



The Cross of Christ

Part 1 - Why the Cross is necessary

Sunday 3 March 2024

Introduction

Why do we need to look at The Cross?

- The cross of Christ is central

Unless we come to see what the cross means we do not understand Christianity... The cross is absolutely central. We must give time and attention to our understanding of what it means.

Leon Morris

- The cross of Christ is familiar
- The cross of Christ is misunderstood

How would you answer the question 'Why was it necessary that Jesus should die on the cross?' Be as specific as you can.

1. Why **we** need the Cross

Where it all begins – Genesis 1

NB God is good

Where it all went wrong – Genesis 3

NB Humanity has rebelled

(a) Adam: our first representative head

God has sovereignly ordered the human race that we are **all** be bound up with the moral actions of a single human, *either* Adam *or* Christ.

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

1 Corinthians 15:21-22 (NIV 2011)

- Inherited guilt
- Fallen nature
- Common destiny: death

(b) Objection: but I'm my own person / individualism

"I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul."

William Ernest Henley

"No man is an island"

John Donne

(c) You and me: sinners in the likeness of Adam

What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. ¹⁰ As it is written:

“There is no one righteous, not even one;

*¹¹ there is no one who understands;
there is no one who seeks God.*

*¹² All have turned away,
they have together become worthless;
there is no one who does good,
not even one.”...*

¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Romans 3:9-12, 18 (NIV 2011)

- We all sin (v. 9)
- Sin is rejection of God by deliberate choice (vv. 12, 18)

*“Sin is defiance, arrogance, the desire to be equal with God,...
the assertion of human independence over [and] against God”*

Emil Brunner, Man in Revolt

- Every aspect of our being is affected by sin

*“...no part of us is untouched by sin, and
therefore no action is as good as it should be”*

J I Packer

There's no denying the Fall is **bad news**, but it's bad news that brings **HOPE**

*“The Fall [is] the only encouraging view of life, for it holds...that
we have misused a good world, and not merely been entrapped
into a bad one.” G K Chesterton*

Objection: you can't hold me responsible!

No one likes being held responsible for their sin, and it's common for people to blame their upbringing, their genetics, anything that "gets them off the hook"! But being responsible for our actions is an important part of being human.

Question: Do we find it easier to take responsibility for:

- Failure?
or
- Success?

If someone says to you, "The main problem in your life is not what's happened to you, not what people have done to you; your main problem is the way you've responded to that" – ironically, that's empowering. Why? Because you can't do very much about what's happened to you or about what other people are doing-but you can do something about yourself.

Tim Keller, King's Cross, p. 28

(d) Bad news: the consequences of sin

1. We are _____

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰ Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

Romans 3:19-20 (NIV 2011)

2. We are _____

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour.

Colossians 1:21 (NIV 2011)

(See also Genesis 3:22-24)

3. We are _____

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

Titus 3:3

(See also John 8:34; Ephesians 2:1-3)

4. We are _____

He went on: "What comes out of a person is what defiles them. ²¹ For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²² adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.

²³ All these evils come from inside and defile a person."

Mark 7:20-23 (NIV 2011)

5. We are _____

"...but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

Genesis 2:17 (NIV 2011)

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins

Ephesians 2:1 (NIV 2011)

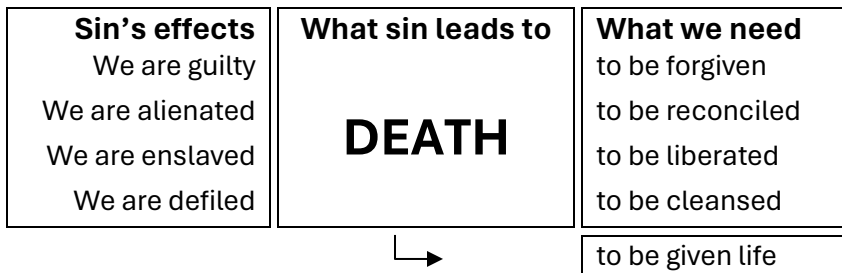


Table from Meynell, Cross-examined, p.61

(e) Summary

Our sin is...

