

Title: **THE ATTRACTION OF THE CROSS**

Text: John 12:32-33

Subject: *The Power of the Crucified Christ*

Date: Sunday Morning — May 16, 2010

Tape: John #85

Reading: *John 12:23-50 or Ecclesiastes 12:1-14*

Introduction:

In evil long I took delight,
Unawed by shame or fear,
Till a new object struck my sight,
And stopped my wild career.

I saw One hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood,
Who fixed his languid eyes on me,
As near his cross I stood.

Sure never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look;
It seemed to charge me with his death,
Though not a word he spoke.

My conscience felt and owned the guilt,
And plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins his blood had spilt,
And helped to nail him there.

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A second look He gave, which said,
“I freely all forgive;
This blood is for thy ransom paid;
I die that thou may’st live.”

John Newton

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.” (John 12:32-33)

My subject today is “THE ATTRACTION OF THE CROSS”. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.*” That is Christ’s own testimony to the power of his death upon the cross.

Proposition: The doctrine of our text is plain and clear: — There is in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ that saving, effectual power that draws sinners to him in faith.

Christianity is a religion about a cross. The cross of Christ is **the key of knowledge** which gives us understanding in Holy Scripture. As **Martin Luther said**, “There is not a word in the Bible which can be understood without reference to the cross.” Everything we believe has the cross for its foundation, its superstructure and its covering. The cross of Christ is **the essence of all biblical**

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doctrine and the motivation for all biblical precepts. We look to the cross for the forgiveness of all sin, for justification and acceptance with God. We look to the cross for sanctification, to be made holy before God. We look to the cross for motivation, as our rule of life in this world. And we look to the cross for our entrance into heaven's eternal glory, as the door of hope regarding the life to come.

I must needs go home by the way of the cross,
There's no other way but his:
I shall ne'er get sight of the gates of light,
If the way of the cross I miss!

For the believer, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is everything. We say with Paul, — “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is not necessary for me to remind you of what I mean when I talk about the cross. I am not talking about the Roman gibbet upon which our Lord was crucified, or about the idolatrous crucifix which has become a piece of jewelry to so many, or about the magical sign of the cross which the papists use. I am talking about the glorious doctrine of the cross as it is set forth in the Word of God. I am talking about the atonement of sin by the death of Christ upon the cursed tree. I am talking about the putting away

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of sin by the suffering, bleeding and dying of the Lord Jesus Christ as the sinner's Substitute.

This is the cross our Lord was talking about when he said, — *“I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”* **The doctrine of Christ crucified has a marvelous, saving power.** The power of the cross is not destructive power, but saving power. It is not punitive power, but forgiving power. It is not repulsive power, but drawing power. The cross of Christ is not harsh or compulsive, but attractive.

Horatius Bonar wrote, “The sun draws up the vapors from the sea, and then hangs a brilliant rainbow upon them; so Christ draws up the sons of men from the depths of our low world, and glorifies them.”

The attraction of the cross is like that of the sun. It is also like the attraction of a magnet. Like the far distant north pole, by some unseen influence, lays hold of the motionless nettle in a compass and turns it to itself, so the cross of Christ lays hold upon the hearts of the sons of men and turns them to himself, by the unseen power of his omnipotent mercy and irresistible grace. Have you felt the magnetic power of the cross? Does it now turn your heart to Christ?

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It is not simply Christ himself who is the magnet; it is Christ crucified. It is our Lord's crucifixion and death upon the cross that has imparted to him this power to draw sinners to himself. It is not Christ without the cross, nor is it the cross without Christ, but both together which draws us to him.

Now notice the greatness of the power of the cross. It draws all men to him. Obviously, that does not mean that every person in the world will be drawn to Christ as the result of his death upon the cross. There are millions in hell who were not drawn to Christ. And there are millions upon the earth who shall never be drawn. How can they be drawn who have never heard? **Yet, there is marvelous, saving power and virtue in the cross which extends to the entire world, so that by virtue of his death upon the cross our Lord Jesus Christ draws some from all mankind to himself.** He draws Jews and Gentiles, men and women, black and white, bond and free, rich and poor, learned and unlearned. Behold the wondrous power of the cross. In the last day there shall be some of all men, some out of every nation, kindred, tribe and tongue gathered around the throne of the Lamb; all drawn to Christ by the power of the cross. May God be pleased now, by the power of the cross, to draw you and me to his dear Son.

