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Sermon Notes

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The Cross of Christ: Ongoing Power for the Journey of Salvation

1 Corinthians 1:18

Surveying the Wondrous Cross:

Long before he was our first President, long before his victory over Cornwallis at Yorktown, long before his courageous crossing of the Delaware River on Christmas Eve, long before any of that, George Washington made a living as a surveyor and mapmaker of colonial Virginia

In 1749, at the age of 17, Washington secured an appointment as county surveyor for the newly created frontier county of Culpeper

As a surveyor, Washington would ride through the wilderness, following rivers and mapping out uncharted territory for future settlers; once he got in a canoe with two other men and set out from Fort Pitt to explore possible sites for bounty lands, making notes and observations as they journeyed to the junction of the Ohio and Great Kanawha Rivers and several miles up the Great Kanawha.

To be an excellent surveyor required a careful eye, a great deal of courage, and artistic ability as he would look over the terrain, studying its hills and valleys, its streams and rivers, its forests and glades

It paid very well, and it also put a man in a position to discern the best chunks of unsettled land and buy it from the British colonial authorities before anyone else knew of it

In this way, Washington was able to begin to acquire some of the choicest chunks of real estate in the colony of Virginia... he made his first purchase of unsettled land in 1752: 1,459 acres along Bullskin Creek in Frederick County, Virginia. Over the next half century Washington would continue to seek out, purchase, and eventually settle numerous properties. His will, executed in 1800, lists 52,194 acres to be sold or distributed in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, Kentucky, and the Ohio Valley

Surveying rich Virginia land gave Washington an advantage in wealth... and also an advantage in war; during the French and Indian war, and during the American Revolution, Washington's practiced eye was able to discern the best position for his

troops and his cannon; and his knowledge of Virginia territory helped him win the battle of Yorktown

This morning, I want to continue a different kind of survey... a careful surveying of a different kind of rich terrain: the cross of Jesus Christ

Isaac Watts's famous hymn points the way:

“When I **survey** the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died...
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride”

Like Washington, we survey the cross to find out how rich we are in God: Last week, we surveyed the cross for attributes of God... what it taught us about God's nature... like a prism, breaking the white light into a rainbow of colors

This week, we survey the cross as a rich source of power, ongoing power for the Christian life... like Washington finding an abundance of natural resources in the wilderness territory of Virginia and Ohio, so we find in the cross all the power we need for our journey to heaven

I. The Cross: Ongoing Power for “Us Who are Being Saved”

1 Corinthians 1:18 the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

A. Our Salvation is a Journey

1. the Greek participle here is best translated in this way: “to us who are being saved”
2. parallel construction: “to those who are perishing”
3. reminds me of the two roads Jesus spoke of

Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

4. salvation is a journey...
 - a. justification
 - b. sanctification
 - c. glorification

AND like all journeys, it needs a power source

B. Salvation Journey Needs Power

1. "Power" = the ability to produce change, to do work, to make a difference
2. the longest journey ever travelled by a man-made object is the Voyager 1: a space probe launched way back in 1977
 - a. as of December 7, 2007, it had travelled almost 10 billion miles from earth
 - b. it uses radioactive decay to generate electricity for its power... the Voyager 1 probe's power source has already lasted far longer than they thought it would
3. Our journey of sanctification is an infinite journey... to go from being dead in sin to perfect in Christlikeness requires infinite power
4. The ongoing source of that power is the cross of Christ... and God's commitment to finish the work he began in us

Philippians 1:6 he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

POWER: The ability to exert effort for a purpose... physical, mental, emotional, spiritual effort to achieve a change

The greater the power, the greater the effect... the cross of Christ gives ONGOING ENERGY for the infinite journey of sanctification

it is essential that we recognize how needy and totally dependent we are on Christ for our ongoing journey of sanctification

We need to come back again and again to the cross of Christ!! For what?

