

Why the cross?

Are you ready for death?

Why the cross? Is there any other way? Can't God just forgive us?

The cross is central to the Gospel, you take the cross out, you no longer have good news.

Paul (1 Corinthians 2:1-5 (vs. 2)

When most of us who think of "why" our answer probably had something to do with forgiving our sins. And while that is true, I want you to notice something; we placed us as the focus. (OUR SIN) (sin=any act, thought, word or deed that falls short of God's perfect holy will)

It's our natural inclination to have a "ME – CENTERED" focus, my rights, my desires, me. Why would it be any different when it comes to the gospel? So let's put the focus back where it belongs and give the proper credit to whom it's due.

In order to do that, we need to adjust our thinking. Let's go from an "ME- centered" thinking to a "God centered" thinking

Character of God

1) He is sovereign over all (Psalm 24:1-2)

The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

- He created all things (Nehemiah 9:6)

"You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.

- He knows all things (Job 37:16 , 1 John 3:20)

1 John 3:20 *for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.*

- He sustains all things (Psalm 104:24-30)
- He owns all things (Deuteronomy 10:14)

Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.

2) He is holy above all (1 Samuel 2:2 = *“There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God. Isaiah 6:3 “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” / Revelation 4:8)*

3) He is righteous in all His ways (Gen. 18:25, Deut. 32:4 , Psalm 145:17, = *The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works.*)

4) He is just in all His wrath (Isaiah 26:21, Romans 3:5-6 = *But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) By no means! For the how could God judge the world?)*

- He is intolerant of sin (Psalm 45:7 = *Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.*)
- He is indignant of sinners

Psalm 5:5-6 - *The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.*

Gen 19 (Lot’s wife)

Lev. 10 (Nadab and Abihu, Aaron’s sons and thus priest to Israel.

Num. 15:32-36 (a man stoned for picking up sticks on the Sabbath)

Num. 20:11-12 (Moses strikes a rock 2x instead of speaking to it)

2 Samuel 6 (Uzzah and the Ark of the Covenant)

Acts 5 (Ananias & Sapphira)

5) He is loving toward all his creation (1 John 4:16)

So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

=====

Then consider the sinfulness of man

1) We have denounced his sovereignty (Gen. 3)

2) We have dishonored His holiness (Ezek. 36:22-23)

3) We have despised his righteousness (Romans 3:10-12 , 6:20)

4) We have disregarded his wrath (Eph 2:1-3)

5) We have denied his love (Rom 2:4)

=====

The Bible declares we have a problem, but we keep trying to redefine what God has already declared.

When we compare ourselves with each other, just as long as we're doing better than the person next to you, we feel OK or thinking that all we need it to be genuine in our repentance.

Explain that to young Rebecca Sperry and her newborn daughter:

Madison County Sheriff's deputies said the driver of a 2004 GMC Yukon, identified as James Foutch, struck the rear end of a 1996 Buick Century while both vehicles were westbound on State Road 32 east of Lapel.

Investigators suspect Foutch was under the influence of prescription drugs. Sources said he was under the influence of hydrocodone.

The impact of the collision pushed the Buick off the roadway and into a utility pole, killing a passenger in the front seat and leaving the driver of the Buick, Rebecca Marie Sperry, of Pendleton, in serious condition. Police later identified the victim as the woman's husband, 23-year-old Jesse Sperry.

Sperry was 9-months-pregnant at the time of the crash and family friends said she was scheduled to have induced labor Sunday night.

Mr. Foutch can be as genuine as possible, but that won't undo the damages he's done

Nor will doing better than other sinners, that is not the standard.

God's perfection is the standard, and we can't do it. No matter how sorry we are or how much we are than someone else, God must be just and the penalty for sin, even just one, must be paid for.

"but you say God is Love" – your right, He is!

We find ourselves starrng upon a dilemma, or should I say a "**Divine Dilemma**".

Prov. 17:15 *He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD.* (Abomination = something that causes disgust or hatred)

**When we consider how Holy, Righteous, Loving and Just God is, and consider this:
God must act at all times in absolute consistency with the perfection of his character**

Not "Today holy, tomorrow sovereign, maybe a little more just on Tuesday."

