

The All-Inclusiveness of the Cross

by T. Austin-Sparks

The cross is the central reality of the gospel, and it is the inclusive crucifixion made by one, which means universal restoration and universal disqualification.

Duration: 1:08:27

Scripture: Romans 5:8, Romans 6:23, Romans 8:1, Romans 8:28, Romans 8:31, Romans 8:33-34

Topics: "The Cross"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the significance of the cross in relation to the human experience and God's universe. The sermon emphasizes the importance of accepting the reality of the cross and its impact on our lives. The preacher also highlights the concept of faith and its role in strengthening our connection with Jesus Christ. The sermon concludes by reminding listeners that even in times of difficulty and adversity, God is present and working in their lives.

Transcript

Can we have a moment or two of silence, lifting our hearts to the Lord, and each one of us making it a day that is meant to share, that we not only hear the words, but the voice of the Lord. Lord, it is quite evident from thine own words and acts that it is something supernatural begun in us, in man, in order to hear the voice of the Lord. We may hear the words and miss the voice.

We ask that the Holy Spirit will quicken and open these inner areas that we may be able to go from this place quietly tonight, saying, the Lord has spoken, and he has spoken to me. In thy great grace and mercy, let it be so. We ask in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Those of you who were here last evening will recall that I intimated that my own garden of message for this time relates to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And I reminded you that in every book of the New Testament, the cross is either explicit or implicit. That is, it is either definitely stated in one, or it is implied, what is being said down.

That in the whole gospel, the cross is historical and acts and events at a certain time, in a certain place, in certain circumstances, in history. In the book of Acts, the historic cross became the theme of the gospel for the whole world, and the apostles, the great ones, were the heralds of the cross. They were for preaching Jesus Christ and his crucifixion.

We, priests, Christ's crucifixion is the inclusive crucifixion made by one. And then we observe that after the Acts, every following book has some particular aspect and application of the cross to a particular situation. And it is there that we take up the matter this evening as we come to the letter to Rome.

The letter to Rome and the cross as found therein. Let me say at once it is not my thought or intention to embark upon an exposition or commentary upon the letter in particular, but only to focus everything upon the central reality of the cross and to look the place and the meaning of the cross as conveyed to us in the burial letter. The letter to Rome has a superior meaning under the sovereignty of God.

Though by no means the cross of the apostolic writings of the times, the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit has been to it that this letter is given the first place in the arrangement and that is of superior significance. Because it is in this letter that we have set forth in solemn and precise and exact fit in all its part the whole basis of salvation. In a sublime and profound way, yet a very efficiently pure way, this letter gives us the basis of salvation upon which the whole of the subsequent superstructure rests.

This, in a way, is the genesis of the New Testament. Like the book by that name, the beginning of the Old Testament contains as the many-fold beginning of everything, the beginning of this and the beginning of that, a floor of beginnings of everything which will subsequently be developed in its greater fullness. The letter to Rome stands in the same position as contains the foundational things which will be developed in all the subsequent letters.

I must not be too detailed and take my time in all this, profitable as it might be, but I must, I will just make this suggestion to you if you are wanting a profitable line of study of the New Testament. Just try or work to see in this letter to the Romanes the things which you find in all the subsequent letters. And you will find that they are here, in one form, in a beginning form.

And you will be able to trace the subsequent letters back here to these points of departure. And when you get to the final book of the New Testament, the book of the Revelation, you will have the whole Bible summed up from Genesis to Revelation. So, said by those, we must get to our particular notice.

Now, this letter, the cross in the letter to Rome. This letter that I have intimated is comprehensive and all-encompassing. Not to say, to take the time, but just to intimate to you that you are just to look into the first eight chapters of this letter and not the place of the cross.

You will find that it is not implicit here. Right there it is stated definitely and particularly the cross has its place in those eight letters. You know that 9, 10, and 11 are the parentheses on the history of this Bible.

And when you are about to ask about parentheses, the chapter 12 comes back to take up the whole thing. I beseech you, therefore, therefore, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies, our living sacrifice, and that of the cross, to complete the whole. This one is a comprehensive letter in every sense.

