

Session Six: The Cross of Christ

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2018

Preacher: Donnie Griggs

[0 : 00] Hey guys, welcome back to Gospel Growth.

This is One Harbor's Life on Life discipleship course. So far what we've done is really try to hit a 30,000 foot or sort of a plain view version of what the Bible shows us about the gospel.

And now what we wanna do is sort of get down on the ground and figure out how does the cross affect our lives on a practical day-to-day basis, right? What does the gospel mean for our day-to-day lives?

What did the cross do for us? I wanna just start with a little warning. Some of the stuff we're gonna talk about is gonna sound familiar to you and that'll lead to you wanting to check out and think about something else.

But I just wanna warn you that I think sometimes these things sound familiar, but we don't really understand them or believe them. You can have heard of it or even know it in your head, but never really believe it in your heart.

[0 : 55] And so I just wanna just ask you to take a second now to sort of lean in and think about, okay, even if I hear something I've heard before, I wanna ask myself, am I currently believing it? Maybe I used to believe it, but now I don't really believe it anymore.

Maybe I've never really thought about believing that. I've just known it to be true. So we're gonna go for it now, and I really think it's gonna be helpful for you. We're gonna take this session and the next one to talk about what Jesus did for us on the cross.

What does the cross mean for us, okay? Okay, and before we can really dive into what the cross means, I think to understand the cross, we first have to understand sin.

And I know this immediately makes me sound like old school, like I should be in a tent, like yelling, or I should be a Puritan. I mean, this is not the kind of stuff we think about anymore or like to talk about. Not a whole lot of books these days being written on sin.

Not a lot of songs being written on sin. I mean, if you go back a few hundred years, you start finding books like The Mortification of Sin, you find hymns where they talk about sin. But nowadays, it's not really something we talk about. And it's probably because it's not fun.

[1 : 55] It's definitely not fun to talk about sin, right? When we talk about sin, it makes you and I uncomfortable. If the gospel is the good news that Jesus died for our sin, then sin's the bad news, that we really wish wasn't part of the story.

I mean, if we're honest, I think what we wish was that we were trying, the Bible would say something like this. We were trying our best, like a kid trying to ride his bike, and we couldn't figure it out quite, right?

And so God came along and just gave us a little push. We would all be very happy, I think, with that version of the story. But that's not what the Bible tells us. The Bible says that we're sinners. And because we're sinners, we're guilty.

And that means that according to the Bible, we're not children who just can't figure out how to ride our bike. We are criminals who deserve the worst kind of death. That's a hard pill to swallow.

It's not something we like to think about, right? It's not fun to talk about sin. However, it's the bad news that, it makes the good news good. If the gospel means good news, sin is the bad news that makes the gospel good.

[2 : 58] It's what makes good news good, right? It's like saying a war is over, but you never knew that the war existed. The good news that the war is over only makes sense if you understood the nature of that war and how painful it was and how many people died and suffered and all the injustices.

Then you start rejoicing in the fact that the war is over, right? It's like a sad part of a book or a movie, but it makes the book or the movie make sense, right? This is what the Bible shows us when we begin to understand sin that, man, there are bad guys and we're the bad guys.

And there's only one good guy, only one hero and his name is Jesus, right? So first, let's just talk about this. What is sin? Basically, what the word means, it means to miss the mark. It means to fail.

And we don't like being failures. We don't like missing the mark. But the Bible tells us that all of us have done this, right? All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We've all done this.

We've all missed the mark. We all fall way short of the glory of God. The Bible paints a broad picture for us of sin, that it's missing the mark, it's failing, but it's also, it's not just like dropping the ball.

[4 : 04] It's choosing something over and above God. It's loving something like God that's not God, right? It's rebelling. It's rebelling against the holy God.

It's mutiny is another way to think of it. It's like piracy against the king of kings. In our area, we love pirates. We're all about them. We got a football team. We got a museum. We got all kinds of like pirate stuff going on here.

And I think like ourselves, we think of pirates and we legitimize certain ones and not others. There's Blackbeard. He's obviously really terrible. And then there's Captain Jack Sparrow from the Pirates of the Caribbean.

And he's not such a bad guy. And some of us think of ourselves like, I'm not a Blackbeard. I'm not killing everybody and all this crazy stuff that Blackbeard did. No, no, no. I sing and dance. I'm really funny.

And occasionally I do things I shouldn't. We legitimize and we romanticize certain pirates. And I think it's the same way we treat ourselves. Oh, maybe I'm a sinner, but I'm not a really bad one.

