

The Crucifixion

Matthew 27:27-54 & Galatians 1:3-5

Pastor John Miller

Take a Bible and open it with me to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 27. Matthew chapter 27, and then if you can find another spot to prepare to turn to, that is Galatians chapter 1. We're going to read from Matthew 27, and then we're going to go to Galatians chapter 1 and begin at verse 3.

Beginning in verse 27 of Matthew 27, Matthew records, "Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus unto the common hall, and they gathered him unto the whole band of soldiers, and they stripped him and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it on his head, and they put a reed in his right hand, and they bowed mockingly their knee before and they mocked him saying, 'Hail, king of the Jews.' And they spit upon him. They took a reed and they smote him on the head. And after they had mocked him, they took a robe off of him, and they put his own raiment on him and they led him away to crucify him. And as they were going out...". Verse 32, "...they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, him they compelled to bear his cross. And when he was coming to the place called Golgotha, that is to say the place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. And as they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, they parted my garments among them and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there, and set over his head an accusation written, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.' Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand and the other on the left. And as they passed by, they reviled him, wagging their heads and saying, 'Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.' Likewise, also the chief priest mocking him, with the scribes and elders said, 'He saved others, himself he cannot save. If thou be the king of Israel, let him come down now from the cross and we will believe him. He trusted in God, let him deliver him now if he will have him, for he said, I am the Son of God'. And the thieves also which were crucified with him cast the same in his teeth. Now from the sixth hour...", which is by the way, 12 noon, "...there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour," which is three in the afternoon. "And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is to say, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' And some of them that stood there when they heard that, they said, 'The man's calling for Elijah.' And immediately they ran and got a sponge, filled it with vinegar and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. The rest said, 'Let him alone. Let's see whether Elijah will come and save him.' Jesus, when he cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And behold, the veil of the temple was ripped in two, from the top to the bottom. And the rocks did rip and rent, and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and they went into the city and appeared unto many. Now when the Centurions saw that, and they were with them watching Jesus, they said, 'Truly this man was the son of God.'

I'd like you to turn now in your Bible to Galatians chapter 1, Galatians chapter 1. And I'm going to begin reading in verse 3, follow with me. Galatians 1 and verse 3, "grace be unto you in peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Notice verse 4 and 5, "who gave himself...", referring to our Lord Jesus Christ, "...for our sins that he might deliver us from the present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father, to whom be glory forever and ever, amen."

Now we read the narrative, historical narrative account from Matthew of the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. The greatest events in human history are the incarnation when God became a man, Christmas, and then the crucifixion, when Jesus died on the cross, and then the resurrection, when Jesus rose again from the dead. But when we read those narrative accounts in the gospels, the question that we need to ask, and I'm going to seek to answer to some degree, is why? What was it all about? Why did Jesus die on the cross? Who did he die on the cross for? What was the cross about? What is the meaning of the cross? And a rule of interpreting Scripture that I want to point out is that whenever you read a historical narrative, you have to interpret that through the lens of the epistles, the didactic, or doctrinal, epistles. You can't just read a historic event and then conclude what it's about. You need to turn to a gospel or to a doctrinal epistle and discover the meaning and significance and understanding of what is taking place.

In Galatians chapter 1, particularly in verse 4 and 5, Paul, in his opening salutation to the Galatians, actually speaks about the cross of Jesus Christ. Now, why did Paul talk about the cross in his opening salutation and greeting when writing to the people at Galatia? Here's the reason why: They were in danger of leaving the grace of God and falling back into legalism. They were in danger of turning away from the cross and believing that they could be righteous before God, or get to heaven by their good works and their good deeds without the cross of Christ. Paul, very rapidly in the book of Galatians, wants them to know about the cross, to understand the cross, and to glory, as he ends the epistle to the Galatians, in the cross.

I want to point out five facts about the cross as we look at the cross today through this text. First, fact number one, is the cross of Christ was voluntary. What we just read in the Gospel of Matthew was Jesus voluntarily choosing to lay down his life. Jesus said, "No man takes my life from me. I lay it down of myself." Look at verse 4 of Galatians 1. And look at the phrase here, Paul said, "Who gave himself," who gave himself. Now, who gave himself? Our Lord Jesus Christ, verse 3. So, he's speaking of Jesus' voluntary sacrificial death upon the cross. Now we need to know who Jesus is. If we're going to celebrate Jesus, break bread together, and remember he died on the cross, who is Jesus? Jesus Christ is the second person of the Godhead. You say, "What do you mean by that?" The Bible teaches there's one God, but that one God is manifest in three persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. So, the Bible teaches a triune God, not three gods, but one God, three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all divine beings. So, God the Son left God the Father, came from heaven to earth, but he did it voluntarily. He did it at his own volition. Jesus, as I said, said, "No man takes my life from me. I have power to lay it down. I have power to take it up again." As we eat the bread and drink the cup and we celebrate Good Friday and the death of Jesus Christ,

remember he died willingly for you. He died voluntarily for you. Jesus, who was in the very form of God, thought equality with God not something to hold on to, but he emptied himself, took on him the form of a servant, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And the fact that it says in verse 4 of Galatians 1, "He gave himself," that's past tense, it shows that the gift acquired once and for all at the cross can never be repeated. Jesus died once and for all, for all of us to be forgiven. I put alongside this the thought of John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him will never perish and would have everlasting life." Though God the Father gave his son, God the Son gave himself voluntarily as well.

