

Lamb's Reformation 2017

---Devotional Guide

Oct 31st 2017 marks the 500yr anniversary of the Reformation when Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the Wittenberg door! This year we want to pray for a **Lamb's Reformation** to help shift the church back to honoring the sacrifice of Christ! A reformation is the action or process of reforming an institution or practice. It's our desire to see the church reformed, fully alive to the Supremacy of Christ in all things! Let's cry out for a God-breathed, Christ-awakening movement where God's Spirit uses God's Word to re-awaken God's people back to God's Son for all that He is! As Paul writes in Philippians 3:8,

Philippians 3:8 (AMP) *"I count everything as loss compared to the possession of **the priceless privilege** (the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth, and supreme advantage) **of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**...[For my determined purpose is] **that I may know Him** [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, **perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly**"*

We are longing for a Gospel Explosion for the glory of the Lamb! We desire to see a tsunami of revival come crashing in on the nations of the earth, for the spread of his fame, for the extension of his reign, for the increase of his gain and for the honor of his claim! May the Lamb who was slain receive the due reward of his sufferings.

Habakkuk. 2:14 *"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea".*

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Sovereign Son of the Father,

reigning at His right hand forever and ever. He is the Triumphant Victor over every foe-satan, sin, death, and Hades. He is the Glorious Conqueror, the dominating personality for all ages to come! He is the Unequivocal Commander of heaven's hosts! He is the Indisputable Judge of peoples and nations, to whom all must give an account. He is the Undeniable Rule of history, overseeing its path and its outcome from beginning to end! He is the Incomparable King of an empire that will ultimately fill creation with His power and piety. He is the Irreplaceable Head and Heart of a people whom He has bought with His own blood. He is the Reigning Redeemer of a church universal, militant and triumphant, sending His salvation to the ends of the earth! He is the Supreme Lord in this moment just as fully as He will be Supreme Lord at the end of time!

I believe one of the keys that God will use to unlock the hearts of his people is the revelation of the *cross of Christ!* In the contemplation of the cross, there is a profound revelation of the love of God. This disclosure comes to the hearts of those who desire to understand this pivotal point in human history. It is a well-spring of extravagant love that awaits the seeker who will linger at the foot of the cross long enough with an open and expectant heart. It is given to all who seek Him with a whole heart, and whose desire is accompanied by a measure of determination. As the apostle Paul wrote,

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

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.”*

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.”

It is the cross of Christ that brings down all barriers, and unites us together in love, for His glory! As Jesus said,

John 12:32-33 “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.”

Revelation 21:23 “And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb”

I believe it is time for the church to return to Christ as the Lamb of Love, the Lamb of Glory. As we approach the end of the age, we must see and encounter the face of Jesus as the Lamb! Twenty-eight times in the book of revelation, Jesus is revealed as the Worthy Lamb! We need to bury our hearts in his wounds until our lives are transformed from glory to glory, for indeed ‘every wound bleed’s glory.’

When Jesus died, a centurion took a spear and pierced his side. Out of the *riven* side of the Passover Lamb flowed forth blood and water. It was a physical sign that his heart had ruptured. His heart was so full of love that it literally burst open, both in the natural and in the spiritual. Jesus literally died of a broken heart! And out of his heart flowed forth a river of God’s love for you and I. The crimson blood of the Lamb washes away our sin and makes us whiter than snow. His love was so strong, that even the grave couldn’t hold him back. On the third day he rose again, burst forth from the grave, alive forevermore!

I believe it's time to behold the Lamb of Glory, until our hearts are *wounded* by the Wounded One! As Spurgeon writes, "When we see the Lord pierced, the piercing of our hearts begins."ⁱ

Could the Holy Spirit be holding back the coming wave of glory until we are gripped with a passion for the Lamb, the One from whom Glory flows? Maybe God is waiting for our hearts to be scarred by the sacrifice of His Son as the Lamb?

Let's Pray,

Father, we believe that the hour has come for your Son, the Lord Jesus to be honored, and treasured as the Worthy Lamb who was slain! Even as the Lamb is in the center of the throne in Heaven, we declare and decree that it's time for the Lamb to become the center of the throne on the earth! Father, we know that you are always looking at the wounds of your Son and we ask for a Lamb's Reformation in the church that would wake us up again to his cross, to bring your Son the reward he deserves for giving his life as a Lamb!

Father would you raise up and send forth messengers of the Lamb, prophetic voices like John the Baptist who will cry out, "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*"

Bring forth ones like Peter who will preach the gospel with such power that people will be cut to the heart- and say, "*What must I do to be saved?*"

Father, send forth ones like the apostle Paul who will resolve to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Father raise up ones like John the apostle who will look until they see the slain Lamb standing in the center of the throne in heaven, and then reveal him here on the earth!

Lord of the Harvest thrust forth ones like the Moravians who cried out, “*May the Lamb who was slain receive his due reward!*”

The Lamb’s Supremacy

Jesus is the Light-bearing, the out-raying or radiance of God’s divine nature! As the author of Hebrews states,

Hebrews 1:1-3 “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.”

According to Colossians 1:15-18, it is the Father's desire to exalt and glorify his Son above all things,

*“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the **supremacy.**”*

Jesus calls us in our personal discipleship, to follow him in all things and all ways, growing in daily cooperation with his perfect leadership. The first commandment must take first place in our lives. Love for Jesus must be a supreme love, a love that trumps all other loves. It means that I admire Jesus more than any other human. It means I want his approval more than anyone else.

It's the Father's dream to see all things summed up in His Son! God's preordained plan and purpose is that Christ would have full supremacy or preeminence in all things. Paul declares,

Ephesians 1:9-10 *“making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things **in him**, things in heaven and things on earth”*.

As Augustine says,

*“The one who has Christ has everything. The one who has everything except for Christ really has nothing. And the one who has Christ plus everything else does not have any more than the one who has Christ alone”*ⁱⁱⁱ

He is the All-Consuming One, the All-Sufficient One, the All-Satisfying One. As David Bryant writes in his book *Christ is All*,

“He defies all human categories; there is no language that can adequately describe Him. He is the incomparable One! He remains in a class by himself...no duplicates, no clones. His importance eclipses all others. He outranks every other being in Heaven, earth, or hell. He is the exalted One; for all eternity he holds the primary focus of our praises. He holds a position of unrivaled distinction, prestige, and majesty. He will be the joy of all peoples, the desire of all nations. He is the Victorious One. None of his enemies will prevail, he will defeat all of his foes unconditionally-both human and demonic and will emerge

forever unthreatened, unhindered, and victorious over all opposition, permanently and forever. He is the Preeminent and Supreme One...in time and space and history he lays claim to the universe, it all belongs to Him. He is the all sufficient One. Nothing can exhaust his power or resources. He will forever prove totally adequate for all of our longings, fears, needs or heart cries. He is faithful and true!”ⁱⁱⁱ

As disciples of Jesus, we join with the chorus of heaven crying out night and day,

Revelation 5:12 “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and blessing!”

