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THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS – PART 1
by Paris Reidhead

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Summary: The sermon explores the profound implications of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and our identification with Him in overcoming sin and evil.

Duration: 38:26 Topics: "Cross"
Scripture References: Ephesians 1:19–23, Ephesians 4:8, Ephesians 6:10–18, Colossians 2:12–15

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DESCRIPTION

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In this sermon, the speaker begins by emphasizing the importance of focusing on the scripture rather than the speaker's interpretation. The reading starts with Ephesians 4:8, which talks about Jesus ascending and giving gifts to mankind. The speaker then moves on to Ephesians 6:10–18, discussing the need to be strong in the Lord and put on the whole armor of God to stand against the devil's tricks. The sermon concludes with a reflection on the victory of the cross, where Jesus paid the penalty for sin and broke the power of hell.

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CONTENT

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And it took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in

heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Now, if you will please, to Colossians. And I think we can begin our reading with the twelfth verse. This is, as you will understand, is just interrupting the train of the Apostles' communication, but I think it will be clear.

We are buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead, and you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses, blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Now back to Ephesians, please.

Interestingly enough, as far as we know, all three of these lovely letters were written from the Marmartine prison there in Rome, which seem to indicate that at this point in the Apostles' ministry, he was deeply concerned that he could share this truth of our union or our identification with Christ. I think we can begin with the nineteenth verse, that we might know what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him in his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all to the church which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

And then I think it will pay us to look briefly at the fourth chapter. If you get weary of the reading, remember the scripture is what God said, and the message is what the speaker thinks God meant. And if you've got to remember one or the other, you remember the scripture.

We'll begin our reading with the eighth verse of Ephesians 4.

Wherefore

he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Bear that phrase in your mind as we turn to Ephesians chapter 6 and verses 10 through perhaps 18. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the

wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places.

Wherefore

take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand

in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, having on the

breastplate of righteousness your feet shod with the preparation of the

gospel of peace, above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the

helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.

Now

let us bow in prayer.

Father, we thank and praise thee for thy word. As we on this day come to

consider the victory of our Lord Jesus and us in him at Calvary, and at

that time of resurrection, we would ask that the eyes of our understanding indeed may be opened, that we may know that emancipation that he purchased for us with his poured out life, and that responsibility that he has entrusted to us to enforce his victory, and to bring the effects of that victory into our daily lives of family and

friends and church and business, and every area where thou hast made us

responsible. So be thou the teacher.

No two of us are in the same place in relation to thee. Our problems differ. They're all crucial.

They're all problems so enormous that only the risen Christ has the wisdom and the ability to solve them. We know that in every home there is such a tragedy as that. Somewhere immediately or attached to it by love and tender concern.

And so we would ask that today we might see him, not as he was, not as he's pictured in art, but as he's revealed, the Lamb upon the throne, standing on the sea of glass. See him as John saw him, hair as wool, eyes that burned his fire. Heard about him, perhaps, with a golden girl, out of his mouth and two edges sore, shining as the brightness of the sun.

And as John, who knew him and perhaps had become too satisfied with the memory of the days he'd walked with him, he forgot who he was. And so we had to turn to see him standing in the midst of the candlesticks. O Father of Jesus, open thou the eyes of our heart that this morning we may see him, and like John, may fall before him in worship, in abandonment, in love, in obedience.

So minister to us, we ask in the name and for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Amen. At Calvary, there were three worlds that came to focus, came into one single point in time.

In order to understand Calvary, I think we have to go back. We have to go back, if you're pleased when I am speaking on this on one occasion, a dear close friend. You know, with friends like mine, I've really never needed enemies.

They've been so faithful. And this particular friend said, well, we'll just mark that Perissery has personal metaphysics. Well, you may want to do the same, and if so, I'll not take offense.

But I have to try to understand what happened in times, so that I can, in the past, so that I can see the meaning of the present. And many years ago, while a student at the University of Minnesota, seated in the union, the student union reading, I had my little testament, and a fellow was at the other end of the couch, and he looked over and saw the shape of the book and wondered what it was. We began to talk, and he said, let me ask you a question.

