

## Easter 2018

The Christian life can be and should be summed up in two words – “Christ alone”. Without any question, those two words represent the primary focus of the Scriptures. Everything that Christians believe is condensed and captured in those two simple words – Christ alone. What we believe about salvation and eternity are based on those two words. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone upon which all of life stands or falls, and He is the literal embodiment of all of the purposes, goals, objectives, and plans that God has for every believer’s life. No one else in all of eternity could have done what Jesus did.

We call this a worship service, and it is even more meaningful because it is Easter when traditionally churches have sunrise services, special cantatas, and take the Lord’s Supper. However, it is not until someone recognizes Christ in His glory that He can really become the object of their worship and adoration. I love the passage in [Revelation 5:11-12](#) where in the throne room of God the following was exclaimed about Christ,

**Rev 5:11 (NKJV) Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup> saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"**

Whenever talking about the “**glory of Christ**”, it is a phrase that just seems to elude us relative to its true and accurate meaning. The life of Christ was marked by an incredible degree of both humiliation and suffering. He was the very Creator of those to whom He came, and yet He was “**despised and rejected of men**”, hated, beaten, crucified. His humanity actually veiled the glory and the splendor of Who He truly was and men never saw Him as One who was glorious. However, there were times when it was as if His glory could not be contained – the Mount of Transfiguration, the moment in the garden when He declared “**I am**”, talking with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Even as committed Christians, our very best understanding of Him is still very weak and feeble, and it is more than difficult at times to comprehend the actual glory that was and is His.

What we know and deeply believe is that the person of Christ and the work of Christ are eternally unique and utterly exclusive. Both of those taken together make the saving work of Christ on the believer’s behalf completely sufficient. Nothing else is needed. In fact, nothing else or no one else is even qualified. The Scriptures are clear in [1 Timothy 2:5](#) when it exclaims the following,

**1Ti 2:5 (NKJV) For *there is one God and one Mediator* between God and men, *the Man Christ Jesus,***

Maybe one of the boldest of all biblical declarations occurs in [Acts 4:12](#) when it states,

**Ac 4:12 (NKJV) Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."**

The crucified Christ, the risen Christ, the ascended Christ stands eternally ALONE at the very center of all of God’s purposes. Jesus Christ is the single object of saving faith, and nothing, absolutely nothing can be added to Him. If you as an individual want to ensure that you are truly Christian, then you have to ask the questions as to whether or not your life is thoroughly anchored in Christ, whether or not you are sincerely and deeply committed to Him and are willing to always give Him first place in your life. His person, His being, and His work on our behalf calls for nothing less. If this day you are certain of

the grace of God operating in your life, that grace cannot and is not something that is spiritually abstract or hypothetical, but it is anchored in the very person and work of Jesus Christ. The person of Christ and the work of Christ simply cannot be divided or separated. Who He is and what He did are not two different things. Christ did what He did because of who He actually is.

Now, the question that we have to answer if we are ever going to truly appreciate the events of Easter is really very simple. It is why did God the Son, the eternal triune person of the Godhead, why did He come to the earth as the God-Man and have to retain that position forever. The answer is simple. It was so that we could be saved. That is the answer, the only answer. In the mind and purposes of the Triune God, any of them could have performed the work of salvation, but in their eternal decision, it was determined that God the Son would be the One to make the greatest of all sacrifices. Apart from what God the Son did on our behalf, there is no salvation or any hope of salvation. Salvation cannot be separated from Christ in any way, and if it is, then it is not salvation and cannot save.

So, the reason that God the Son became the God-Man in the Incarnation was so that He could fulfill God's eternal purpose and do everything that would be necessary to save us. Sin had separated man from God, and man had no answer to that dilemma – none. Let me say it in another way. The focal point of redemption is the forgiveness of man's sin. The results of sin are so utterly disastrous that fallen man is not even willing to accept his dilemma. He still thinks all is well and that everything will work out for his benefit and blessing apart from Christ. In reality, that is a delusional and damning position. All men are born into a fallen state that demands God's judicial sentence against them. Apart from a saving relationship with Christ, man is in a state of condemnation before God with absolutely no possible solution for resolving his dilemma. Man faces a God who is completely self-sufficient, utterly holy in every respect, just at every level, and who is morally pure. So, when a defiled, sinful, disobedient, unloving, and uncaring sinner collides with God and His holiness, the tension between the two is unresolvable as far as man is concerned. Simply stated, it is no small event or decision for the Triune God to decide to forgive sin. Ultimately, it was God Himself who determined that He was the only One who could satisfy His own righteous demands to provide forgiveness – and that happened through the work of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Let me see if I can explain this in six statements. (1) God demands satisfaction for the punishment of man's sin. (2) God in His grace chose to forgive sin, not by overlooking it, but by divine punishment for that sin. (3) The Father and the Son agreed that the Son of God would come in the likeness of men and take the punishment. (4) God the Son was incarnated and qualified Himself to take the punishment. (5) Christ was fully obedient to the Father's will and sacrificed His life as man's substitute. (6) Christ's sacrifice fully satisfied the righteous demands of God for forgiveness.<sup>2</sup> Please take note that we are not even mentioned in these six steps. Salvation is all a work of God. Who Jesus Christ is qualifies Him to do the work that He did. No one else was qualified. The person of Christ, the life of Christ, and the death of Christ makes Him utterly sufficient to pay for man's sin. That is why what we confess as believers is "Christ alone" – and nothing else. The death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ were absolutely essential to bring about salvation.