If Christ is the all-deserving One, then we must respond to His call, “Come Follow Me,” with our whole hearts! It’s God’s desire that our lives become increasingly Christ-dominated, Christ-saturated, and Christ-exalting to the Glory of God the Father! As Spurgeon writes,

“He is the sun of our day, He is the star of our night; he is our life, he is our life’s life, he is our heaven on earth, and he shall be our heaven in heaven!”^{iv}

It should be the longing of our hearts to see a Christ-awakening erupt in our lives, our homes, and churches. We want to see God’s Spirit using God’s Word to re-introduce God’s people back to God’s Son for all that He is! Our prayer each day should be, “Conquer me Lord Jesus!” As Evan Roberts, the great revivalist of Wales in 1904 cried out, “Bend me O God, and save a nation!” When Jesus becomes our All, then we can walk as Leonard Ravenhill exhorted us,

“The Christian who knows he is crucified with Christ, has no ambition and so has nothing to be jealous about; has no reputation and so has nothing to fight about; has no possessions and so has nothing to worry about, has no rights and therefore cannot suffer wrong. He is already dead.”^v

The Lamb’s Gospel

John 1:29 *“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”*.

We are convinced that God is calling his church to embrace the gospel again, living grace-addicted, truth-filled, Jesus-exalting lives! The Gospel is the good news that God’s kingdom power has entered human history through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ! As John Piper writes,

“The Gospel is the news that Jesus Christ, the Righteous King, died for our sins and rose again, eternally triumphant over all his enemies, so that there is now no condemnation for those who believe, but only everlasting joy!”

The gospel is the center of the Bible, and it ought to be the center of our lives, homes, churches, ministries, spiritual disciplines, songs, parenting, marriage-everything! The Christian life is formed by the glories of the gospel-it’s patterned and powered by the gospel of grace in all of life-for the rest of life! We don’t worship the gospel, we worship the God of the Gospel, Jesus Christ! The gospel is God’s act of turning scoundrels into saints, turning sin seekers into people who find their utmost satisfaction in God! Dave Keesling put it this way,

“the gospel’s simplicity is its ability to, in a moment, change literally everything”¹

Daniel Montgomery shares three aspects of the gospel, the kingdom, the cross, and grace...

- *The gospel of the kingdom is life with God under God’s rule*
- *The gospel of the cross is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus by which God accomplishes our salvation, rescues us from his wrath, incorporates us into his people, and inaugurates his reign in the world.*
- *The gospel of grace is the wonderful news that God accepts us, shares his life with us, and adopts us as heirs of his kingdom not because we have earned it or deserve it, but because God chooses to give all of this freely at Christ’s expense.²*
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As JA Medder’s writes,

- *We worship Jesus because “he is the radiance of the glory of God” (Heb. 1:3)*
- *We harp on the gospel because “for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21)*
- *Our hope is wrapped up in the truth that “he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and by his wounds we are healed” (Isa. 53:5)*

¹ Byron Paulus, OneCry, 140

² Daniel Montgomery, *Proof*

- *We center our lives on Jesus because “we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over him” (Rom 6:9)*
- *We sing, pray, sacrifice, and follow Jesus because, “there is one God and there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (I Tim. 2:5)*
- *We have confidence in life, and death because of Jesus, “who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever! Amen” (Gal 1:4-5)*
- *We walk with joy and no condemnation because, “he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin, and live to righteousness. By his wound’s you have been healed” (I Peter 2:24).*
- *Jesus is our great reward and love because, “in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7)*
- *We go on gospel mission because “the saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’” (I Tim. 1:15)³*

As Tim Keller shares,

“We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe and yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope...We were so bad that Christ had to die for us, but we were so loved that Christ was glad to die for us....Sin comes and says, ‘your life for me,’ Christ says, ‘my life for you! Religion makes us proud of what we do, but the gospel makes us proud of what Jesus has done!’”^{vi}

³ J.A. Medders, Gospel Formed, 26-27

As Sam Storms shares,

“Therefore, the gospel is not what God requires. The gospel is what God provides! The gospel is not an imperative, demanding things you must do. The gospel is an indicative, declaring things that God has done. The gospel is not about human action. The gospel is about divine achievement. The gospel is not a moralistic Do! The gospel is a merciful Done! The gospel informs, controls, and energizes all we do. Our ministry values—worship, prayer, discipleship, community, and mission—are all the fruit of the grace that God has given us in Jesus”

The Lamb’s Finest Hour

From the outset of his ministry Jesus was born to die! His finest hour, was his death on a cruel cross where he hung in agonizing, excruciating pain dealing a death blow to death itself! Strapped to a wooden beam, he crushes death, the evil one, and the power of sin. He fooled everyone! It was like he was playing chess on twenty different levels. He mapped it out, and with one glorious move: Checkmate, game over!

The greatest and most glorious of all subjects is the cross of Christ! It is the subject of worship in this age and in the age to come. We will stare at nail-pierced hands and weep with gratitude forever... seeing and savoring, prizing and praising the glory of God in the face of Jesus, the Lamb of God! This is the subject that baffles men, shuts king’s mouths, and dumbfounds the human race!

Imagine the highest stoops to become the lowest, the greatest becomes the least, the king becomes a criminal! The Lord of all because the servant of all, the creator becomes the crucified, the powerful one becomes the pierced one. This place called Golgotha was not a place of mercy yet the most merciful act in history was

being accomplished. The sinless and guiltless one was dying as one guilty. The perfect one was being spoiled by the perverse. The wicked had released their hatred upon the wonderful one. The righteous one, ravaged by the cruel cross, was dying for the rebellious. Yet now he sits enthroned forever as the worthy Lamb at the right hand of the Father!

Revelation 5:6 *“And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain.”*

The Lamb’s Desire!

Jesus lifts his eyes to his Father in prayer and declares his most holy intentions.

John 17:24 *“Father, I desire that they also whom you gave me may be with me where I am, to see my Glory”.*

Jesus strikes at the heart of our greatest longing to know that we are desired and loved by God. Jesus was telling the Father that he desires us to be near Him, not at a distance, but close like a bridegroom and a bride. The Bible begins and ends with a wedding. Our relationship with Jesus goes beyond contractual agreement and faithful obedience. It is to be typified by fervent, ardent love and longing like a bridegroom and a bride have for one another. He longs for a partner not a mere subject in His kingdom. In fact, at the end of the book of Revelation the bride of Christ is crying out, *“Come, Lord Jesus!”* We are certainly the children of God, but we are also the bride of Christ, betrothed to Him in love. The covenant from heaven’s perspective between God and man is not defined as a service agreement but as a marriage covenant.