If God knew that man was going to sin, man was going to do all the horrible things that he's done, if God knew the kind of a creature man was going to be in the way he turned out, why did he ever make him in the first place? Well, I must admit that I didn't have a very good answer at that time. I did the best I could, and I'm not just sure what I told him. But I wasn't satisfied, and I rather think he wasn't

either.

But, you know, an honest question deserves at least an attempt at an honest answer. And so I began to pursue this through the Scripture.

Why

did God make man? Why did he make him, and why did he make him as he did? And the only answer that I could find was in the character and the nature of God.

This God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is love. Not just love in the abstract, but a person who is infinite in his love. And we know from human experience, and we must reason from there, that love is really never complete without an object, without someone who needs that love, who can receive it, can appreciate it, and can return it in such a way as to satisfy the heart of the one who has loved originally.

And so I would suggest reverently that perhaps in the heart of God from

eternity past there had been a great longing and yearning for a beloved.

The eternal bridegroom had yearned for a bride. The eternal father had yearned for many sons and daughters.

And so God had purposed, even before the foundation of the world, that he would procure for himself just such an object of his love. And apparently he made everything that is as just preparation for this.

And

then in the fullness of time he made a being, of whom it was said, made

in the image and the likeness of God.

Well, why? We can only love that which is like us. We can't love in as many directions as we may carelessly use the word. You've used it that way, and I'm afraid I do.

We love our new house, love that shade of blue, love food, love cars, love pictures. We use it rather lightly. But in the last analysis we can

only love that which is capable of understanding our love, receiving it, needing it, enjoying it, and returning it.

So there are really two directions for love. We can love others in whose

image we share, and love God in whose image we're made. But that's about

the end for the right and proper use of that word love.

So if God was to have someone who was to be a fit object for his love,

he'd have to be like God. Now, we do not know in what particulars the other beings that God has made are unlike God. It doesn't say, and I'm not going to speculate.

He did make Seraphim and Cherubim and other angelic beings, perhaps. And we do not know wherein they differ. But we know that the only being God has said that is made in his likeness is man.

And the only being that God has made that he has said he loves is man. Now, that would mean then that in a sense man is a microcosm of God. That is, man possesses on a finite level the attributes that God has infinitely.

And we thus like him not in the sense of degree, but perhaps in kind. Now, previous to God's making man, there had been other beings made. I've referred to them, among whom or above whom was one called Lucifer, the son of the morning.

Apparently, God had invested in this being Lucifer the greatest intelligence and power of personality, ability, beauty, many other attributes that God had seen fit to put into this one angelic being. And apparently his reason was that Lucifer could serve as the prime minister, if you please, over the created angelic beings. Now, God's character is given to us in simple words.

I've already used this expression, God is love. Elsewhere in the Scripture we find the statement God is light, and then we find God is life, and God is truth. So let's just take four.

God is light and life and love and truth. Now we find that there is a conflict going on in the mind of Lucifer. It's recorded in the Scripture.

This being entrusted with so much responsibility did, as employees frequently do, he disagreed with the management. And he said, you know, God is doing it this way, but if I were God, I wouldn't do it that way. Well, that's just a matter of an opinion.

Then imagination says, but if I were God, I would do it this way. That's moved beyond an opinion now to something of a plan. And then we find the next step, just an idea, or an opinion, and then a plan, and then a moment of decision.

And we find this one Lucifer, as it were, clenching his fist and saying,
I will be like the Most High. I will set my throne above the throne of the Most High. I will be God.

Now, he was no fool, obviously, if he was that intelligent. And he knew
that if he were to be above the throne of the Most High, he'd have to have character upon which all power rests, and he would have to have tools, which are the implementing of character. Now, if God is love and
light and life and truth, then that is something.

That is, that has meaning, that has reality. But it's a law of logic that every thesis has its antithesis, or every positive has its negative. The positive only has meaning in relation to the negative.

And if you want to put it another way, perhaps more simply, every front
has its back. If you see what looks to be the front of a hand, and you quickly run around, there's no back. You didn't see a hand.

You saw an illusion of one, because if there's a front, there has to be
a back. And if there is love, there has to be an opposite, or else it has no meaning, it has no existence. Now, it may have had only potential
existence.