It encompasses all dimensions. It will take you back to the before times eternal, outside of time, before time came in. You will find yourself there at one point in this letter.

It will bring you into the course of time, and then it will take you on beyond time into the eternity yet to do. That's the limit. It will reach out its arms and grace all nations, all nations.

That is, the whole human race, in all its departments, which we perceive for these days. That is the breadth of it. It will take you up into the future mundane, the future earthly, the cosmic and heavenly realm,

that is, the high balance.

And it will take you down into the ultimate depth of sin's ultimate consciousness. That's the depth of it. The length and the breadth and the height and the depth of consciousness in this letter.

And right at the same statement of this universe, time and eternity of heaven and of hell, our life and of death, that's chapters one to five, lead us to the cross and sacrifice. Sacrifice is a kind of, parentheses, a gate, and then sacrifice, liberation. The cross is here, right at the heart of humanity, in God's universe and in ours.

It will take that up. I'm coming to something very basic. So, it goes for that.

There is, in this letter, as those of you who are familiar with it may quite well, a pursuit to the very last ditch and post, as we say, a pursuit of the Spirit of God through the hands of the Apostle Elijah. He sent out anyone in this whole creation who can come right with God, who has right coming with God. That search is pursued, first of all, through the whole history of Israel, right up to the time that the apostle wrote this letter and particularly wrote chapter seven, that very difficult and controversial chapter.

The whole history of Israel as the nation of religious genius beyond all other nations. But all that we know about the economy of Israel and all society, altar, streets, tabernacles, temples, people over here, the pursuit is set in motion through all Israel and all Israel's history. The eyes, the loose eyes of the Spirit of God between this nothing is seeking to find a life if there be one life.

In this Adamic race there is a life of full pending with God. It's a very powerful spirit. Even more careful than that made by the prophets of God.

Remember? In the reign of King Ahab that wickedness of old came to this world, prophet Elijah called for a bright upon the earth. Then the giant came into his house. And the Lord himself had cut Elijah away somewhere.

You know, when the Lord hides anything you will not find it. And the Lord had hidden Elijah away and he was becoming so furious that Ahab said to the prophet Abed-Ahar you and I will go throughout the whole of Israel looking for that man Elijah. You go that way, I'll go this way.

And they did. And Abed-Ahar did his job wherever he did. It was always he did, but it was always her.

And Abed-Ahar went his way, a different type of man. And they came back and met and there was and there of course was no Elijah. No Elijah.

And it says that Abed-Ahar said to the king that Elijah was not. I'm not in that story to make sure Elijah really appeared, I'm a priest. But the point is by way of those statements they cut and harrowed the whole kingdom to find that man and they could not find him.

And to say to those that we should not doubt that that is a mere figment of being compared with the first captains, the Lord of the worlds. The quest for the Spirit of God for one man to stand in rightness of character and nature before God. And whom God could take if he was a man in the old creation of God.

He could right the job. I'm leaving that later on when we take you out to a cold righteous man that even fell. The righteous that was not in themselves.

Not in themselves to say well this cold righteousness is a righteousness which is a sin. But even so, no man to stand before God in all his wild history that is God. First, shallow, complete, the verdict, true and final.

Come to that. Then having heard through all his wild history and all his wild multitude with this gain the right the Holy Spirit comes to the Gentile world and the church is set there. The whole of the nations outside of this world the same verdict.

And when this has been done God by his Spirit through this brought down the verdict. There is none righteous no, not one. No, not one.

Oh yes, for a moment while we take up this man who is writing this.