We love a king who will not sell out his people for wealth and power but who will humbly serve the people even unto death. The

movie *Braveheart* is a great example of this. We love a husband who fights for the heart, honor, and nobility of his bride, even to the point of death. Many times we push him away, but the statement of Christ from the cross is, “*You’re the one I want.*” In Jesus we have an unwavering King and companion who will give up His life for love. Beloved, even now, Jesus maintains a resurrected human body forever. He has forever joined himself to us in love!

The Father and Son are in agreement. The Father wants to give his Son a bride and the Son desires to have a bride, an eternal companion and voluntary lover! She would be in full partnership with his leadership, adorned with His beauty, and seated with him in heavenly places! As Jesus stared at the criminal, his eyes stinging from blood, sweat and tears, a river of desire flowed from his heart, “*today you will be with me in paradise.*” Do you see him today?

The Lamb’s Covenant of Redemption

Hebrews 13:20–21 (ESV), “*Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,*²¹ *equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*”

This eternal covenant mentioned in the book of Hebrews is called the **covenant of redemption**. As Daniel Montgomery writes,

“In eternity past, God chose to save undeserving sinners ‘to the praise of his glorious grace’ (Eph. 1:5-6). Now he is on a global rescue mission, chasing down undeserving rebels and changing their hearts so that they turn to him and freely submit to his kingship (Isa 43:5-7, Acts 16:14,

Eph. 1:5, Rev. 5:9-10). By his grace, God transforms sinners into his beloved adopted children, filling the bank accounts of their identity with all the goodness of his Son, sealing their destiny by the power of the Spirit, and securing them on a journey that will not end until his splendor floods the earth like waters surging in the sea” (Ps. 72:19, Hab. 2:14, Rom. 2:24, 2 Cor. 1:21-22, Eph 1:4-5, 13-14

Peter shares with us,

Peter 1:19-20 “but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you...”.

And John the apostle writes in Revelation,

Revelation 13: 19 “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”.

At some point in eternity past, I can imagine God the Father asking God the Son to give his life as a slain Lamb. From this eternal vantage point, I picture the Son as He slowly closed his eyes and bowed his head. I see tears slipping down his face as he pondered this monumental request of the Father. Silence must have filled the halls of glory...

He saw himself flung up on two stakes of wood, draped in naked, bleeding flesh. He saw himself crushed with human sin and cast into the raging flames of God’s wrath and punishment. But He also saw something else. He saw a bride, taken from his wounded side and washed in His own blood. He saw himself rising and ascending to the throne, receiving a bride covered with His

resurrection glory. He saw a bride who would love him and would live only to bring Him the reward of his sacrifice.

In fact he saw you, and he loved you even then; for the Bible says, *“He chose us in him before the creation of the world”* (Eph. 1:4). Before you were even born Christ looked into the Father’s cup of wrath and saw what would happen to you if He refused to drink it. The Bible says that all who reject Christ *“will drink the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath”* (Rev. 14:10). But the Son could not bear to see you have to drink the Father’s cup of wrath for your sin. He lifted up His head and looked into his Father’s eyes, love pouring from his heart, crying with all his might: *“Yes Father, I will go! I will offer myself as the Lamb!”*

I believe the Father is crying out today, *“This is My Son! He will be honored for His sacrifice on the cross! His blood will be honored on earth as it is in heaven. My Son will receive the reward of His suffering as a Lamb!”*

Prayer Focus: I invite you to come and look into his eyes with all your heart and soul. Look into his eyes that are like flames of fire...the irresistible blaze of his gaze! It’s a look of love! His eyes are towards you today... look until the message of the cross burns into the tablet of your weak heart, causing it to melt under the bonfire of his love. Come look up at Jesus until you see the tears pooling in His eyes and swimming down His cheeks. Gaze at Him until you can almost reach up and touch the wet drops of blood spilling from open wounds. Come look until you can feel the presence of God breathing down upon you. Breathe in the richness of His presence until you are filled and flooded with God himself. Let Jesus heal the deep, hurting, hungry places in your soul...His arms are wide open, his heart exposed...bleeding...and hear him say, ‘Come near!’

The Lamb's Bride, One Thing

Luke 10:38-42, *“Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.” ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”*

Just days before the cross Jesus desired to be with his friends that he loved. John 11:5 states, *“Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.”* Mary and Martha were sisters. Their brother was Lazarus. Most scholars believe that the parents had previously passed away. Martha was left with the house, Mary was given an alabaster jar of costly perfume. It is not clear if Lazarus was given anything. Although he certainly received an all-expense paid 3 day trip to heaven and back.

Mary of Bethany was truly a remarkable woman of unparalleled devotion in her day. Mary longed to be at the feet of Jesus and desired to cultivate personal, secret history with Jesus.

I believe a question that is being asked today is this, *“Who has really been with Jesus?”* I believe Mary was one of these! Mary of Bethany was one of those who had cultivated intimacy with Jesus. She had learned to set her heart and focus on Jesus! She had memory and history with Jesus! The question for you and I is this: When we finally see Jesus face to face, when the curtain moves, and we see his eyes for the first time, will there be a memory in that gaze? Will we be able to say, *‘I know you ...we have been*

through so much...we have walked together...’ When we see the glory of the Lamb, will we remember weeping over his nail-scarred hands during our days on the earth?

We see Mary doing 3 things. First she postured her heart at the feet of Jesus. All three times we see Mary of Bethany in Scripture the Holy Spirit highlights that she is sitting at the feet of Jesus and making the choice to hear his words! Two of the three occasions Mary is criticized by others and yet she is never described as defending herself. Her heart attitude is worship, and submission to the leadership of Jesus. We learn from Mary that worship must precede petition, and intimacy with Jesus must precede intercession. Mary had learned to position her heart before the bonfire of his outrageous love!

The second thing we see Mary doing is gazing on his beauty! Mary was single-hearted. She had developed the paradigm of living before an audience of one! Mary had vision to be an extravagant worshipper of Jesus, unmoved by the criticism of others! Like Mary we are made to enjoy the glory of Jesus, his dynamic personality throughout all eternity! Mary understood that God’s aim is to ravish the affections of the human race with irresistible displays of the glory of his Son! God commands us to know his glory with our minds and treasure his glory with our hearts! His call is to enjoy his glory as our highest and most superior treasure! As John Piper declares, “the glory of God is the supreme JOY of His People!” God created us to know and enjoy His glory, and in this way, display its supreme value! Do we truly value the blazing glory revealed in the Cross of Christ? I believe Mary certainly did!