But here is a being who says, I'm going to set my throne above the throne of the Most High. So what did he do? Well, if you please, he said, I can't out-love God and be God in his place, but I can take the antithesis to love, and my character will be hate. God is light.

The opposite has potential existence at least. He calls it as it were, saying, I'll take as my attribute, my aspect of character, darkness.
God
is life.

And so his decision was, if he was to set his throne above the throne of
the Most High, that he would take as his character death, and God is truth. And so if he's going to over-vanquish God, then he can reach out,
if you please, and get the very opposite and take the lie. So here is a
being now armed with darkness and death and hate and the lie.

And here is God, whose character is light and life and love and truth.

Now, what can God say at the beginning of such a conflict? Oh, I hate that dark--oh, no, you see, if he had done that, he would have destroyed himself. He could not take hatred to overcome hatred without destroying his own being.

And so love has to encounter hatred, and light has to absorb and encounter and defeat darkness, and life has to triumph over death, and truth has to absorb all the power of the lie. And so there's a conflict, of which our Lord Jesus speaks when he said, I saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven. And we presume he fell as we were.

Now, my metaphysics may be not yours, but I rather have the feeling that, oh, I'm going to be cagey this morning. I rather have the feeling that perhaps maybe there might be--how's that? Is that going to get me off the hook, or should I put another qualifier? That what you have in between Genesis 1-1 and 1-2 is what happened when Christ saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven. For it says, In the beginning God, Bara, made out of nothing the heavens and the earth.

And then in verse 2, And the earth became without form and void. Which might be at a time when someone who is darkness and death and hatred and the lie comes down to a planet, and it's going to reflect his character. And darkness covered the face of the deep.

And the earth was without form and dead. Well, it would look like it was the place where such a fellow as this would be in charge, doesn't it? But in the fullness of time, when God wanted to make this beloved, he'd yearn for where'd he go? Some fresh new planet out there and say, Now listen, you rascal, you stay there, and I'm out. Oh, no, no.

He came where darkness covered the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the earth. And he said, Light be! And light was. But it was divided so that there was light and darkness, as it were, in daily conflict with each other.

And then he recreated the earth and made it a fit and proper habitation for this beloved whom he was going to bring. Put everything that was there needful and said, Now I've given you this, and you are to dress

it

and be responsible for it and to govern it and name it. Now, didn't he know what he was doing? Of course he did.

Didn't he know that this clever fellow could take any shape or form he so desired in this kind of an environment? Of course he did. Didn't he know that there would be a serpent that would coil itself around a tree

and beguile Mother Eve, appeal to her appetite? So what did God put into

Eve and Adam when he made them? What did he give them? Well, he said he

made them in his image and likeness. He gave them, that is not in the physical, in that sense, but he gave them a body and a body that has in

it desires.

He gave them personality and personality has appetites. Let's look at the appetites for just a moment. Man is finite, God is infinite.

God gave to man a finite mind and we learn in sequence, so he gave to us

curiosity and intellectual hunger, a desire to know. And the, is not that? He was there to stir us on. And then our bodies are sustained by calories, carbohydrate, protein, fat, God made us this way.

And he put it all there, made it all available, and then he put within us something called an appetite, an urge or a drive or a propensity to take it at periodical intervals in order that we could maintain our health. And then he gave to us, gave to man the responsibility to rule over all of his creation, so he built into man this something that wants

him to stand erect and to enforce his will and to govern. And this is not bad.

It was there to enable man to do the task God had given to him. And then

he made the pair and his purpose was to obtain this family of beloved by

a process of procreation. He gave with him an urge or a drive or a propensity for sex.

And then God had provided so munificently for his creatures and so he gave to them a desire for security. And then God gave to them these marvelous abilities to taste and smell and see. And then he made the watermelon.

Have you ever thought about it? Isn't that lovely? And you don't need it, but he made it attractive to look at and fragrant and so tasty.

Just

a little bonus. I just fucked it in, you know.