[5 : 04] You know, I'm not like dealing drugs. I'm not like whatever the case may be. We've got these different standards that we use to grade ourselves. But here's the thing, like with a pirate, you know, Blackbeard or Captain Jack Sparrow, they're both pirates.

And to the nation that they're in piracy against pirates are pirates. And all pirates either surrender or die. The same thing's true with sinners. Maybe we're better or worse than some of the sinners we see around us.

But man, before a holy God, a sinner is a sinner. And there's only two choices, surrender or die, right? It doesn't matter if you're a better pirate than the other pirates. It doesn't matter.

We're guilty, right? So how bad is the situation that we're in? How bad is our sin situation? Well, quickly, let me just tell you what the Bible says. It tells us that we're born into this thing called sin and we cannot grow out of it.

You can't mature out of it. You just can't in your own grow out of this. So we're born into it. We can't grow out of it. It tells us that, the Bible tells us that sin is sin before God, that it carries an equal penalty before a holy God.

[6 : 07] Now, on earth, there's different consequences. I mean, if you tell a white lie or if you cheat on a test, that's different on earth than if you kill somebody, right? There's different consequences on earth, but before a holy God who hates sin with a holy hatred, who is utterly different than us and above us and beyond us, who can't cohabit with sin, to him, all sin is sin.

Added to that, this God, it's not like some senile old man in the sky. He knows everything. He knows not just our actions, although he knows all of them. He also knows our thoughts.

That's why Jesus would say, some of you are proud of yourselves that you don't commit adultery. Good for you, but when you think about a woman lustfully, you've now committed adultery in your heart. Jesus is saying, hey, I saw that.

I saw that. Now, yeah, you didn't go ahead and do it, but I saw you do it, right? So God's counting our actions and our thoughts. He hates sin. He hates every sin. He hates even little white lies. God hates them, right?

And so that means that we are, we're in this sin situation that really means that we're doomed, right? We're guilty. We've accrued a debt that comes along with our sin that we can never hope to pay, okay?

[7 : 17] So the Bible wants us to feel this. It wants us to get to the place where we're starting to ask this question. What should I do to be saved? How am I ever gonna be free from this? Enter Jesus.

Jesus is our only hope because he becomes our substitute, okay? This is the tension the Bible wants us to feel. It wants us to feel that we're hopeless, that we're helpless, that we're trapped, that we're doomed until Jesus shows up.

That's what the Bible wants us to feel. Right away, we see that Jesus has come to earth to deal with sin. If you look at what happens, this interchange between John the Baptist and Jesus in John 1, 29, look what John the Baptist says when he sees Jesus.

He says, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Now, that sounds like a funny description for a person. We give people animal nicknames sometimes, but Lamb is kind of a weird one, right?

And how does Jesus, how is he a Lamb and how is he gonna take away sin? Well, if you understand that the whole Bible is pointing to Jesus, this makes a lot of sense, right? Because what John the Baptist is showing us is that Jesus has come to be our substitutionary atonement.

[8 : 26] He's come to atone or to pay for our sin as our substitute. He's going to die, suffer, and die in our place, right? And the Bible has been painting this picture for a long time, that we would be justified, that we'd be made right, we'd be made innocent because of what Jesus has done, that he would be our Passover Lamb.

If you remember that story in the Old Testament where God passed over his people, he passed over, his wrath passed over them, but it wasn't because they were innocent. It's because God chose to look at the blood that was smeared on their door from an innocent, spotless Lamb.

Jesus is our Passover Lamb. He is our substitute. The Bible tells us that he is our propitiation, which means that he's paid for our sin, that he's our expiation, which is this idea of Jesus being our scapegoat.

But he was, our guilt and shame got transferred onto Jesus, right? That's what the Bible tells us happened. He dealt with our sin and dealt with our consequences.

He paid the debt and he took away the shame and the guilt. Jesus did this in our place. We've been delivered from the guilt of sin and the penalty of sin by the blood of Jesus. It's what, it's called the great exchange.

[9 : 34] Paul speaks of this in 2 Corinthians 5, 21. For our sake, for my sake, for your sake, for our sake, he made him to be sin. To be sin.

Who knew no sin? He was innocent. So that in him, we might become the righteousness of God. That means you and I don't have to duck and dive, pointlessly trying to hide ourselves from a holy God who sees everything anyway, right?

We can come to him as children who've been loved and accepted because of what Jesus has done. That's the most amazing thing. Jesus reconciles us to God.

He reconciles us to God. Jesus has done the unthinkable. He is in his cross. He has restored the most broken relationship the world had ever seen. That one between us and God that was never gonna get fixed.