- An inherited problem
- A problem we're also responsible for
- An all-encompassing problem

(f) Objection: this is all rather offensive!

Being offended ≠ Being innocent

2. Why **God** needs the Cross

For us to understand the Cross rightly we must understand **ourselves** rightly, but even more importantly, we must understand **God** rightly.

“The good God will forgive, that’s his job”, what do you/your friend(s) think to this statement?

“All inadequate doctrines of atonement (the cross) are due to inadequate doctrines of God and man.”

John Stott

(a) God is holy

And that’s a problem for sinful people...

Bible ref. (page no.)	Who meets God?	Response	Why?
Exodus 3:6 (59)			
Job 42:5-6 (542)			
Isaiah 6:5 (691)			
Ezekiel 1:28 (831)			
Daniel 10:8-9 (897)			
Luke 5:8 (1032)			
Revelation 1:17 (1233)			

In each of these examples we find God’s holiness **exposing sin**.

God's holiness is described in terms of:

- Height "the LORD most high" (Psalm 7:17; 9:2; 21:7; 46:4; etc. etc.)
- Distance "do not come any closer" (Exodus 3:6)
- Light "[God] lives in unapproachable light (1 Timothy 6:16)

(b) God is the offended party responding with
wrath / righteous anger

*Your eyes are too pure to look on evil;
you cannot tolerate wrongdoing.*
Habakkuk 1:13 (NIV 2011)

God's wrath / righteous anger to sin is described as:

- Fire (Hebrews 10:27, 31)
- Vomiting (Leviticus 18:25-28; Revelation 3:16)

In each of these examples we find God's wrath **opposing sin**.

NB God's anger is *not* like our anger

"An angry man opens his mouth, and closes his eyes." Cato
"God's settled, controlled, personal hostility to all that is wrong."
Rico Tice

God's wrath is **personal**, it's not simply an abstract force

As sin is a **personal** rejection of God; so wrath is a **personal** reaction in opposition to us.

God's wrath towards sin is **necessary** because...

(c) God is the just Judge

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne.

Psalm 89:14 (NIV 2011)

*The Lord loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of his unfailing love.*

Psalm 33:5 (NIV 2011)

So people will be brought low and everyone humbled, the eyes of the arrogant humbled. ¹⁶ But the Lord Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will be proved holy by his righteous acts.

Isaiah 5:15-16 (NIV 2011)

“God is in himself holy and just and has the constant will of giving to each his due”

Francis Turretin

*“God cannot permit his honour to be attacked... [He] would cease to be God if He could ...The law of His Divine Being, on which all the law and order in the world is based... demands the divine reaction” **Emil Brunner***

(d) Summary

Because God is holy he **exposes sin**.

Because God is the offended party, his wrath **opposes sin**.

Because God is the just judge, he cannot **overlook sin**.

For these reasons, forgiveness is a problem for God!

*“Forgiveness is to man the plainest of duties;
to God is it the profoundest of problems.”*

Carnegie Simpson

3. Why all this **bad** news?

A thorough and honest assessment is for our good. Think of the Columbia Disaster on 1 February 2003...



Understanding the bad news means

1. We rightly see our sin as serious and heinous
2. We see the majesty of God's love at the cross

"...our... emphasis on the atonement [cross] is dangerous if we come to it too quickly. We learn to appreciate the access to God which Christ has won for us only after we have first seen God's inaccessibility to sinners."

John Stott

"Only at the Cross of Christ does...the inviolable holiness of God, the impossibility of overlooking the guilt of man stand out more plainly; but nowhere else also does the limitless mercy of God, which utterly transcends all human standards, stand out more clearly and plainly."

Emil Brunner