How can a Holy, Just God save rebellious sinners, justify the wicked (who are due his wrath), without being an abomination to himself?

For God to grant the forgiveness of our sin is a threat to His character.

The beauty of the cross is, first and foremost, about the demonstration of the character of God.

Before the cross is for anyone else's sake, it was for God's sake.

I believe we struggle with this because we have so belittled our sin; we have convinced ourselves "It's not that bad" "God is a loving, a forgiving god" that sin is OK, it's not really a sin anyway.

IT'S NOT OK! But we are so blinded by our own sinfulness, we convince ourselves otherwise. (Romans 1)

If we were to sin against a rock, there is no guilt.

If we sin against another person, were guilty.

If we sin against an infinitely holy God, we are infinitely guilty.

Walk through history – The unfolding story of God's glory, Jesus's love and his plan of redemption for those who look to Jesus to do what we cannot.

Garden of Eden – Eve looking upon the first dead anything.

God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12, 15 and 22)

Moses delivers God's chosen people out of Egypt. - 10 plagues

#1 Water to blood, #2 frogs, #3 gnats, #4 flies, #5 livestock die, # 6 boils, # 7 hail, # 8 locust, #9 darkness (Exodus 7-10)

#10 death of the first born (Passover) Exodus 11-12

Mosaic covenant (Exodus 24)

Tabernacle established (Exodus 26)

Regular sacrifices reminding God's people – your sin can't be swept under the rug. Something must die to cover your sin. The lifeblood of an animal will be poured out in order for our fellowship to remain.

Numbers 21:4-9 – the wandering Israelites began to complain against God and Moses, God sent poisonous snakes to bite and kill them and many died. They came to Moses and said we've sinned, God told Moses, make a bronze snake and put it on pole and when the people are bit; have them look at the bronze snake, and they'll live. (John 3:14-15)

That very thing that was an image of death to some was the source of life to those who would humbly look to it to be healed

Hebrews 10:1-14

10 For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?

3 But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.

4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Jesus the God/man is the only way.

Fully God = must be perfect and sinless in every way (John 1:1-3, 2 Cor. 5:21 = *for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*)

Fully man = completely able to identify with us (Heb. 4:15-16 = *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*)

5 Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

*“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; **6** in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. **7** Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.”*

8 When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law),

9 then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second.

10 And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

11 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,

13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

14 For by a single offering **he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.**

So, Are you ready for death?

Here’s the first of three things I want to make sure you get:

We have all sinned against God, some of us are more aware of our sin than others, but were all guilty and were all going to stand before this Holy, Righteous, Just and Loving God and be judged based upon our relationship with Jesus.

Let me clarify something, some of you; know Jesus as a “get out of Hell Free” ticket. You walked and isle, repeated a prayer, got baptized, you know historically everything I’ve said today, and would say “Jesus is my savior” – But he’s not your Lord. He’s your “Jesus in box”, you take him out on Sundays and when you’re in a pinch, but otherwise you see no real need for him in your life.

That is not a relationship.

Connie and I have been married over 20 years now, every night I drive an hour home, not because I have to, but because I want to, I could go anywhere, I could do anything, but my relationship with her compels me to go home. I love her and can’t imagine not being with her.

Is your relationship with Jesus like that? You don’t go to him because you have to, but because you love Him.

Here’s the second thing:

If you have that relationship with Jesus,

And you’re sitting here today, feeling defeated by life, and bad choices, some you’ve made, some, others have thrust upon you. I don’t know if you feel as if there’s that sin that’s too big even for God to handle

I want you to remember we have a great sovereign, Holy, Righteous, Just and Loving God who is crazy about you (just read Ephesians 1)

(Psalm 103 10-12 = He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us

The third thing:

If we’re struggling with the Idea that we must perform to please God, which is an idea that will always leave us feeling as if we fall short. The fact of the matter is when Jesus paid our debt and died on the cross, he did everything. All we need to do is rest in His finished work. Understanding that God’s love for those who know Him as Lord and Savior, will never be less than perfect, when Jesus said “It is finished” He meant it. Now we can serve out of complete freedom and Love back to Him.