At a negative level, sin is not something with which a man can trifle, not something that he can just casually dismiss as unimportant. Sin is the barrier between God and man, and man has no way of removing that barrier. Sin is the issue in man's relationship with God. Please do not miss the point that

God hates sin in any and every form that it may take in a person's life. To consciously and willingly sin against God, which is something for which all of us are guilty, is to set ourselves in opposition to Him and to invite His discipline on the Christian and to invite His judgment on the non-Christian. The moment that we turn to sin, choose to live in sin, at that very moment we alienate ourselves from God and from all that He desires for us to become.

Listen very carefully. There is absolutely nothing in Scripture, not the slightest hint that we can bring about reconciliation and forgiveness of sin by what we do. We created the barrier, but have no means of breaking that barrier down. However, the New Testament demands and insists that something must be done about the issue of sin. It is not something that can just be ignored, overlooked, or seen as of no importance. Sin has happened and it has results associated with it. Today, people just take sin lightly. If sin against God does not seem to bother a man, then he somehow believes that it must not bother God either. To the contrary, however, it creates a barrier that man cannot penetrate and a barrier that keeps that person from God.<sup>3</sup>

So, the issue of man's sin was something that had to be resolved. Until a barrier is removed, it will remain a barrier. From a spiritual perspective, there could be no relationship or fellowship between God and man until that sin barrier had been removed. Enter Christ, enter Easter, enter the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The enmity had to be removed and when Christ died on the cross and took His blood to the throne of God and offered it there as a just basis for the forgiveness of sin, God accepted the sacrifice. Only God could have done this, and He did. All of this was beyond us, but it was not beyond Christ. It is the very measure of His greatness, of His being, of His glory that He accomplished what He did. Why did God do this? Why did God choose to forgive us? Why did God even consider sacrificing His Son? It was because of you and me. It was because God loved us with an everlasting love. It was because God knew that we could never save ourselves. [Romans 5:8-11](#) declares,

**Ro 5:8 (NKJV) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. <sup>10</sup> For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. <sup>11</sup> And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.**

The death of Christ is the evidence of God's love for every one of us. It is the visual and graphic demonstration of His love. Do you know what was removed from our life? It was the wrath of God! Just imagine that for a moment – living for eternity under the awful wrath of God. It is unimaginable, indescribable, and horrific beyond any feeble description of it that can be made – and the great news is that it has been fully and completely removed. This is the glory of Christ, this is the glory of His blood, this is the glory of His offering His life as a living sacrifice. This is why we celebrate Easter. The problem that we have is that we live in a world that has everything backwards. The riches of God are considered trash to men. What God highly esteems, men despise. What is repugnant to God is loved by men. It is all backwards. So, when we come to something like the cross, it just turns all of man's values upside down – sacrificing your only Son! The cross of Christ, the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ is the very pinnacle of redemptive history. It was always the target, and what appeared to be the most tragic of all events became the most glorious.

Over a period of time in contemplating the absolute wonder of the sacrifice of Christ, I have come to an understanding of something that is so remarkable that I simply do not know how to put it into perspective. It has to do with two simple statements that I made in a seminary class that I was teaching on Romans. I was teaching out of [Romans 3](#) and I made the simple statement that at the cross that God the Father did two things: He placed our sins on Christ and He placed His wrath on Christ. Now, those are two very unpretentious statements. There was nothing in either one of them that should have caused any consternation or concern for anyone. They were theologically correct. However, what began to trouble me was the issue of exactly how did that happen, and how was Christ actually able to absorb and bear those things? All of the sins of men and all of the wrath of God against those sins are of such a magnitude that it is humanly impossible to describe. Where would one begin? How could we ever understand the enormity of taking on the judgment of sins of mankind and then having them placed on a Person? Then to actually bear the accrued punishment for that sin – the actual wrath of God itself, how did that happen? How could Christ in His mere human flesh ever absorb such things? I was deeply troubled by what I did not understand. There was something in those two simple statements that eluded me, that concerned me, and that spiritually challenged me at the deepest level of my understanding. There was something so unique about Christ in His death that I feared I had never understood – and I was humbled by my ignorance.