With his hand and his spirit came this test that and that is this man is representative of the most religious of all nations and peoples and he is representative of the very best the very best spirit born out and born into the world the Jewish and the Gentile a Jew a Hebrew of Hebrew a free man of the rest of the world a Roman citizen free born to go into any part of the world under the cap of Roman eyes in world world dominion of world and have all the rights of a Roman citizen as heavy free as a universal man on the Hebrew of Jewish side here what he is going to say about himself that his death his heritage his upbringing his training and his triumph in that world and the life after the age of twelve deep in the north the gate lord he said he said at the age of twelve the ceremony of

the adoption of a son of the lord that part he has and now he graduates into the next stage of things a son of the lord the age of twelve in the higher classes of Jewish education he sits under the chief rabbi here in England the most native of all Jewish rabbis he sits at their feet in the age of twelve until he comes to the age of maturity and graduates from the Jewish university as a rabbi and a member of the Jewish community and he will qualify to the very last point in the Jewish eternity not only until that month but in time so far that could make most particularly absorbing everything of the lord according to the standard in a way of his name he is the representative of the best of the other race he has stepped back for a moment into that old position that he got very enthroned in

in pursuit of the lord he says exactly the truth about his inner life what he did outwardly was one thing but what he has come to discover of himself now through the cross is quite another thing and at the end of chapter seven he comes to tell us it's all personal programs in that matter all personal programs I oh man that I a great soul a great Jewish a great powerful oh man that I am a man righteous married I I'm not exaggerating I'm only telling you what's here I don't think I could figure it out as it ought to be but you must make me say that man representative of the great and the Roman or non-Jewish world that's the verdict on himself and that's the verdict of God upon that whole regime of Adam Jewish of Adam and Eve now what am I getting at first of all you can't get to the heart

of things with the cross until you get this here that is the uttermost of this letter there are three uttermosts in this letter and that's what I want to get to but first of all the importance is that we have seen the uttermost of human representation therefore let me anticipate the end of this by saying that it takes out almost the whole of our life to accept that as a truth and reality our difference and abduction our pro-fundamentalism will accept and if you're a fundamentalist you do believe in facing discredit or discredit in your theology or adduction it is parity of mind you accept that all have been with no wrong or good with no righteous no not wrong in your so-called acceptance that let me say again to your dying day perhaps in your last days you may not have accepted that

fully in your heart because you've still been looking for something good in yourself to make you happy and comfortable to deliver you some introspection and self-condemnation all that will be the misery of this wicked man you'll be bothered about that to the end unless you come to the heart of things we are teaching today heart of things and understand freely the meaning of the cross that's the first utterance you see the utterance of human reservation and human disqualification for the presence of God this is the one utterance by nation in our souls in what we are in our souls are disqualified from fellowship with God from the presence of God we are by nature wickedly wicked that's what this letter begins with and we'll have to settle a little more later we'll have to settle but so far

as we ourselves are concerned that's where we are so there's a second part on this here which is not only the pronouncement of the judgment and the verdict upon us upon mankind it is the relegation of that whole humanity from atom onwards the relegation the exclusion from life essentially this is going to mean that you and I have not arrived yet it has got carried out it has not put out excluded relegated there are papers as you know in the Jewish economy do you remember the paper this one ah they have you see the print about that paper in page 1 to 2 and the priest presenting the whole nation himself included lay his hands upon that dirt and transferring the sin of the nation the unrighteousness of the nation the retribution of the nation transferring it to that dirt by the laying of

hands he identified the nation with that dirt have you heard of that oh typology yes we miss the point so often oh yes it is too great to monopolize the statement of the priest he says to him people away and away away ever farther away from the habitation of God from the habitation of God from where God was take upon the horizon and then let go dismiss let me remember the word first dismiss from the presence of God from the habitation of God from all that has to do with God dismiss dismiss beyond the horizon excluded cut off shut out poor preacher dying far from God and all that is above that is there in your bible and look again look again look with those larger eyes you are not seeing one man you are not seeing a priest and one date you are seeing all this raising up raising away behind

that date following to the far far remaking of the land of desolation forsaken of the nation of God as such there is your Old Testament it is a very powerful one a very poignant one that in the letters to the Romans if you study deeper you will find so much of the Old Testament in this letter that here in the text restoration dismissal exclusion you me all of us in the humanity of Adam this is this is God very often a very different being a very universal being this is God you see this is exactly what the cross means the whole thing this universal restoration and this universal disqualification this universal rejection is focused in that cross when one sin took the sin of the race your sin and my sin the sin of the whole race because there is none righteous no not one took that sin of the