The third thing we see Mary engaged in was listening to every word and teaching that Jesus was sharing. The Greek word for *listening* in this text meant to “listen on the edge of your seat.” She desired to hear the word in such a way that would cause her to receive his love, empowering her to love him in return!

But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.”⁴ But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things...”

How familiar is that statement? How many of us are worried, troubled, and anxious in our everyday lives? One of the primary barriers in our relationship with Jesus, is that we are anxious and worried, often distracted with much serving. Paul spoke to us in 2 Corinthians 11:3,

Luke 10:40 “But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”

The enemy’s strategy is to distract us, and cause us to worry and be anxious. Anxiety is a subtle form of pride. Anxiety is not trusting in the Lord, but trusting in self. We say things like, *‘I’ve got to do this,’* or *‘I’ve got to bring it to pass.’* Taking his yoke and entering into his rest simply means abandoning outcomes to God, accepting that we do not have it in ourselves. We give up our rights, and rest in God’s leadership, just as Jesus showed us, embracing the cross! Jesus wraps us this story with a powerful promise,

“but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”

Jesus the Son of God steps out of heaven and declares, *“one thing”* is necessary! He doesn’t say the only thing, but the one thing! Like Mary he calls us to sit at his feet, gaze on his glory and hang on every word that says to us. The wisest thing that we could do is develop this kind of secret personal history with Jesus. This one activity is most needed, most important in our lives. Jesus declares that it will not be taken away from her! Just like Mary, he will

remember and reward every movement of our hearts toward him, not matter how weak it appears. He promises to remove and forget our sin, but will remember and reward every choice we make to pursue him.

Hebrews 11:6 (NIV), *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”*

Just days before the cross we read about Mary of Bethany again in

John 12:1-3 (ESV), *“Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at the table. Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”*

Six days before the cross, Jesus enters the town of Bethany, to the home of Simon who had been healed of leprosy. It was probable that the town was hosting a customary banquet in honor of Jesus who had done miraculous signs in their town. Martha was cooking a meal again, probably to thank Jesus for all that he had done for them.

Many had come to marvel at the deeds of Jesus. Mary brings her alabaster jar of costly ointment. This pure nard was worth a year's wages. This was most certainly Mary's dowry, representing her only hope for marriage. In this culture if she wastes this or uses this on something other than her future spouse she would have only two options. Either take care of Lazarus her brother, or beg and prostitute herself to survive. When she looks at these two choices, she understands the worth of Jesus! It is as if she was

saying, *“You are the priceless Son of God, worthy of all I have! I can risk and throw myself into your hands”*

When she looks at him she knows her choice. Those present at the meal wanted Jesus to minister to them, but Mary wanted to minister to Jesus! She pours out the ointment onto the head and feet of Jesus and then washes his feet, assuming the posture of servant. Only servants in this culture wash feet! Everyone thought this was crazy. She let her hair down to wipe his feet with her hair. In that day, only prostitutes did this in public. She was willing to suffer her reputation. She wasted her entire inheritance, her future, her livelihood, and her reputation on Him! It was her offering and gift of worship to the one she loved! The fragrance of Mary’s offering, Mary’s worship filled the whole house, and prepared him for his burial.

This pound of costly ointment was so pungent, and fragrant that it would stay on the body for up to week later. As Jesus hung on the cross, in the midst of terrible anguish, he could still breath in the glorious fragrance of worship of this woman, Mary of Bethany! I can imagine Jesus gasping, “it’s worth it Father!” Like Mary of Bethany let’s waste our lives on Him. He is all-deserving! He has the right to all of me! Let’s anoint him with the oil of our treasures, and pour out our lives like a drink offering upon the one that we love!

Prayer Focus: Place yourself before the cross and pray through Psalm 27:4 making it your own prayer. Ask yourself what do I need to pour out on Jesus, dreams, future, relationships, reputation, comforts, etc.? By name place the things that you value most at the feet of Jesus. Tell him he is worth it all!

Psalm 27:4 *“One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the*

days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.”

The Lamb’s Selection Day

Palm Sunday was called Lamb selection day. Jewish families would choose a 1yr old male lamb on Palm Sunday, bring it home and examine it.

Exodus 12:2-6 “Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers’ houses, a lamb for a household... Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old... and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.”

Jesus and the disciples were approaching Jerusalem from the east as they came up the road from Jericho, until they reached the town of Bethpage on the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives. Luke tells us,

“As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.” And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a

barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Lamb selection day. Israel wanted a king to free them from the oppression of the Romans, to give them their land back, and bring to fulfillment the Davidic covenant. However this day, Jesus came to them as a Passover Lamb. For many in Israel, they missed the day of their visitation.

God gave Israel special celebrations called ‘Feasts’ when he brought the Hebrews out of Egypt. God spoke to Moses, saying,

Leviticus 23:24 “Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘the feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts...These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times.”

The biblical word for holy convocation describes a ‘dress rehearsal.’ The Jews would act out these visual aids, or pictures through the festivals as a dress rehearsal for the purpose of revealing the Messiah and learning God’s plan of salvation through history! God appointed 3 primary feast seasons, Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. They represented three major encounters with God in the lives of His covenant people. Passover was the first feast as a memorial to the Hebrews deliverance from Egypt. This deliverance occurred during the month of Nisan and represented God’s first encounter with His covenant people.

Leviticus 23:4-5 *“On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight (evening) is the Lord’s Passover”.*

The Hebrew day begins on the evening of the 14th (twilight) at approximately 6:00pm. Jesus fulfilled this feast at every point. The Hebrews killed the lambs at the three o’clock in the afternoon on the 14th in order to eat the meal by six. When three o’clock arrived, they slaughtered the Lamb and applied the blood to their doorstep. The family then entered their house through the blood-stained door where they were protected from the plague of death that was to move through the land. According to the instructions, the entire Lamb was to be roasted and consumed. Nothing could be left over for the next day. In preparing the meal, not one bone of the lamb could be broken which required that the lamb be roasted on a spit shaped like a crossbar so that its body could be spread open. This was the Lord’s Passover. We see that He used the blood of the lamb to save His people from death. The blood of the lamb was their covering and protection.

When the temple was built, instead of killing the lambs and applying the blood to their doorstep, the people would bring their lambs to Jerusalem and kill them at the temple. The entire Jewish nation would come to Jerusalem each year. It was a time of great celebration, as the Levites would lead in the singing of Psalm of David, especially Psalms 113-118.