There's no way, no how we were ever gonna fix that relationship. Jesus did it. He did it. Ephesians 2 speaks to this. Now, what Paul's gonna do here is he's gonna talk about how there's now peace between people who didn't like each other and hated each other, but he's using a very interesting rationale.

[10 : 38] He says he himself is our peace. He's not saying, you guys just get along, try better. No, he says, Jesus is our peace. He's made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.

He abolished the law of commandments expressed in ordinances. He wanted to create in himself. He created one new man in place of the two, so making peace. And he wanted to reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Paul's saying, you guys, you hated each other. You were never gonna get along, but your relationship wasn't nearly as bad as the one between you and God. And look what Jesus did with that. If he can break down that hostility, if he can make peace where there was just enmity between us and God, there's hope for you and everyone else around you, right?

We now have this relationship that's restored between us and God. And like children, we get to run. Hebrews 4 tells us, we just get to run into his presence and find mercy and grace before his throne.

We don't have to run from God, we run to God, right? So let me just talk about what really understanding this would lead to. What kind of maturity does a disciple have? Well, maturity in Christ is not denying our sin.

[11 : 47] It's just trusting in Jesus. I grew up thinking that the real Christians, the mature Christians, were the ones who didn't sin anymore. But the Bible doesn't say that that's even possible here on earth. It paints this picture in 1 John 1, 8 through 10.

If you say you have no sin, you deceive yourself, the truth isn't in you. That's not possible. But 1 John goes on and says, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

However, if we say we have not sinned, we make him to be a liar and his word is not in us. This idea of I don't sin anymore, I never was a sinner, I never was that bad, and we're making God out to be a liar.

Actually, the right response is to confess our sin, to repent, which means to turn away, run away in the other direction, and to trust in his faithfulness that he is going to cleanse us of our sin.

John Newton, the author of Amazing Grace, said it like this. He says, although my memory is fading, he says, I remember two things. I am a great sinner, and Christ is a great savior.

[12 : 53] It's like what Paul says in 1 Timothy 1, 14. The grace of our Lord Jesus overflowed to me with faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

I'm the chief of sinners. Paul goes on in the next verses to talk about how Jesus saved him, the chief of sinners, so that Jesus could put on display to the rest of the world that if he could save Paul, he could save anybody.

That's what maturity in Christ looks like. It's not saying, oh, I was never that bad or I don't sin anymore. It's saying, no, no, no. I've grown in my understanding of how bad I really was, and the more I follow Jesus, I realize how I still sin.

I get better at hiding it, but I still sin. Man, I'm so dependent on Jesus. I'm so thankful for Jesus, and we grow in that thing that Paul's got where we say, hey, if Jesus could save me, he could save anybody, right?

That's what maturity looks like. It doesn't look like looking back and longing for the life we used to live and bragging about how much sin we used to, you guys wouldn't believe what I used to do. We're not bragging and longing for our past.

[13 : 59] We're not kind of just wallowing in it. We're not trying to set ourselves free and be good all by ourselves. We're acknowledging our guilt, but we're trusting in Jesus.

John Dotson says it like this, know your sin, fight your sin, trust your Savior. The last piece is the thing I really struggled with for a long time. I knew my sin, I tried to fight my sin, but I wasn't really trusting my Savior.

I just wanna just leave you with this, guys. Disciples of Jesus aren't just those who know sin and fight sin. Disciples of Jesus trust their Savior. Jude 1, 24, it says it like this, now to him who's able to keep you from stumbling, to present you blameless for the presence of his glory with great joy.

To him, not to him, who's able to keep us, to our only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time and now and forever, amen.

That's how we're meant to live. As people have been forgiven, but we're dependent on him. He's gonna keep us from stumbling. He set us free and he's gonna keep us. I want you to just spend some time now discussing this with your group and I want you to know I'm praying for you to have a really good discussion here.

[15 : 11] I think for some of you, it might just be acknowledging you've never really thought about sin before or maybe it's been a long time since you've thought about sin. Maybe you've got some questions about what this means for you or your life or maybe for you, you're going, hey, I'm not really fighting my sin.

If I'm honest, I'm just kind of, I've rolled over, I'm just letting it happen. I've just given up the fight. For some of you, you're saying, no, no, no, I'm fighting very hard. I'm just not trusting my Savior. Some of you are like, I don't even know what my sin is.

What is it, right? These are good things for you guys to talk about, but here's what I want to encourage you to do in this group is don't spend the whole time talking about your sin. Quickly, as quickly as you possibly can, come together and begin to thank Jesus for how he's set you free.

Just spend time thanking and glorifying Jesus for the fact that, man, sin meant you were guilty, but the cross means that you are forgiven. God bless you guys.

I hope it helps. I hope it helps.