Isn't that nice? And he gave all, and with all these drives or urges or propensities in this first man, what did he say? He looked at him as he'd made him and he said, it is good. Don't you ever allow anyone to tell you the body is bad, the appetites are bad, the urges are, no, no. Now that's not where the problem lies.

Someone says the cause of accidents is not in the reasons for which the makers are forced to recall the cars for adjustment. It's the loose nut behind the wheel that does the damage. And this is true.

And so the body that God gave and the drives and the urges and the appetites, he looked at it and he said, it is good. And he put into that environment everything needed to satisfy every appetite. And he made it legitimate in a proper way.

But what happened? Mother Eve was tempted. Do you know what temptation is? Well, temptation is the proposition presented to the intellect to satisfy a good appetite in a bad way. I'll back out of that and drive into it again.

Temptation is the proposition presented to the intellect to satisfy a good appetite in a bad way. And as long as you have appetites and intellect, you're capable of being tempted. There's no state of grace or work of love God has ever provided.

If you ever come to the place that you're not capable of being tempted, then know you've attained a state where you're holier than his wonderful son was. Because he was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Temptation is the proposition presented to the intellect to satisfy a good appetite in a forbidden way.

So what happens? Into this garden now has come Satan. And he says, yea, hath God said. It's the part lie.

You'll die. You're not really going to. This fruit isn't poisonous.

You don't take one bite and keel over. It's not cyanide. It's apple.

It's good to look at it. And it tastes so nice. It'll make you wise.

You're going to know good and evil if you eat it. And so there's a temptation. That wasn't sin.

Mother Eve looked at it. She weighed the argument. Then there was a decision.

Now she had sinned before her hand ever reached out for the fruit. Because I'm going to give you the definition of sin. If temptation is the proposition presented to the intellect to satisfy a good appetite in a bad way, sin is the decision of the will to satisfy a good appetite in a bad way.

It's the decision of the will. Now it doesn't mean that you have to already have killed to be a murderer. He that hates his brother, has the intention to harm, is already a murderer.

He hasn't raised his hand, no blood on his fist, but he's still a murderer because he has the intention. Now, there you see something happening. Who is it that's there? It's the God of this world.

The God of darkness and death and hatred and the lie that's come to Mother Eve. And what has she done? What's happened? Well, God made this to be a circle. He would pour his love upon man and fulfill and satisfy man.

He made in us an empty place. Nothing in the universe can fill but God. And then man's love was to go out to God and God's love to man.

And it would be a circle. It's symbolized in the wedding ring of poured-out love. And our love would satisfy the ancient longing in his heart and his love would satisfy the longing in ours.

And you know what happened? Man sinned. Well, what is it? Sin is the decision of the will to gratify one's appetites irrespective of the will of God or the rights of others. Sin is self-love.

It's that cutting of the circle and the love that should have gone out to God turns in upon oneself. And now man has come under the control of

the God of this world. And he's died.

He's died four ways. He began to die physically because the wages of sin is death, death, separation of the spirit from the body. He certainly died legally with that act.

He had no longer any hold upon God. God had no responsibility to him. You've seen the ad, having left my bed and board.

I do not accept any responsibility for debts incurred by so-and-so. Legal responsibility ceases. God, man died legally.

He died spiritually because his love turned away from God. Now God is just simply withdrawing. It wasn't that he turned to dust.

Your radio may be dead or your television set. That doesn't mean everything in it's a pile of rust. It just means the connections aren't functioning.

And that's what happened with man. Just the connections loosened. And man can't get the broadcasting.

God, he lives, we live and move and have our being. But the receiving set isn't working when we're dead in our sins. But that doesn't mean that we're annihilated.

It just means that it isn't an adjustment. God isn't broadcasting at our wavelength any longer. We're just not getting the picture, not getting the message.

But he's there. And then he died, of course, eternally, separated from God. And being thus made in his image is, we believe, incapable of annihilation and therefore will have continuous being in some place.

Now, this process goes on. God gives, and I haven't time for all the time pictures, just one. There in the garden, what's happened? We see Adam and Eve, now their character reflecting their new God, the God of this world.

And they're hiding. It's about time for him to come. And they get where the bushes are the thickest and the leaves are the heaviest.