cross forsaken forsaken of God my God my God taught me and the teacher living out in the presence of God that's one side of the cross that's the meaning of the cross oh it's a terrible sigh saying God it is only one side but let's get clear about this as you're trying to get depth into fable with God on your own ground you'll find there's a barrier that you cannot pass for seeking grace of universal size stands between you and God grace of your Jesus next to this forsaken utterance of our situation my picture of the cross now read more clearly say that for those who have seen that who have accepted and who have embraced that by faith that forsaken of their representatives on their behalf as their for them and have said when that faith went out in the presence of God I was with that faith

said thank you God and cried you Lord what time has God forsaken me that was your forsakenness and mine When we have accepted that as our tradition, and our destiny by Jesus Christ, and the faith in the

Lord Jesus in what He did with us, there's another faith that happened in God, stayed in the presence of God, there's the other half of things, the other side.

There's the utter respecting of faith in the Lord Jesus, faith that He did all that as us, not only for us.

Faith that that was you and that was me in that position, in that dire hour on the cross. I was there, it was my penalty, He was my sin, He was my rejection, He bore my sin in His own body, blessed be God who did it, and me, and all of me, and I worship at His feet and believe that. When we've come to a position like that of faith, although again not a doctrinal position, not a theological position, have you been there, you have, you know what I'm talking about, then the door is open, and there's an utterness of acceptance, of standing before God.

And I said, oh can it be, can it be, yes, I can stand up right in the presence of that infinitely holy and righteous One, and without, without bending my head in that awful remorse of self-rejection, find in that beloved One, oh God make our doctrine, our familiar doctrine more real. It's going to be so, it's going to be so, we're getting away from our teaching to reality. Anybody who has been this way knows what a real thing it is.

This very thing, this six chapters of the letter to the Romans, turned my life inside out and upside down and cut it in two, even as a preacher, an organizer of Christian work home and abroad, and a preacher of a very large church of preaching, thinking I was getting on. And then came, and in that crisis I said, never again will I preach, never again will I put my hand to Christian work, Lord I'm going out, unless you do something you've never done before. But it was a terrible thing, I cannot tell you, it was devastating, and desolation, the end of everything.

Something, oh yes, even so, although it meant so much, so much, and it did mean a lot, it was only a mere fragment, microcosm of what my Lord and your Lord went through, and the crisis of the cross was something devastating, and you really come into touch with it under the hand of God, on the one side. And until some crisis of that kind, I'm not saying that it's got to be in the same way as mine or Paul's or others, but something like that, or is happening, is in process of happening, you're coming more and more and more to an end of yourself and to despair about yourself, until something like that happens, you're not going to be any good to God. Preach if you like, organize Christian work if you like, and the end, desolation.

Well, that's that. Let's come back, happy as I am. The utterness of acceptance, ah, it's not that you and I are in ourselves any more perfect than we were before, but what is happening? What ought to be happening? And I ask you, is it happening with you? On the one side of your life, your history and experience, progressively, you are coming more and more to me.

I tell you, look at the person you are. Are you? Are you? Are you at the point often of giving it all up because of your faith? That's all right, dear friend. That's very good, so long as it doesn't go there.

What is God doing? What is the Holy Spirit doing with us? If you would leave it out, giving us your mysticism prayer, oh Lord, unless you take over altogether, I'm dying to spare after all. That's very utter, isn't it? Yes, that on the one side of our history, we are not getting to the place where we can say, I'm getting better and better. That may be all right for two years in, but it isn't all right for six years.

I am getting, now am I getting worse and worse as we do? No, I'm not. I never could be worse than either I was, but I'm coming to discover how worse I am. That's bad.

We must be careful. And this great man, who wrote this letter, he understood what he was writing. Tremendously.

This man, at the end of his long, full life, poured out at the end, wrote, Brethren, I count not myself to have changed. Neither am I already perfect. Is my ambition still within that day? I stand not having a righteousness of my own.

A righteousness which is of God, who faith in Him is just. Right to the end, depreciation of self and growing apprehension of Christ. Now here arises a point that I would leave you in trouble if I didn't touch upon.

You see, you saw a devil around us. I don't mean you guys. You see, this devil.