As time passed, it became difficult for people to bring their sacrifice to Jerusalem, so the Levites began raising lambs without spot or blemish for Passover and sold them at the temple. The Jewish historian Josephus reported there were more than 250,000 of these Passover lambs killed in Jerusalem in the first century.

In John 12:1, we read that Jesus came to the town of Bethany six days before Passover, which would be the ninth of Nisan.

Jesus enters into Jerusalem on the tenth of Nisan set aside as the human lamb on lamb selection day! For the next five days, Jesus was examined, questioned, and interrogated to see if any spot or blemish might be found. They wanted to discredit him so that he would not be an acceptable sacrifice. After interrogating and beating Jesus, Pilate said of Him, “*I find no fault in him*” (John 19:4). Finally Jesus was crucified on the 14th on the same day and same time the lambs were killed. Jesus was placed on the cross at 9:00am, opened up just like the lambs were placed on the altar of burnt offering. The people were singing Psalm 118, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We bless you from the house of the Lord. The Lord is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us. Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar!”

And then at twilight, 3:00pm he was slain... The curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom just as the flesh of the son of man had been torn in two...split open... “*And the earth shook and the rocks were split!*” The rocks were indeed ***crying out***, convulsing under the weight of the King of Glory and his Revealed Excellence.

Prayer Focus: Read through John 18:1-19:37 and focus on Jesus your Passover Lamb!

The Lamb’s Fire

The night before the cross, Jesus led the disciples from the upper room out of the city and across the Brook Kidron, which at this point was blood red from the thousands of lambs that had been slaughtered. The stage was set, Jesus is about to spill royal blood

as the Passover Lamb set for slaughter. The crimson blood of the Lamb would soon flow forth like a river to the human race for the forgiveness of sins.

As they entered the garden called Gethsemane, Jesus began to be greatly distressed and troubled (deep alarm, anguish and dismay). When we look at Jesus throughout the gospels we see 3 exciting years of ministry. Words like authoritative, assured, and fearless describe him. He is steady and controlled. However there comes a moment when we follow Jesus under the trees to a place called Gethsemane, which means, “oil press.” when we encounter a savior that we are unfamiliar with. Jesus uttered,

Mark 14:34 *“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and watch with me.”*

Luke the doctor says, *“And being anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground”*(Luke 22:44). Though extremely rare, the phenomenon of hematydrois, or bloody sweat, is well documented. Under great emotional stress, tiny capillaries in the sweat glands can break, thus mixing blood with sweat. The Greek word for drops is *Thrombos* meaning, ‘Large thick drops of clotted blood.’ When blood hit the cool night air it congealed, and thickened.

Rich, red human blood issuing from the veins of the Lamb—Selah

What was it that caused him to be at this point, near death itself? Was he thinking about the nails? Was he thinking about the unbearable shame that he would have to endure? What would the Father’s anger and wrath against sin look like?

Luke 22:42 *“My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”*

As Jesus stared into this Cup, it was a crushing, agony for our savior. As C.J. Mahaney writes,

“Isaiah 57 shows us that this cup is God’s extended hand—it’s the ‘cup of wrath’, and for those who drink it, it’s the ‘cup of staggering.’ This cup contains the full vehemence and fierceness of God’s holy wrath poured out against all sin, and we discover in Scripture that it’s intended for all of sinful humanity to drink. It’s your cup...it’s mine. In vivid imagery of the Old Testament, this cup is filled with ‘fire and sulfur and a scorching wind, like some volcanic firestorm, like all the fury of the Mt. St. Helens, eruption concentrated in a coffee mug. No wonder Scripture says that tasting from this cup causes the drinker to ‘stagger and be crazed.’ No wonder when Jesus stared into this detestable vessel, He stumbles to ground. In this dark hour, do you see your Savior’s love for you!”^{vii}

Fire of God’s Glory

One of the primary metaphors for the glory of God in Scripture is fire. God is an all-consuming fire, a jealous God. His jealousy removes everything that hinders his love from increasing in our lives. His eyes are a flame of fire, consumed with love for his people!

Ezekiel 1:27 (ESV) “And upward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him.”

His words are like fire, his feet are like burnished bronze in a furnace. His face shines like the sun in all its brilliance. His throne

is ablaze with fire, and its wheels are full of fire! A river of fire comes out from before him! The Holy Spirit is described as the 7 blazing torches or lamps of fire! He truly is an all-consuming fire. And everything that surrounds him is set on fire.

Several times throughout the Old Testament, the priests would lay before the Lord an offering, and God would consume it with the glory of His fire!

Leviticus 9:22-24 (ESV), “Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and when they came out they blessed the people, and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the pieces of fat on the altar, and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.”

Again when Solomon was dedicating the temple,

2 Chronical 7:1-3 “As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. ² And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD’s house. ³ When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

God often answers by fire! Jesus said,

Luke 12:49-50 *“I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!”*

Jesus came to endure a baptism of fire at the cross. Jesus was the fulfillment of the burnt offering sacrifice. The fiery wrath of God the Father would blaze forth upon Jesus as he hung, strapped on the altar of sacrifice, the cross! There in Gethsemane, said Jonathan Edwards,

“He was brought to the mouth of the furnace that he might look into it and stand and view its raging flames and see the glowings of its heat, that he might know where he was going and what he was about to suffer.”^{viii}

In the garden, as Jesus is gazing intently into the cup of wrath, he understands that he is about to experience the full and eternal wrath of God against your sin and mine. He is about face the reality of bearing our sins and becoming the object of God’s full and furious wrath on our behalf.

He is about to be abandoned by his Father...all because of the fullness of sin resting upon him. Jesus must be utterly removed and separated from the presence of a Holy God. The sky grows dark and luminous. Breaking forth from the blood-stained lips of our savior, He uttered the most terrible words “My God my God why have you forsaken me.” William Hendriksen comments graphically on the darkness that portends Jesus’ cry,

“The darkness meant judgement, the judgment of God upon our sins, his wrath as it were burning itself out in the very heart of Jesus, so that he, as our Substitute, suffered most intense agony, indescribable woe, terrible isolation or forsakenness. Hell came to Calvary that day, and the

Savior descended into it and bore its horrors in our stead”^{ix}

As R.C. Sproul writes,

“This cry represents the most agonizing protest ever uttered on this planet. It burst forth in a moment of unparalleled pain. It is the scream of the damned for us.”^x

Literally for the first time in history Jesus is ripped from his Father’s embrace. Jesus understands the pain of abandonment, and that’s why now, he can promise, *“I was abandoned so you will never have to be abandoned ever again. Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you”* (Hebrews 13:5).