And they've covered themselves. They know so little about it. And they're blinded by the God of this world.

And Adam says, shh, he may not find us. And God, in the cool of the

evening, walks, Adam, where art thou, Adam? And at last, drawn by the loving entreaty of God, no running in confession and contrition and repentance, hiding from God, which is the characteristic of all of us ever since, God always on the seeking hand, drawn by his love and wooed by his voice, stands out there defiant and rebellious. And what does he say? Well, now, what's the God of this world? Darkness and death and hatred and the lie.

What is this thou hast done? The woman you gave me made me to eat. Now, if you've got to kill somebody, kill her. Kill her.

She did. What is this? Isn't this the lie? She didn't make him to eat. Isn't this hatred? Isn't this darkness? Certainly it's death.

All the attributes. But do you see what happens to the Lord Jesus? For it is he in his Shekinah presence that walks that day. The lamb, its life is given, its blood is shed, and he lifts, it wasn't a coat of wool, it was a coat of skins.

And he wraps it around Eve and around Adam, and he said, one day down across the air there will be one who is the seed of the woman and will bruise the serpent's head, though the serpent will bruise his heel, and then that will be your covering. And so Adam knew Eve, and Eve looked at the little boy, and she said, I have gotten the man from the Lord. No, she hadn't.

A man who was to murder a brother, his brother but not the man. It remained for centuries to elapse until one day the angel spoke to a vessel handmaid and told her that that which was to be born of her was Emmanuel, God come in the flesh. Who is it? This same one that walked in the cool of the eve, now by the presence of the Holy Ghost, is joined to one cell in the body of Mary, and that which is born of her is indeed Emmanuel.

And he lives a sinless life subjected to all the tests and all the pressures of temptation to which he allowed man to be put, but he is without sin. So the lawgiver who said, the day thou eatest thou shall die, has now taken his place among the law keepers and can hear the Father say, my beloved son in whom I am well pleased, so that he can take the place of the lawbreakers. And so at Calvary what do you have? Well, you have three worlds come to focus.

One is the world of man's hatred against God, which is what we see the

Pharisees and the Romans doing to Christ. And the second is God's hatred against sin, God's wrath and anger with sinners. And the third is the hatred of Satan toward both God and man made in his image.

So our Lord Jesus, as it were, reaches out to where you were and I would be in time, and he draws us to himself. As he reached back into time and found Adam in one hand and Eve in the other and drew them to himself and all who trusted him in the past, and he was made to be sin for us, he who knew no sin. Now when he did that, when he laid our sin upon his own body on the tree, he then did something.

He made himself now subject to everything that the God of this world can do. Do you understand? In a mortal body, yes. Now he was this sinless holy son of God over whom Satan had no power.

But when he found you in time and found me and he drew us, and he became sin for us, was made to be what we were. Now what happens? God sees him as me and does everything that he must do to me. And he took that cup of God's wrath and drank it to its last drop.

Man saw him as God and did everything he's wanted to do toward God. But Satan saw him also as God. Now laden with our sin and thus vulnerable, so what happens in those hours of darkness when all hell gathers around the cross? There is the Lord Jesus Christ, eternal love saying to hatred, hatred, do your worst.

There is eternal light saying to darkness, darkness, this is your hour. There is eternal life saying to death, death, if you can do it now. And there is truth saying to the lie, you have the floor, do as best you can.

And when there's not another drop in the cup of God's wrath against man and there's not another arrow in the quiver of hell, the Lord Jesus says, it is finished. It is finished. And he went into the grave, chained as it were, bound, the tomb sealed.

The third day that God life that cannot die, burst the bonds and broke the bands. And he stood forth in the glory of his resurrection triumphant. What did he say? He said the penalty of sin is fully paid.

But he also said the power of hell is fully broken. Now that's the victory of the cross. Father, we thank thee and praise thee that he led captivity captive.

And you have exalted him and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and in earth. Should there be any who have not bowed here in time, that they might even in this moment so do. And those of us who have, rejoice again in his triumph and accept the responsibilities that he's entrusted to us of enforcing his victory in time.

So to that end, seal the word to our hearts. For Jesus' sake, amen.

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