What I have called the thief. You say that lightly, but that's what it is. And you see, you have only got to have some kind of rebirth in your life, some difficulty, some adversity, some sorrow, some loss, some trouble in family or business.

In your life. Something that is difficult, hard, that you cannot understand. But a lot of you cannot explain it.

Beyond your comprehension of, understanding at all, why the Lord should allow that to come to me. Why is He denying that? So many people haven't got that, don't know any better. It's God.

And there's a thief right at your ear. The Lord is displeased with you. The Lord is pleased with you.

You have upset the Lord. And therefore this, this is the Lord. The Lord turning on you.

This is, this is an example or an expression of the Lord's disapproval of you. Keep that in your ear. And if you listen.

And if you take it on. It will not be long before you have called into question all that the Lord Jesus did in His cross. You will have undercut the very foundation of your new relationship with God.

And you'll be under a dark cloud and a presence of accusation. Oh yes. The fact is that we are still faulting, in traffic, failing, we slip up, we make mistakes, we do wrong, and this thief is always a condemner to accuse us and make us believe and accept that that adversity is the displeasure of the Lord.

Well, what are you going to do about that? Do you know something about that? What are you going to do about it? I'm going to say, I am faultless. I am perfect. Satan, you have no taste at all.

You see, I have already a taste. Are you? Oh, what are you going to do? This letter. And you will see what I have tried to point out about the cross placed in it.

And what has been done. And the job it's been taking. We have been taken right away.

And yet here we are in the reality of an imperfect, faulty life. Not sinlessly perfect. Forgive me if some of you believe in that.

I don't. Not sinlessly perfect. Capable of failure.

But, you're on the other side of chapter 6 now. And you're on the other side of chapter 7 now. And a triumphant shout rises to heaven in the presence of the lifted man.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in. There is no condemnation. From God.

Alright, devil, see what did I stop in God? But here is a difficult one. Why is it then that when we make mistakes, we do something? What are our mistakes? Don't you see that you're under a different economy? Under the old economy, your mistakes brought judgment on you. Condemnation.

And this, in the new economy of in Christ Jesus, you make your mistakes. You're not the first going to excuse yourself. Shall we continue to sin that judgment about God forbid? No.

You're going to have to alleviate this. You are going to say, that was wrong. That was wrong.

The way I spoke was wrong. What I said was wrong. What I did was wrong.

There's no justification for that wrong. But, I confess. I bring it back to the cross.

And I say to the Lord, now turn my mistakes and my wrongs to good account. That's the new economy. The sovereignty of grace is, that although we have these faults, it does not bring us under that old judgment.

Condemnation. The Lord sovereignly in his grace takes our bad mistakes and turns them to wonderful account. Have you a history of that? Oh yes, he made mistakes.

I'm not one of those who thought, thinks that the apostle Paul was infallible and never made any mistakes. No, and he wouldn't agree with that. I think I could put my finger upon him and tell you all the big mistakes that he made.

Is that heresy? Is that heresy about a life such as his? No. But I do think, how marvellously, the sovereign grace of God can those mistakes be accounted for. And the issue, although different from what Paul wanted, expected, very different, nevertheless the issue was more to the glory of God.

Now I'm almost afraid to take that up, because you may be deceived by my provision. I think Paul did make a little mistake, you know, about going up to Jerusalem as he did, and when he did, and getting into the temple, and then, resulting to an experience, an experience, stepping back onto old Jewish ground again. Because the notice was so good.

He didn't make a mistake. And he had written that he would go to Rome Oh, the ambition of the righteous to go to Rome and meet her there. He got to Rome alright.

He got to Rome alright. Not as he wanted or expected. In a very different way.

But, the sovereign grace of God, Paul, there is certain letter. Would we be without it? Would we be without Ephesians, Galatians, Philippians? Alright, would you? What? But here I go. I go to say to that mistake.

Well, if you don't believe me, I'll try to bear your condemnation. But I do believe. Under this new economy in Christ, hope, failure, mistakes, which would be characteristic of us to the end, can be turned to real account for the law in his sovereign grace.

