered and said to them, and why do you also transgress the commandment of God? Because of your tradition. Don't ask, argue with Jesus, you're going to get a slap, that's for sure.

For God commanded saying, honor your father and your mother. And he accursed his father and mother, let him be put to death. But you say, whoever says to his father and mother, whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God.

Arrogant little kid. Then you need not honor his father or mother. Thus you have made the commandments of God of no effect by your tradition.

Hypocrites, while the Isaiah prophesy about you saying, this is not a light gospel, by the way, he's talking to them straight on. These people draw near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching us doctrines, the commandments of men.

And when he called the multitudes to himself, he said to them, hear and understand. It's not what goes into the mouth that defiles a man, but what comes out is what defiles him. His disciples came and said to him, do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard the saying? And he answered and said, every plant which my heavenly father has not planted, we root it up, let them alone.

They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads a blind, both will fall into the ditch. Religion is simply man trying to serve God on man's terms and incorporating man's ways and man's ideas and takes out the cross as a centrality of his theology.

This disappears in religion. It goes on the back wall. It is something we talk about.

It's an emblem, but it's not a crucified life. When I give my life to Christ, Paul said, I'm crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live and live by faith in the son of God.

When I'm willing to come to that place, this little thing called faith is going to click in. I'm going to see things in a different way. I'm going to know a freedom.

I'm going to know a freedom from the world, a freedom from fear, a freedom from oppression. I'm going to start to touch the real life of the spirit, but it first comes when I'm willing to lose my life. Outside of that, I don't have freedom.

Now I'm going to touch just on a couple of things this morning very briefly. I'm not dealing with any one of these subjects in any depth. I'm simply throwing a stone across a lake so that you get some idea of the dimension of what we're talking about.

I have mentioned this before, but in good old English tradition, if a black cat walks across your road when you're walking down a pavement and a black cat crosses your path, what does that mean? Bad luck. I don't think it's in the belly tradition, is it? No. You don't care if a black cat crosses your path, do you? No, no.

But an Englishman, ah, black cat, that means bad luck is coming. Now, so, and if he hasn't got any white spots on him, he's a pure black cat, more bad luck. So where ever did a little pussy carry bad luck with him? Please explain that to me.

But you will see a bunch of Christians from who are just traditional people, see a cat, they go up there, oh, I saw a black cat today, bad luck is coming. Come on. Friday the 13th.

Don't ever fly an airplane on Friday the 13th. It's bad for you. You can book a ticket, by the way, get them cheap on Friday the 13th.

If you're a Scot and you spill some salt on the table, what do you do? You must make sure you pick it up with your right hand and throw some over your left shoulder, otherwise bad luck comes. Can you see how stupid it is? Traditions of men. How many Christians live like that? People go to church, but that is still a part of their lives.

Okay, we had a little incident yesterday in Lobangula. An owl was found in the church. Not only was it found, it was attacked and mutilated by Christians, because it brings bad luck.

Are we savages? Are we bound by an owl? Why do we kill a bird? Do you understand what I'm saying? You laugh at the black cat and the salt on Friday the 13th and you're going to kill an owl. What about a

chameleon? If an owl flew in here, what would you think? Nasty comments, huh? Why am I saying this? Guys, we've got to grow up. You understand something? We've got to come to the place where we recognize that an owl is a little bird that God made.

Finished. End of story. There's no Tokolos attacks to an owl.

And if you think there was one, then afterwards you come to the front and get born again. Finished. Because you are still bound by fear and superstition and tradition.

Now, for religious people, Jesus has no power. Religious people, Jesus is something they just believe in. He died over there.

But what happens out there is more powerful than any work of the cross. But the moment Christ comes as a central focus of our lives, what happens to these funny things? They lose significance, don't they? Do you understand? We start to see things as God sees them. We're not bound by some bird, some black cat, some piece of salt, some number on a calendar.

We're not bound by these things. Why? Because they belong to the realm of fear and demons and make-believe and all the little rest, along with English fairies and goblins and gnomes and all that kind of nonsense. Tradition has no part in our Christian faith, guys.

Be very careful with tradition, because it's dead. And what it does is it robs you of your freedom in Christ. It robs you of your freedom in Christ.

But the moment I come to Christ, I realize that He has a preeminence, He is the beginning, He is the end, and He is the reason that I live. And tradition disappears out the window. I see it for what it is, games that men play to manipulate.

It's all it is, little things that come out of ancestral spirit worship, little demons running around keeping us in bondage. Guys, we're free of that. We are far, far free of that.

We're above that, but we're not above it if our lives are not surrendered to Christ. The moment my life is surrendered to Christ, what happens is true faith clicks in. When there's true faith, I can see these things in the Spirit, and I begin to understand them for what they really are.

Do I make sense? You come back to church next week? I want to help you. There's a lot you watch on TV, a lot goes on out there. What they do is they take this out.

This disappears. Goodbye. And now we have meetings and we discuss finances and faith and family.

We discuss all these things. Without the cross, it doesn't make sense. It's just little objects flying around in the space, each one a little doctrinal by itself, no significance.

You put the cross back into the center, right back there. That's our point of identification. The rest of our Christian theology starts to make sense.

It starts to stick together. Each one's interlinked. It becomes something in the Spirit.

It becomes a life in which God is in control. It becomes a life in which we're drawing from His grace day by day. We become a people who are free to serve Him.

We begin to understand what the Apostle Paul, when he said, death works in me, but life works in you. We begin to understand many, many things that are right now just phrases. It's called the true Christian life.

And my whole purpose this morning was not to end up with an altar call or anything like that. It was to put things that are floating around there into focus so that we come to the point where we begin to understand that serving the Lord is not a game. It's the beginning and the end of everything that we have.

And we take all these things and we realize how they're interlinked, put them together. We say, Lord, there's been a time when I have not been afraid of giving you my life. The cross, we call it the cross.

Our work, our life identified with Jesus in His death. Paul says, I preach Christ and Him crucified. That's the foundation of all Christian theology.

It's the foundation of the church. He must have preeminence in everything that we do. All right, shall we pray?

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