

The Cross, God's greatest glory

Intro: We have by no means exhausted the nature of God in these studies; but I do hope that we have as a result a greater understanding of and respect for God. What I have hoped to help us see together is the great glory of God. Like Moses, we should long for the experience of seeing God's glory and say with him, "Lord, show me your glory".

If I could pick one event in the history of the world that reveals God's glory, it would be the crucifixion of Jesus. In that single event we see demonstrated the glory of all God's characteristics. As John Stott has said, "The achievement of Christ's cross must be seen in terms of revelation as well as salvation". The cross is a revelation of God great glory.

The cross reveals:

The glory of God's Wisdom or Omniscience

Paul reminds us that the wisdom of man, no matter how great, could conceive the plan that God had in mind. Who would have thought that God would redeem men to Himself by the sacrifice of His own provision? The cross reveals the awesome wisdom of God.

but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; (1 Corinthians 2:7)

At the same time it reveals God's knowledge of all things from the beginning.

knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you (1 Peter 1:18-20)

The glory of God's Faithfulness or Veracity

From the dawn of creation God spoke of His redemptive purpose. The OT is filled with His promises.

To Satan

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." (Genesis 3:15)

To Abraham

And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."(Genesis 12:3)

To Israel

All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. (Isaiah 53:6)

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." (Luke 24:44)
Everything God promised to do He did. The cross is the glory of His veracity.

The glory of God's Sovereignty

The cross though a surprise to all those who loved Jesus on earth was no surprise to God. In fact, it displays His Lordship over all, making all things work for His purposes.

this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. (Acts 2:23)

The cross was simply the outworking of the plan of God from the beginning. It was:

Conceived in eternity

Announced in history

Accomplished in the fullness of times

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, (Galatians 4:4)

The glory of God's Holiness

God is wholly other than what we are and this is especially so in terms of His moral purity. Man's sin creates a vast divide between the holy God and us. No human effort can span the gap that our sin has created. Only the cross can remove the sin that is an affront to God's holiness. Only a perfect sacrifice could stand in our stead.

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

The cross then reveals the glory of God's holiness in that only Jesus' death could make it possible for sinners to approach God.

The glory of God's Justice

If God's holiness prevents his fellowship with man as a sinner, then His justice demands that sin be punished. In the cross we see the glory of God's justice.

God's justice was manifest in the punishment of Jesus in our stead, even those who for a time had not been punished for their sins.

This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:25-26)

By the cross God's perfect justice was displayed in punishing sin.

The glory of God's Wrath

Cross also reveals the magnitude of God's wrath against sinners. What punishment would be suitable for man's sin? Perhaps the human response is to suggest some minor penalty. A payment of a huge sum of money? A lifetime in a prison cell? What propitiation would satisfy the wrath of God? How big did the gift have to be? The answer is the life of God's own son! and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. (1 John 2:2)

Jesus Himself alluded to the measure of God's wrath He would endure in his question to the sons of Zebedee:

Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" (Mark 10:38)

This statement reminds us of the magnitude of God's wrath as it was poured upon God's son for us! The cross reveals the glory of God's wrath.

The glory of God's Love

This is feature of God we most commonly associate with the cross. Divine love manifests itself in giving to meet the need of man.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16) For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:7-8)

Our need of redemption was supplied by God because of His great love.

The glory of God's Grace

The cross reveals not only the glory of God's love in responding to our need; but also to the glory of God's grace in supplying it to the undeserving.

But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. (Hebrews 2:9)

What was there about mankind that necessitated a sacrifice so great?

Nothing. The cross reveals the glory of His grace.

The glory of God's Omnipotence

Have you ever contemplated the power of God in the cross? That power is seen in:

The effects of Jesus' death on the world

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)

God's inactivity in the face of His Son's death demonstrates an awesome power as well, the glory of His omnipotence.

I've often thought of the creation of the world as the greatest expression of God's power; but consider this. What power would it have taken to watch your own innocent Son be mocked, beaten, and cruelly murdered and do nothing to stop it? Every person

knows what great power of self-restraint it would take not to intervene in such a situation.

The glory of God's Goodness and Mercy

God's goodness and mercy is seen in all that God has provided for us through the death of His Son.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, (Ephesians 1:3) All the blessing we have in Jesus flow from the goodness and mercy of God. But none of them could exist separate and apart from His cross.

The glory of God's Eternality

The cross of Christ reaches back to the eternal purposes of God and it reaches forward to eternity future.

Back to the mind of God before the creation of all

And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. (Revelation 13:8)

Able to save forever

Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:25)

The cross displays the glory of His eternal nature.

The glory of God's Immutability

The cross reveals the unchangeableness of God. Some people seem to have the concept of God that He got softer with age. In the OT He was demanding and just; in the NT forgiving and loving. The truth is God is unchangeable and the death of Jesus reveals the constancy of God's character. The varying features of God's character seen in the cross illustrate this truth.

God did not become something He wasn't nor cease to be something He was. The cross is a manifestation of what God has always been and always will be!

Conclusion: No wonder God has called upon us to gather and remember the death of His Son. If we truly comprehend what Jesus did, then each week we are at the same time drawn to the God who planned it all! All praise, honor, glory belong to Him!