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The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is the center from which Divine omnipotence goes forth in the saving operations of grace. It is the place from which the saving power of God goes out to arrest sinners and bring them to Christ. But wherein does the power of the cross lie? What gives the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ such magnetic, drawing power? **What is the attraction of the cross?** Obviously, that is a bigger question than I can answer; but I want to show you seven things about the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the crucified Christ draws sinners to himself through the preaching of the gospel.

Divisions:

1. The one who died upon the cross is our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. The cross of Christ reveals the love of God.
3. The cross is a vindication of God's righteous character.
4. The cross is the ultimate revelation of God's being.
5. The cross of Christ is the center of God's purposes and the ratification of God's covenant.
6. The cross of Christ is a proclamation of redemption fully accomplished.
7. The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ has a marvelous healing and transforming power.

THE ONE WHO DIED

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This is the first attraction of the cross — **The One who died upon the cross was no ordinary man.** Many men died by Roman crucifixion before our Lord Jesus was crucified. Two men died when he died. And many were crucified after him. But this man was and is the Son of God (Matthew 27:54).

Someone said, “The wonder of the cross is not the blood, but whose blood, and to what purpose.” **If that man who died upon the cross is himself God over all and blessed forever, as he most assuredly is, two things are certain.**

1. **The Lord Jesus Christ died as a willing Substitute, by his own voluntary consent** (Luke 9:51; John 10:17, 18).

(Luke 9:51) “And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

(John 10:16-18) “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd. ¹⁷ Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. ¹⁸ No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it

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down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

Illustration: John 18:4-9

(John 18:4-9) “Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? ⁵ They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am *he*. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. ⁶ As soon then as he had said unto them, I am *he*, they went backward, and fell to the ground. ⁷ Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. ⁸ Jesus answered, I have told you that I am *he*: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: ⁹ That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.”

2. **Whatever he intended to accomplish in his death upon the cross, he has fully accomplished** (Isaiah 42:4; 53:10-11).

(Isaiah 42:1-4) “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom* my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth

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judgment to the Gentiles. ² He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. ³ A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. ⁴ He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.”

(Isaiah 53:9-11) “And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰ ¶ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹ He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.”

- He shall see his seed.
- He shall prolong his days.
- The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.
- He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.
- By his knowledge he shall justify all of those whose iniquities he bore.

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THE LOVE OF GOD

This is the second attraction of the cross: — **The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is the revelation the love of God** (John 3:16; Romans 5:6-8; 1 John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10).

(John 3:16) “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

(Romans 5:6-8) “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. ⁸ But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

(1 John 3:16) “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.”

(1 John 4:9-10) “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only

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begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. ¹⁰ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.”

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky!

The cross of Christ proclaims what the law could never reveal: – “*God is love.*” In the cross of Christ we see “*what is length, and breadth, and depth, and height*” of the love of God.

- The breadth of God’s love encompasses a world of perishing sinners.
- The length of God’s love spans eternity.
- The depth of God’s love reaches down to dregs of fallen humanity.
- The height of God’s love lifts us up to eternal glory.

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The cross of Christ shows how far men will go in sin. We crucified the Son of God. But it also shows how far God will go for man's salvation. He gave his only begotten Son!

Illustration: *“My Daddy died for me.”*

Note: We could never have known the love of God as we now do, had we not fallen in Adam that we might be redeemed by Christ.

RIGHTEOUSNESS VINDICATED

The third attraction of the cross is this: — The cross of Christ is a vindication of God's righteous character and his strict justice (Romans 3:24-26).

Illustration: *Darius' Dilemma* (Daniel 4:14)

(Romans 3:24-26) “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ²⁵ Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ²⁶ To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

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(Job 33:23-24) “If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness: ²⁴ Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.”

(Isaiah 45:20-22) “Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye *that are* escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god *that* cannot save. ²¹ Tell ye, and bring *them* near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? *who* hath told it from that time? *have* not I the LORD? and *there is* no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; *there is* none beside me. ²² Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for *I am* God, and *there is* none else.”