It so happened, however, that in the sovereignty of God that I was listening to some messages on the person of Christ by Wayne Grudem, and in one of those messages he made this simple statement. He said, and I paraphrase, that the pouring out of our sin on Christ and the pouring out of God's wrath on Christ was poured out on the **divine nature** of Christ. I was staggered! I was left utterly speechless! In that simple statement, God shook me to the very core of my existence. I was overwhelmed and overcome to the point of tears, and in my inner man I knew that there was a divine truth in that statement that was more than my feeble mind and heart could embrace. For days and days I sensed the drawing of God into that reality as never before.

The embedded truth that shook the very core of my being was that **the divine nature of God the Son was the object of God's wrath, as well as the repository of our sins**. In reality, the divine nature of Christ is the only part of His being, either His divine nature or His human nature, which could actually endure and survive the outpouring of God's wrath and the outpouring of all of our sin on Him. If we could somehow add up the entire accumulated and deserved wrath that we would have endured in eternity in the Lake of Fire if we had been lost and not saved, and then pour all of that out on Christ, **ONLY THE DIVINE NATURE OF CHRIST COULD HAVE ENDURED GOD'S PUNISHMENT**. That would have been our punishment! His humanity, His flesh would simply have been annihilated and utterly consumed with such a monumental punishment being poured out on Him for everyone. In His physical body He could never have absorbed such a degree of suffering. It would have been humanly impossible, and that is exactly why the Incarnation was so critical. It is because His incarnation maintained His divine nature, and that divine nature was the only element in all of eternity that could absorb and endure the pain and punishment that He endured. Please appreciate that I am not in any way diminishing the death of Christ on the cross. Paul said in [Galatians 6:14](#),

**<sup>14</sup>But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.**

To the contrary, I am elevating the cross beyond measure. It was a brutal, vicious, and inhumane death. It was a cruel and undeserved death, a death that defies a proper narrative. However, most of the time we only see it as a physical death and a spiritual separation from God the Father - which it was. However, in so doing we miss the part of His divine nature being the object of God's wrath as well. We think it was only His humanity that was suffering, but it was more. It was both His humanity and His divine nature that were suffering. For all intents and purposes, we can only relate to the physical suffering. At the peak of our understanding it would be virtually impossible to know what Christ suffered in His divine nature. In essence, the death of Christ was so much greater in magnitude than I personally ever understood it to be – and for that I am deeply ashamed.

What happened at the cross was so much more than Jesus Christ simply dying a cruel death. In His divine nature and in His human nature He actually became the object of the holy wrath of God – and both parts of His divine God-Man nature suffered as cannot be explained. His human body suffered the cruelest of all deaths, but His divine nature suffered in a way that will never be understood. If we do not understand the magnitude of the suffering that took place in His divine nature and in His divine essence, then in reality we have diminished the cross. His humanity, even though He suffered the most horrific of deaths, could never have endured what God did to His divine nature. That makes His sacrifice even that much greater. What He suffered was far, far more than we could ever even imagine. I was staggered by this! In my feeble comprehension of such a divine truth, I even more fully realize what took place at the virgin birth and why there even had to be a virgin birth. God the Son had to be able to identify with us in a human way, but at the same time He had to remain far above us so that He could actually suffer becoming sin for us in ways that we will never perceive. **“He who knew no sin became sin for us.”** Those three hours of darkness on the cross were so much more that we could ever understand or even explain. There had to be the divine nature at the cross to absorb the totality of God's judgment on sin. It had to be there to take on the sin that was poured out, and to take on the wrath of God that was beyond description. It would be the greatest of all pride for us to think that we could understand the magnitude and the immensity of what it meant for the God-Man to become sin and to literally have the accrued sin of all redeemed men poured out on His divine being – but this is Easter. This is Christ. This is why we are even here today. This is the glory of Christ! This has never been about Easter eggs and Easter bunnies and Poinsettia's in the sanctuary. Easter is the resurrected Christ in all of His glory and majesty and it should drive us to utter worship and adoration for His Person and His work on our behalf.

## **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Wellum, 109.

<sup>2</sup> Wellum, 109-110.

<sup>3</sup> Morris, 146-147.

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