Jesus says to you and I today, *“I heard your cries, when they left you...I hear the cries of this fatherless generation and that’s why I came to this earth to be utterly forsaken by my Father, so that you would never have to be forsaken ever again.”*

Not only was he ripped away from the loving embrace of his Father for you, but he also endured the eternal wrath of the fiery flames of hell on our behalf. What is our penalty for sin? It is eternal separation from God. It is the pain and agony of enduring the fiery flames of hell. Jesus experienced the hell that we were supposed to endure for our sin. God the Father took His eternal wrath, condensed it, and emptied it into His cup. He distilled eternal judgment, the very lake of fire, hell’s blazing fury and then asked His Son to drink it on our behalf. The fiery flames of wrath blazed forth and consumed the Lord Jesus on the cross, as the final burnt offering sacrifice!

It’s like the true story of the mother who awakened one night smelling smoke. She shook her husband and raced upstairs to the baby, but a wall of flames drove her back. Outside the neighbors and firemen fought the blaze. But the mother kept hearing the cry

of her baby from the upstairs window. Her husband held her back, knowing that there was nothing to do. Finally she broke from his grip and tore into the house. Covering her face with her hands, she charged up through the wall of flames into her baby's room. Gathering her little one in her arms, she pressed back through the flames. IN a crumpled heap of charred flesh, she fell to the grass outside. And though she was disfigured for life, she had saved her baby...^{xi}

Just like that story Jesus heard your cries, he felt your pain, he saw you heading toward the eternal flames of hell...so he LEFT Heaven, charged through the flames of wrath to rescue you...he took your hell and drank your cup on the cross, he swept you into his embrace and brought you through to safety, though He too was disfigured, he still bears the scars and marks on his body to show what he did for you....He took your Hell, so you could have His Heaven!

Jesus had entered the garden for a brief interlude before the hour of the cross, but found hell thrust in his face. Jesus had every right to turn his tearful eyes towards you and me and thrust this cup into our hands, shouting "*you drink it...this is your cup, you are responsible for this?*" And yet instead he takes it freely for you and I...

Prayer Focus: Find a place to bow down or lay prostrate before the Lord. In this posture, spend some time focusing on the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane. Re-commit your heart to the Lord, "*Father not my will but your will be done.*"

The Lamb's Surrender

Ken Sande writes,

Idolatry is the most discussed problem in the Bible of the human condition. It is anything that we love and pursue in place of God. In biblical terms, an idol is something other than God that we set our hearts on (Luke 12:29;1 Cor. 10:6), that motivates us (1 Cor. 4:5), that masters or rules us (Ps. 119:133), or that we serve (Matt. 6:24).”

Idolatry is anything I look at and say, “*If I have that, my life has value.*” If there is anything in my life that is so central that I feel like I can’t live without then it is an idol. For us as believer’s idolatry is often making a good thing into an ultimate thing.^{xii} The evil in our desires typically does not lie in what we want but that we want it too much. So an idol is something other than God that we set our hearts on. Whenever we make something more important than God we are committing idolatry. There is always a reason for sin. Under our sins are idolatrous desires. Sin isn’t only doing bad things, it is often making good things into ultimate things. Whatever we build our life on will drive us or enslave us. Whenever we build our self-worth or happiness on anything other than on God we have idols in our life. At the core of all our idolatry is pride. As C.J. Mahaney writes,

“Pride is when sinful human beings aspire to the status and position of God and refuse to acknowledge their dependence on him.”

We cannot save ourselves. A divine rescue is needed and thanks be to Jesus Christ who has made a way through the cross!

The best way to confront and deal with the idols in our lives is to come humbly before the foot of the cross. When we are exposed to the humble God, we fall prostrate and cast out crowns down before the Worthy One! As John Stott writes,

“Every time we look at the cross, Christ seems to be saying to us, ‘I am here because of you. It is your sin I am

bearing, your curse I am suffering, your debt I am paying, your death I am dying.’ Nothing in history or in the universe cuts us down to size like the cross. All of us have inflated views of ourselves, especially in self-righteousness, until we have visited a place called Calvary. It is there, at the foot of the cross, that we shrink to our true size.”

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. In light of God’s awesome holiness, and our utter depravity, we must cling to the cross of Christ as our only hope.

As C.J. Mahaney writes,

“Humility is honestly assessing ourselves in light of God’s Holiness and our Sinfulness.”

God calls us to set our minds on the glory of the humble God,

Philippians 2:5-8 “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

The ultimate revelation of the humility of Christ is found at the cross and this is where we must go as well. Jesus became our burnt offering sacrifice. As Leviticus 1:3-9 (ESV) says,

“If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him... Then he shall flay the burnt offering and cut it into pieces... And the priest shall burn all of it on

the altar, as a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.”

He was without sin, a male without blemish. He offered his all in complete and total surrender to the will of the Father. He became our burnt offering sacrifice on the cross so that we might become his living sacrifice. To have an obedient heart in total submission to the will of the Father is our highest act of worship. The leadership of Jesus consumes all of us with holy fire, so that nothing remains that is not subject to his authority. His jealous love removes everything that hinders his love from increasing in our lives!

Jesus sacrificed his all at the cross--his struggle in the garden, his sacrificial life, his obedience unto death! His dedication and unwavering commitment to ‘set his face’ like flint and go to Jerusalem in total submission to the Father! And Jesus made a voluntary choice of love. Jesus made it clear that no one was able to take His life from him. Rather, He laid his life down of his own accord!^{xiii}

John 10:17-18 “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

The agony of Jesus is revealed in, “*And he shall flay(skin) the burnt offering and cut it into pieces.*” (Lev. 1:6) The word ‘flay’ means to be skinned, to tear or strip away. The scourging he took for us literally laid his flesh open like strips of ribbon off his back. He was skinned for you and I. He was stripped of all his possessions and hung naked on a cross. He was despised and rejected by men, ridiculed, scorned, and scolded on our behalf, all in absolute surrender.

We must realize that at times the Lord will allow our flesh to be flayed in order to expose who we really are. Before all can be given to him, all must be exposed.

Prayer Focus: Ask the Lord to reveal to you any known or hidden idols in your life. Write them down and then lay them down at the foot of the cross.

Then let's pray this prayer in absolute surrender and absolute delight,

“Lord, I surrender every part of my life to you. I lie before you open and exposed. You have the right to be Lord of every part of my life.”

The Lamb's Cross

After the arrest in the middle of the night, Jesus exhausted from Gethsemane, was brought before the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas, the high priest. A soldier struck Jesus across the face for remaining silent when questioned by Caiaphas. The palace guards then blindfolded Him and mockingly taunted Him, spat on Him, and struck Him in the face. In the early morning, Jesus battered and bruised, dehydrated and exhausted from a sleepless night, is taken across Jerusalem to the Praetorium of the fortress of Antonia.