Here's fact number two about the cross. The cross of Christ was substitutionary. The cross of Christ was substitutionary. You say, "Well, what do you mean by that?" In verse 4 of Galatians chapter 1 Paul says, "who gave himself for our sins." So, he tells us who the Lord Jesus Christ, that he voluntarily gave himself on the cross, and why he did that: for our sins. Someone said, "The sins are ours yet the death is Christ." It was our sins; it was his death. Normally those who sin, the Bible says the soul who sins will surely die. Sin leads to death, but in this case, Jesus took our sin. Jesus took our penalty. Jesus died for us. He took our sin and died in our place. How marvelous and how glorious. In Isaiah 53, it says there, "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. and by our stripes we are healed." Jesus paid the price and died for us. I love what John R.W. Stott said. He said, "The concept of substitution may be said then to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man submitting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God submitting himself for man." Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be, but God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone. God accepted penalties, which belong to man alone. Jesus paid the penalty for our sins. So, as you hold the bread and you drink the cup, remember that Jesus died voluntarily for you, and that He was dying for your sin, not His own. He was the sinless Son of God. The Bible says in 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 18, "The just for the unjust." 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21, "For He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Here's fact number three, fact number three about the cross. The cross of Christ was a rescue mission. I want you to look at the verse in Galatians again, verse 4 of chapter 1. Notice the phrase "that he might deliver us." He gave himself for our sins; why? That he might deliver us. There's the rescue mission from this present evil world or age. That is actually in the Greek emphatic. It's in fact, he gave himself to deliver us, to rescue us from this present evil age. Jesus left heaven, came down to earth in order to rescue us. How marvelous that is. That word, "rescue" or "deliver" means to pluck out, to draw out. So he saves us out. He saves us from number one: sin's penalty. The wages of sin is death. He paid the penalty. Saves us number two: from sin's power. When you become a believer in Jesus Christ and you are born again, or regenerated, by the Holy Spirit and indwelt by the Spirit of God, he not only pardons your sin, but He gives you power to live a life of holiness and godliness. We're saved by grace, but we're saved unto good works, which He has before ordained that we should walk in them. So, He saves us from sin's penalty, from sin's power, and then the glorious truth that we'll celebrate

Easter Sunday, He saves us from sin's presence when we rise from the dead, amen, in the resurrection. Now, if we die before that, we go immediately with the Lord, we're free from sin. One day our bodies will be resurrected, they will be glorified, and there will be no more sin, no more sin, no more Satan, no more death, no more sickness. For all the former things are passed away. Jesus came to rescue us from sin. Jesus came to set us free.

Here's fact number four, if you're taking notes. The cross of Christ was planned by God the Father. Notice in verse 4 of the Galatians passage, it says, "According to the will of God and our Father." So, Jesus gave Himself voluntarily for our sins as a substitution, that He might deliver us, or rescue us, from this present evil world. And all of that, verse 4, is according to the will and purpose and plan of God. The cross of Jesus Christ was not an afterthought. When Adam and Eve sinned and fell in the Garden of Eden, God wasn't surprised or shocked or didn't know what He was going to do. It was all preordained, designed by God, before the foundations of the world. And I believe, as we're going to see in just a moment, in order that God could get greater glory. In Ephesians chapter 1 verse 11, Paul said, "According to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will." I don't know about you, but I'm glad. I'm glad that God is working all things according to his master plan and his purpose. Amen. Marvelous to know that. When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane and he was praying in agony, he said, "Father, if it be possible, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." And he's basically saying, "if there's another way you can save mankind, if there's another way that you can forgive sins without me going to the cross," he said, "let it be." And then he made this prayer at the end, he said, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." Not as I will, but as you will. So, God's purpose, God's plan, God's design was that Jesus would go to the cross, that he would die on the cross in order to rescue and redeem and reconcile sinners back to himself. Had we never fallen into sin, we wouldn't know that he is the Redeemer who loved us and would give his life for us. Jesus came to redeem us by his grace. A man by the name of William Evans wrote a hymn, it's called "At Calvary." And the chorus, the hymn says, "O the love that drew salvation's plan. O the grace that brought it down to man. O the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary." So, God had it all drawn up. God had it all planned. God had it all designed.

Here's number five, last of my five points. The cross of Christ brings glory to God. Amen. Notice verse 5 of Galatians 1. Paul says, "To whom..." to whom. Now that references to God the Father, the end of verse 4. To whom, God the Father, be glory forever and ever, amen, or so be it. The false teachers in Galatia were taking the glory away from God and trying to do certain things to earn merit, deserve favor of God. Religion says "do," Christianity says "done." Remember when Jesus died on the cross, we just read it, he cried, "Tetelestai", Tetelestai. That phrase means "It is done, it is finished." It also could be translated, "paid in full." Jesus hung on the cross and he cried "Tetelestai", paid in full, it is done, it is finished. All we need to do now is enter into the finished work of Jesus Christ by faith, by believing in him, by trusting in him. There's no more work to be done. Jesus did it all. I love that song: "Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow." Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe. All glory, all honor, all praise be to the Lord. So, there's no room for boasting. Paul said in Ephesians that we're saved by grace through faith and it's not of ourself, it's a gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. Galatians 6 verse 14, as Paul closes his letter to the

Galatians, he says, "But God forbid that I should boast, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

At the cross of Christ, there's healing through His wounds. At the cross of Christ, there's life through His death, at the cross of Christ there is pardon through his pain, and at the cross of Christ there is salvation in his suffering. Amen? Let's pray.