- Ongoing Cleansing from Sin and Guilt
- Ongoing Welcome in Prayer
- Ongoing Protection from Pride and Worldliness
- Ongoing Pattern for Daily Service
- Ongoing Focus of Worship
- Ongoing Training in Hope-Filled Suffering
- Ongoing Center of Evangelism

II. Ongoing Cleansing from Sin and Guilt

1 John 1:7 if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

A. Sanctification: A Journey into our Own “Heart of Darkness”

1. The Spirit takes us by the hand and leads us down into the darkest recesses of our souls
2. He shows us the hidden pockets of rebellion still there
 - a. The pride that pops up when someone insults us or slights us
 - b. The covetousness that burns in us when we see someone else with a beautiful home or new car or suit
 - c. The lust that enflames our hearts when provoked by temptations
 - d. The anger that burns toward another person when they cause us pain
 - e. The prayerlessness and coldness toward the things of God
3. How does the Spirit do this? By orchestrating circumstances in which these hidden sinful traits come oozing to the surface
4. It isn't long before the Christian begins to lament against himself... against the vileness of his own sin:

Job: I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes (Job 42:6)

David: I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. (Psalm 51:3)

Daniel: we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. (Daniel 9:5)

Ezra: O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens. (Ezra 9:6)

Paul: What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? (Romans 7:24)

B. Satan the Accuser: seeks to keep us out of action

1. He lures us to sin, then turns around and accuses us most bitterly
2. spiritual depression comes more in this one topic than any other... our own sinfulness

3. we violate our consciences, then feel as though we can never recover

C. One simple answer: COME TO THE CROSS AGAIN

1. the Christian life is not a life of perfection... only of seeking perfection every day
2. 1 John 1:7 speaks of walking in the light as he is in the light... a constant lifestyle of following Christ moment by moment
 - a. But note; the blood of Jesus CLEANSSES US from sin... a constant stream of cleansing from sin's defilement
3. the cross of Christ is available for constant cleansing
 - a. Hebrews 9 speaks of the blood of Christ able to cleanse a guilty conscience
 - b. If your conscience is defiled by some sin pattern, come to the cross again and again for cleansing

Hebrews 9:14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

4. The lyrics of "There is a Fountain Filled with Blood..." sums up the power of the cross to cleanse us constantly from indwelling sin

William Cowper, 18th century hymnwriter, struggled all his life with deep depression and mental instability

At one point resolved to commit suicide; but God sovereignly prevented him from carrying it through... he felt so deeply guilty, as though his sin could never be forgiven

But on reading Romans 3:25-26, he came to realize that the blood of Christ, shed on the cross for sinners like him was sufficient to cleanse him from all ungodliness... so he wrote the hymn "There is a Fountain Filled with Blood"

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
 And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.
 Lose all their guilty stains, lose all their guilty stains;
 And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day;
 And there have I, though vile as he, washed all my sins away.
 Washed all my sins away, washed all my sins away;
 And there have I, though vile as he, washed all my sins away.

III. Ongoing Welcome in Prayer

A. Prayerlessness is a Great Danger

1. One effect of sin and its guilt... prayerlessness
2. John Bunyan: “Prayer drives out sin, or sin drives out prayer”
 - a. Because of guilt feelings, we feel alienated from God and unwelcome in His presence
 - b. We feel we will have no power in prayer... that God would not want to hear our prayers
 - c. BUT this shows a basic misunderstanding... actually arrogance on our part
 - d. As though our best days and the good deeds they involve give us standing in the eyes of the thrice-holy King of the Universe!!!

B. God’s Holiness Daunting

Psalm 24:3-4 Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? ⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart

C. Ongoing Welcome in Prayer: Christ’s Cross... Not Our Works

Hebrews 10:19-22 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God...

1. Basic command: draw near to God
2. How? Confidence through the blood of Christ
3. A new and living way opened up for us into the very throne room of God
4. the “curtain” refers to the veil that separated the holy place from the most holy place
5. the way opened is HIS BODY... clearly the confidence we have in the presence of God is the cross of Christ... on that basis alone God will hear our prayers

IV. Ongoing Protection from Pride and Worldliness

Galatians 6:14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

A. Paul Dealt Constantly with Pride

1. He mentions boasting frequently in his letters
2. He was tempted toward spiritual pride in his days as a Pharisee of Pharisees
 - a. He gives his former resume in Philippians
 - b. He was always ready to excel more and more in Judaism... to be able to boast over others
3. Paul learned how empty are all human achievements when he encountered the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus
 - a. All human glory is like NOTHING compared to Christ's achievement at the cross
 - b. So Paul renounces all human boasting in Galatians 6:14

Galatians 6:14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world

- c. I sometimes hear the boasting of people drunk with the mindset of our present age and I shudder
 - Politicians make arrogant claims about their leadership skills, their vision, their courage, their record
 - Corporate executive make arrogant claims and boasts about their wealth, their power, their success
 - Athletes make arrogant claims about their athletic accomplishments... the number of points they score, how fast they can run... "I am the greatest of all time!!" they claim... sportscasters play into this by using the language of boasting

"You're watching what true greatness is all about!!" spoke about Larry Bird when he scored a lot of points in a playoff game

I thought "No, true greatness is all about the cross of Christ!"