It was there, in response to the cries of the mob, that Pilate ordered Barnabas released and then condemned Jesus to be scourged and crucified. Preparations for scourging are carried out. The prisoner is stripped of his clothing, and His hands tied to a post above his head. The Roman legionnaire steps forth with his flagrum (flagellum) in his hand. This is a short whip consisting of several heavy leather thongs with two small balls of lead attached near the ends of each. The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across Jesus' shoulders, back and legs. At first,

the thongs cut through the skin only, then as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles. The small balls of lead first produced deep bruises, which are broken open by the subsequent blows. Finally the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons, and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue. When it is determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner is near death, the beating is finally stopped. The half-fainting Jesus is then untied and allowed to slump to the stone pavement, wet with his own blood.^{xiv}

By his stripes we are healed, physically, emotionally and spiritually! Indeed we can now hear the Lord proclaim his name before us as he “Shows Us” His Glory, his revealed excellence,

Exodus 34:6-7 “The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.”

The Romans soldiers see a great joke in the provincial Jew claiming to be a king. They throw a robe across his shoulders and place a stick in his hand for a scepter. A small bundle of flexible branches covered with 3 inch thorns is pressed into his scalp. Copious bleeding ensued, the scalp being one of the most vascular areas of the body. After mocking him and striking him across the face, the soldiers take the stick from his hand and strike Him across the head driving the thorns deeper into his scalp. Finally they tire of their sadistic sport, and the robe is torn from his back. This had already become adherent to the clots, to blood and serum in the wounds, and it’s removal—just as in the careless removal of a surgical bandage—causing excruciating pain, almost as though He were again being whipped, and the wounds again begin to bleed.

He bled from his head taking on himself all the wicked thoughts of the human race. He took on the curse of the toil and hardship of working the ground (thorns). They beat his face causing it to become disfigured as Isaiah wrote,

Isaiah 52:14,53:3 “As many were astonished at you— his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind...He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

Isaiah says they literally ripped out his beard,

Isaiah 50:60 “I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.”

However even as they hit, despised and rejected this man of sorrows, his face revealed the very Glory of LOVE! This piercing love caused them to turn away...they blind-folded him, they couldn't continue to look upon and behold this Lord of Glory.

The heavy beam of the cross was tied across his shoulders, and the procession of the condemned Christ, two thieves, and the execution detail began the slow and painful journey. The weight of the heavy wooden beam, together with the shock produced by the copious blood loss causes Jesus to stumble and fall. The rough wood of the beam gauges into the lacerated skin and muscles of the shoulders. He tries to rise, but his human muscles have been pushed beyond their endurance. The dust from the hot ground latched onto his wounds, pasting and stinging. Imagine for a moment the smell of blood and bodily fluids, the nauseating aroma of liquor and cheap ale on the breath of the soldiers, and the evil excitement in the air of people all around crying out 'Crucify him,

crucify him!’ On arrival at Golgotha, the beam is placed on the ground. And Jesus is quickly thrown backward with his shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire feels the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy square wooden iron nail through the wrist, through the median nerve, and deep into the wood. This would be like smashing the nerve in your elbow when you hit it against something, yet in this case racking your entire body in one moment! The pain from this was so severe that a new word was invented for this, EXCRUCIATING!

Quickly he moves to the other side, and repeats the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but allow some flexing and movement. The beam is roughly lifted. Imagine the unbearable pain as the weight of his body came crashing down upon his wrists. After this the left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended and toes down, a nail is driven into the arch of each, as He pushes Himself upward to avoid the stretching torment. He places his full weight on the nail through his feet. Again there is the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet.

Psalm 22:16 “For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet.”

Isaiah 53:5 “But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities”

Jesus took the wrath of God against the sin of our hands and feet. Think about the ways you have sinned against a brother or sister with your hands, or willingly walked into a place of sin or iniquity. He took it! He paid the price for it.

Psalm 22:14-15 “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; ¹⁵ my strength is dried up like a potsherd,

and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.”

When Jesus said he would be poured out like water, it means that His body would dehydrate through the cross. Muscles and tendons are what hold our bones and joints in place. They are comprised of more than 70% water. When severe dehydration occurs, muscles and tendons break down, lose their elasticity, and are unable to properly support the skeletal structure. Hanging on the cross would cause even his bones to be exposed, 'out of joint,' or 'divided and split.'

As the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push himself upward, hanging by his arms. The pectoral muscles are paralyzed, and the intercostal muscles are unable to act. Air can be drawn into the lungs but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the bloodstream, and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, He is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen. Six hours of limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down against the rough timber.

Next a deep crushing pain in the chest as the pericardium, slowly filling serum, begins to compress the heart. The compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues. The tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to grasp in small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues send their flood of stimuli to the brain.

Jesus gasps, “I thirst.” He can feel the chill of death creeping through his tissues. With one last surge of strength, he once again presses his torn feet against the nail, straightens his legs, takes a

deep breath, and utters his seventh and last cry, “Father into your hands, I commit my spirit.”

Apparently, to make sure of death, the legionnaire drives his lance through the fifth interspace between the ribs, upward through the pericardium, and into the heart. Immediately, there came out blood and water. We therefore have rather conclusive post-mortem evidence that our Lord died not the usual crucifixion (death by suffocation) but of heart failure (a broken heart) due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid in the pericardium.

*Ye that pass by, behold the Man!
The Man of Grief condemned for you,
The Lamb of God for sinners slain,
Weeping to Calvary pursue.
His Sacred Limbs they stretch, they tear
With nails they fasten to the wood;
His sacred limbs exposed and bare,
Or only covered with His blood.”^{xv}*

The Blind-folded Lamb...

Luke 22:64 (NIV), “*They blindfolded him and demanded, “Prophesy! Who hit you?”*”

I have always wondered why you never see this seen in the paintings of Jesus? This scene seems noticeably absent, yet it is so terribly tragic. It is incredibly telling as the ‘*Blindfolded Christ*’ is seated amongst a group filled with blind hatred. And this they did to Jesus of Nazareth who had healed a man born blind. As Samuel Zwemmer writes,

“Why did it occur to them to blindfold Jesus? Was it not because His eyes were filled with such a holy wonder at their unbelief, eyes full of compassion for their ignorance

and yet flashing with a light that smote their consciences like a flame of fire. They could not bear to look Him in the face and so, as Mark says, “when some began to spit on him, others ‘covered his face and began to hit him” And certainly it was not just an individual that struck him, it was the race, it was humanity, it was you and I. “He was smitten of God, afflicted and we hid as it were our faces from Him”—or, when we could not hide our faces we covered His face and blindfolded him. They all agreed as did we, to hide His face before they struck his Glory...”