GOD’S BEING

The fourth attraction of the cross is the fact that — **The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate revelation of God’s being** (John 1:18). — “*By mercy and truth iniquity is purged*” (Proverbs 16:7).

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John 1:14-18) “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ ¶ John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. ¹⁶ And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him.*” (

(Psalms 85:9-11) “Surely his salvation *is* nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land. ¹⁰ Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed *each other.* ¹¹ Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.”

(Psalms 85:13) “Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set *us* in the way of his steps.”

Creation tells us that God is great. Conscience tells us that God is righteous. The law tells us that God is just and holy.

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But only the cross of Christ reveals the entirety of God's character. In the cross I see that God is...—

- Holy and Merciful.
- Just and Gracious.
- Righteous and Good.
- Immutable and Wise.
- Omnipotent and Kind.
- Omnipresent and Compassionate.
- Omniscient and Forgiving.

COVENANT RATIFIED

Here is a fifth attraction: — **The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is the center of God's purposes and the ratification of God's covenant.** — The death of our Lord Jesus Christ was not an after thought with God. It was not something God did as the result of man's disobedience to and rejection of his Son's claims as the Messiah. Far from it! **The cross of Christ is the reason for which God made the world and the object which he had in mind when he created man upon it.**

- **The cross of Christ is the center and focal point of God's eternal purposes and decrees** (Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:18-25).

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(1 Peter 1:18-25) “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; ¹⁹ But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: ²⁰ Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, ²¹ Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. ²² Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:* ²³ Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. ²⁴ ¶ For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: ²⁵ But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

- The cross of Christ was the central object of all the types and prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures. — “*To him give all the prophets witness*”(Acts 10:43).

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- The cross of Christ ratified, confirmed and fulfilled the everlasting covenant of God's grace (Hebrews 9:14-17; 8:10-12).

(Hebrews 9:12-17) “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*.¹³ For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:¹⁴ How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?¹⁵ ¶ And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.¹⁶ For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.¹⁷ For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.”

(Hebrews 8:10-12) “For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those

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days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: ¹¹ And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. ¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

Illustration: *The Reading of the Will*

REDEMPTION ACCOMPLISHED

Here is the sixth attraction of the cross: – **The cross of Christ is a proclamation of redemption fully accomplished.** — “*It is finished!*” (See Hebrews 9:12 Isaiah 40:1-2).

Complete atonement Christ has made,
And to the utmost farthing paid
All that His people owed:
Nor can God’s wrath on me take place,
I’m sheltered in Christ’s righteousness
And sprinkled with His blood.

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Since Christ has my discharge procured
And fully in my room endured
The whole of wrath Divine —
Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine.

The cross of Christ declares to sinners everywhere:
Atonement is made, justice is satisfied, sin is put away. —
Believe and live!

TRANSFORMING POWER

There is yet a seventh attraction in the cross. — **The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ has a marvelous healing and transforming power.** There is healing in the cross. He who looks to Christ is healed — healed in every part — completely healed. The healing begins now in the soul; it is completed here after in the resurrection body. Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen One, is our Healer. His name is Jehovah-rapha, — **“The LORD that healeth thee!”**

(2 Corinthians 5:17-21) “Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

¹⁸ And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to

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us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. ²¹ For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

“The saving power of the cross does not depend on faith being added to it. Its saving power is such that faith flows from it.” (J. I Packer)

Illustrations: *Pilgrim — The Brazen Serpent*

In the cross of Christ I find...

- Life eternal
- Propitiation with God.
- Reconciliation to God.
- Rest from all my labor.
- Inspiration for my life on earth.
- Hope for the world to come.

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The cross of Christ, the gospel, is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe. The cross irresistibly draws our hearts to Christ. The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is the theme of our preaching and praise here. And the cross shall be the theme of our song in glory! — “*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*” (Galatians 6:14)

(2 Corinthians 6:1-2) “We then, *as* workers together *with him*, beseech *you* also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. ² (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)”

(Isaiah 55:1-7) “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ² Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which is* not bread? and your labour for *that which* satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which is* good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. ³ Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will

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make an everlasting covenant with you, *even* the sure mercies of David. ⁴ Behold, I have given him *for* a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. ⁵ Behold, thou shalt call a nation *that* thou knowest not, and nations *that* knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee. ⁶ Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: ⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

Amen.