Hear again the words of Isaac Watts:

"When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died...
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride"

Forbid it Lord, that I should boast
 Save in the death of Christ my God
 All the vain things that charm me most
 I sacrifice them to his blood

B. Worldliness Dies at the Cross Too

1. Paul: by the cross of Christ **“the world has been crucified to me...”**
2. **AND I to the world**
 - a. in other words, the world looks dead and useless to Paul after coming to Christ
 - b. AND Paul looked dead and useless to his former buddies in the Sanhedrin after his conversion
3. The essence of worldliness: selfish striving after personal power, pleasure, and possessions
 - a. They all appear empty when we survey the wondrous cross
 - b. The world and all its achievements are stripped of their glory there
4. Ongoing power for seeing the world’s allurements as the empty things they are

Another hymn... “Knowing You...”

All I once held dear, built my life upon
 All this world reveres and wars to own
 All I once thought gain I have counted lost
Spent and worthless now, compared to this:

Knowing You, Jesus, knowing you... there is NO greater thing

The baubles and treasures of the world look utterly worthless

John Wesley’s Journal, December 23, 1755;—I was in the robe-chamber, adjoining the House of Lords, when the King put on his robes. His brow was much furrowed with age and quite clouded with care. And is this all the world can give even to a king? All the grandeur it can afford? A blanket of ermine round his shoulders, so heavy and cumbersome he can scarcely move under it! A huge heap of borrowed hair, with a few plates of gold and glittering stones upon his head! Alas, what a bauble is human greatness! And even this will not endure.

All human greatness looks like NOTHING compared to the cross of Christ!! The cross is like a lens... looking one way, it MAGNIFIES Christ's glory; looking the opposite way, it MINIMIZES human glory

V. Ongoing Pattern for Daily Service

1 John 3:16-18 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

A. Christ's Sacrifice a Pattern for Our Daily Sacrifices

1. there is a certain moral obligation that comes with the cross of Christ
2. Count Zinzendorf's experience
 - One of the most influential missionary leaders in Protestant history
 - Born in 1700 in an influential German family of nobility
 - His father died, mother remarried; was raised by a grandmother and aunt, whose warm evangelical Pietism softened his heart toward the gospel
 - Still, struggled with his future calling; went to Wittenberg to study law in preparation for a successful life as a government leader... but he actually desired to go into Christian ministry
 - Went on a tour of Europe in 1719, and was arrested by a painting of Christ enduring pain and anguish for him... the painting was by the Italian artist Domenico Feti, and it was called *Ecce Homo*... Pilate's statement 'Behold, the man...' At the bottom of the painting was this inscription: "All this I have done for you; what are you doing for me?"
 - That question haunted Zinzendorf, and it has stayed with me too...
 - He lived the rest of his life using his wealth and influence to spread the gospel of Christ and to alleviate suffering
 - Many others have faced the same moral power of the cross... like C.T. Studd... the wealthy British cricket champion who left all that worldly success to serve Christ as a missionary in China, India, and Africa:

If Jesus Christ is God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.

3. Christ's pattern of selfless sacrifice then becomes our pattern of daily life...

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

VI. Ongoing Focus of Worship

A. Last Week: Prism

1. likened the cross of Christ to a prism in which we can see most clearly the perfections of Christ; by "surveying" the wondrous cross, we can see more and more of God's glory

his grace... his love... his power... his wisdom... his patience... his kindness... his wrath... his power... his infinity... his justice

2. whatever attributes there may be, you can see them most clearly in the cross

3. So the cross is the perfect focus of our worship

a. Not a physical cross per se, an idol that we grovel in front of

b. But the truths flowing from scripture as represented by the cross

B. Heavenly Worship is Throne-centered AND Cross-centered

1. all of heaven centers on the throne of God... the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures all gather around the throne, encircling it with their praise

2. they fall down before the throne and give praise, glory and honor to him who sits on the throne

3. BUT the worship is also cross-centered

Revelation 5:6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.