And really, really and truly, no condemnation. Where's the promise? Still holds true. The absolute acceptance, that's my point.

The absolute acceptance. What is so fair about this? Oh, my dear friend. Do you need it to be renegade? The utterance of this acceptance, after that utterance of rejection, lecturbation, and exclamation, how far we are received? Well, listen.

Turn to chapter eight. Here is a talent thrown out by this apostle. A talent is thrown out in the threefold two.

What shall we say to these things? Is God big for us? Who is against us? He that... Where is the cross? Here we are, right back at the cross. He that spared not even son, God delivered him up for us all. How shall we not also give him? Freely give up all things.

Challenge number one. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God he lifts? Who? Only the devil. And that will be of all types of people now.

Who? It is God that justifies, that put us into right standing. Revealed so. Who is he that shall condemn, bring us under condemnation? It is Christ that dies.

Yea, rather, that was raised from the dead. Who is at the right hand of God? I'm glad he put that in. Glad he put that in.

Why? Without a wish of the devil. And all accusations, and all cross against at the right hand of God. Who also makes intercession for us? Third challenge.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? That's the question. Mighty question. And now the apostle embarks upon the impossible answer.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? Oh, but you see, that tribulation he came to me was because the Lord was against him. Was he? Who shall lay him apart? Shall tribulation? If you interpret it rightly, it will separate you from your enjoyment of the love of Christ anyway. Shall persecution? Or famine? Or nakedness? Or peril? Or thought? Even as it is written, there's a cross in the life of the believer.

For thy sake we are killed all the day long. Then for thy sake, and it isn't the Lord against us, for thy sake all the day long we are accounted as sheep for a slaughter. Nay.

The answer is nay. Who? Who? Who? Nay. And for the mighty name it is, in all these things we are more than conscious through him that loves us.

For I am self-created, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor physicality, nor things present, nor things to come, nor power, nor height, nor depth, nor reality, nor anything else in the whole thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Is that utter acceptance? Well upon us. Well upon us.

Oh may the Lord help us by this. Help us to see, to understand, that there will be space, situation, hell, nakedness, cold, hunger, life, life can be a big burden, life, death, height, depth. Anything else you'd like to mention in the whole creation? Yes? Well I'll give you a long list of the things that have happened to him, and there'll be no time that any one of them, all the kitwets and all the other things, draw any sense of condemnation upon you.

There'll be a deletion. There probably will be some of them. In every life here, we're going on with God, but the love of Christ, the love which we come into in Christ, that's the point, in Christ, that love is greater than every mentionable thought in this universe, including the sleep.

Neither one, and that love is greater than all. That's the ultimate. But then the apostle makes it appeal, after this parenthesis, he says, die those merciful, God merciful, die those merciful ones.

I beseech you, present your bodies, that is, your whole selves, as living things. Put it on the altar of dedication, consecration, utterness, like His burned offerings, as living things, present your bodies as living things, holy, acceptable, after all, it's only your reasonable service or your spiritual work or translation for God, for Christ, because of His utterness for us. In these words, I, after all, feel how I fail to get over you, what I feel about this.

Dear friends, people out there are upset with me. Oh, this cruel evil one, this cruel evil one, days of weakness, that physical weakness, days of outward adversity, trials, days of unfaithfulness, disloyalty, and the past. My Christian friends, there is much, much more.

What a cruel enemy he is, trying to get in between us and the Lord. So you see, this is only his condemnation. We've got to learn something about this God, haven't we? Yes, marvellous by our Lord, the greatness of this God, issuing Him in our lives.

It cannot be nullified by anything in heaven and earth or heaven. God help us to understand that the cross in Romans very imperfectly presented but I think it enough to picture how often have we sung it and said it, love, oh amazing, oh divine, demand my life, my soul, my all. Oh Lord, breakthrough, our inability to grasp, really grasp, great strangers, can detect our inability to apprehend of the master and show us yet more than ever we have seen how great, high and deep, raw and long, is that love of Christ as we are.

We leave it to do, oh Lord, we leave it to do, what we can do and send us out from this place under the solemn house of the grave.

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