Revelation 5:11-12 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

a. Worthy is the LAMB WHO WAS SLAIN

b. The great glory of God is displayed PERFECTLY CLEARLY at the cross

c. The millions of angels who surround the Lamb especially praise him for what he accomplished on the cross... SO MUST WE

VII. Ongoing Training in Hope-Filled Suffering

A. How Will You Face Suffering? And how will you face your own death?

1. Justin Martyr, second-century apologist, writer, defender of the faith, was converted by watching Christian martyrs die

“I watched them stand fearless in the face of death and of every other thing that was considered dreadful.”

2. Martyrdom of Perpetua & Felicitas

In 203 AD a group of Christians in Carthage, North Africa, were sentenced to the beasts in the arena. One of these was Felicitas a slave woman and mother of seven

Felicitas said to her Roman persecutor: “While I live, I shall defeat you; and if you kill me, in my death I shall defeat you all the more.”

3. Not every Christian will suffer persecution and martyrdom... but how we face suffering is vital to the witness we leave in this lost world

B. Suffering Inevitable in Life

1. no one makes it through this world unscathed by suffering
2. the varieties of ways we suffer make suffering unavoidable
 - a. physical pain: everything from daily bumps, bruises, the flu, etc. to terminal illness like cancer or heart disease
 - b. emotional pain: family struggles, broken relationships, strife in marriage, disappointments in life, opportunities that pass us by, discouragement and depression
 - c. financial difficulties... loss of possessions, loss of job, economic issues like spiraling prices
3. These are the trials that are common to man

C. Suffering Inevitable in the Christian Life

1. Two trials unique to Christians:
2. Suffering temptation

Hebrews 2:18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted

3. Suffering persecution

2 Timothy 3:12 everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted

D. Real Issue: HOW Do You Suffer??

1. Christians are called to an other-worldly, hope-filled suffering
2. James 1: We are told to count it “pure joy” whenever we face trials of many kinds
3. Romans 5: We are told that we ‘rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance produces character, and character produces HOPE
4. But how can we do this? Come back again and again to the cross... to the way Christ suffered on the cross as our power source for hope-filled suffering
 - a. Hebrews 4

Hebrews 12:2-3 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

- b. Author to Hebrews tells us to “fix our eyes on Jesus...” that means to consider Him steadfastly... to gaze upon Him
- c. The scene is especially set before us: the cross
- d. Jesus endured its pain, its suffering of all kinds
- e. HOW? By focusing on the eternal value of the suffering... for the joy set before Him
- f. Notice how others-centered Christ was on the cross... how giving to others
 - i) He seeks forgiveness for his persecutors:

Luke 23:34 "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

- ii) He provides for the care of his mother by John
- iii) He says to the thief

Luke 23:43 today you will be with me in paradise.

- g. We tend to get very self-focused in suffering... Jesus heals us of this by teaching us how to suffer with hope-filled, forward-looking faith

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen.

Practice for the hour of your suffering and later for the hour of your death

The cross of Christ gives inexhaustible power for hope-filled courage in the face of suffering

VIII. Ongoing Center of Evangelism

1 Corinthians 2:2 I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

- A. God Has Committed to Us the Ministry of Reconciliation
- B. The “External Journey” is Essential to Our Internal Journey
- C. Many Wandering Theories of Evangelism... the Cross of Christ MUST BE THE CENTER
 1. especially prevalent these days: inclusivism, servant ministries that show the love of God but not the gospel of Christ
 2. without a cross-centered message, Jesus Christ, Son of God, dead on the cross... our substitute, we have no gospel at all
- D. That is why Paul focused on the cross of Christ

1 Corinthians 1:17-18 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel-- not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. ¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

AND

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. ² For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. ⁴ My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

As we seek to reach the lost people in our world, we must center on the cross of Jesus Christ... and as we do so, we will realize how totally dependent on it we are as well!!

IX. Summary

A. Two Straight weeks of “Surveying the cross”

1. last week: the attributes of God revealed in the prism
2. this week: the cross of Christ the ongoing power source of salvation

B. Salvation a journey... and the cross is the ongoing power source

- Ongoing Cleansing from Sin and Guilt
- Ongoing Welcome in Prayer
- Ongoing Protection from Pride and Worldliness
- Ongoing Pattern for Daily Service
- Ongoing Focus of Worship
- Ongoing Training in Hope-Filled Suffering
- Ongoing Center of Evangelism

You will never outgrow your need for the wondrous cross of Christ... come back to him day after day

Live what C.J. Mahaney calls the “Cross-centered life”