Even today men cannot leave Christ alone. His face is riveting! It is a magnetic pull as a flame of fire! Men are either drawn or repelled but there is no neutral ground when one looks at the glory of God in face of Christ!

Behold the Man! Bound, exhausted, bruised, insulted, and yet silent with the silence of suffering love. The Word of God who spoke creation into existence with mere sentences is now silent before the very ones he had created.

The Father is always looking at the wounds of his Son! He is asking, “*when will the church give him what he deserves?*” May the slain Lamb receive the due reward of his sufferings!

There was a true story of a father who got a call from the police one night that his son had been in an accident and he needed to come down as soon as possible. On his way to the accident, he wondered...he trembled...he groaned...he cried...if only...as he arrived at the accident the ambulances were blocking his way to the scene. Frantically he tried to weave his way through the myriads of people not able to contain his emotions. “*Please get out of the way...I need to see my son.*” Looking ahead he saw the car and knew instantly that his son hadn’t made it...lying on a stretcher he saw his son, and embraced him...covered in blood...he looked up and saw his son’s blood all over the road...he

obviously had been thrown from the car. But as he looked up...he saw cars coming quickly towards the scene...he jumped up and in anger, screaming at the cars streaming by, “STOP! Don’t you see it! You are driving over my son’s blood...STOP, don’t you care?”

In the same way, I can imagine the Father saying to his church today, “STOP! Don’t you see it? Don’t you Care?”

Hebrews 10:29 “How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?”

By the grace of God let us never treat the blood of the Son of God with contempt, trampling it under our feet. O God help us to never become desensitized or familiar to the reality of the cross! For indeed this is holy ground!

These things the angels long to see, but they cover their faces when they behold the mysteries and excellences of the grace of the gospel...

*“Crown Him the Lord of Love;
Behold his hands and side,
Rich wounds, yet visible above
In beauty glorified
No angel in the sky
Can fully bear that sight,
But downward bends his burning eye
At mysteries so bright!”^{xvi}*

The Lamb’s Blood

The death of Jesus is the epicenter of God's glorious revelation of triumph over the march of death in the course of human history. In one movement in His own body, Jesus halted the cosmos' spiral into chaos and eternal oblivion. He turned it around. As His flesh was torn open and His blood was loosed, the power of its perfection entered the cosmos and brought the gears of sin and cursing grinding to a halt. The way to the Father was torn and now, blood-bathed, no man can shut it anymore!

Hearts transformed by the power of His blood join into the epic chain and emit an ever-increasing wave of His power. The blood breaks open the bars of sin's prison and sets the captive free. With it explosive power is multiplied and loosed in testimony of what He has done. This perpetual motion—the release of the light and heat of Calvary—is living and unfolding in increasing glory down through every succeeding generation. It is the assurance that the whole earth shall be filled with His glory. The cross remains. It is not a onetime event of history that has ceased to surround us in its efficacy. It suffuses the very atmosphere of invisible and visible realms with the power of salvation and the treasure of resurrection from the dead! The cross is the epicenter of glory from before the foundations of this world and the creation of the human race until the Lamb appears. If a man should glory let him glory in the Cross. If a man should find himself and be able to say, *"I am," let him say, "I am crucified with Christ!"*

Are you downcast? Look to the Cross! Are you rejoicing? Look to the Cross! Do you seek a compass? The Cross points the way. Are you weighed down? Let the Cross lift you up: A yoke that breaks every other yoke. A bond that looses every bondage. An ensign that rises above the highest mountain of opposition and is planted immovable in grace in the miry depth of the lowest chasm of suffering. Let us say with the hymnist, "In the Cross, in the Cross, be my glory ever."^{xvii}

Edith Stein, a modern saint who voluntarily revealed her Jewish identity in order to share the love of Christ in the midst of the horrors of the Holocaust concentration camps, Edith Stein writes in her meditation, *The Love of the Cross*,

“The sight of the world in which we live, the need and misery, and an abyss of human malice, again and again dampens jubilation over the victory of light. The world is still deluged by mire, and still but a small flock has escaped from it to the highest mountain peaks. The battle between Christ and the Antichrist is not yet over. The followers of Christ have their place in this battle, and their chief weapon is the Cross. The lovers of the Cross, whom He has awakened and will always continue to awaken anew in the changeable history of the struggling church, these are His allies at the end of time.”

The Finished Work of the Blood of the Lamb

God commanded the priests of Israel to sacrifice two offerings daily, one in the morning, at the 3rd hour which was 9:00am and one at the ninth hour of the day which was 3:00pm. Jesus was hung on the cross at the exact time the priests were sacrificing the morning burnt offering. At 3:00pm the Passover Lamb, the Lord Jesus was slain, as Jesus breathed his last! On Day of Atonement, the high priest would declare after the evening sacrifice, “It is finished!” Jesus our High Priest, roars forth with every ounce left in his physical being, “It is finished!” This statement literally meant, “Paid in full!” Jesus purchased us and brought us into his glorious inheritance! Through the shed blood of the Lamb, we now have these precious promises that are 'Yes and Amen' in Christ!

We have protection under the covering of the blood.

Exodus 12:13 (ESV), *“The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I*

will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.”

We have salvation, forgiveness and redemption in the blood.

Hebrews 9:22 (ESV), *“Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”*

Matthew 26:28 (ESV), *“for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”*

Ephesians 1:7 (NIV), *“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.”*

There is life, healing, and provision in the blood.

Isaiah 53:5 (NIV), *“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”*

Psalms 105:37 (NKJV), *“He also brought them out with silver and gold, And there was none feeble(sick) among His tribes.”*

There is cleansing in the blood.

1 John 1:7 (NKJV), *“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”*

There is justification in the blood.

Romans 5:9 (NKJV), *“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”*

There is sanctification in the blood.

Hebrews 13:12 (NKJV), *“Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.”*

There is peace under the covering of the blood.

Colossians 1:19-20 (NKJV), *“For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell,²⁰ and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”*

There is washing in the blood.

Revelation 1:5 (NKJV), *“and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,”*

There is overcoming in the power of the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 12:11 (NKJV), *“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”*

There is accessibility in the blood, allowing us into the presence of God.

Hebrews 10:19 (NKJV), *“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,”*

Therefore let’s declare by faith these glorious promises today:

- Today I testify personally to what the Blood of Jesus does for me.
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- Through the Blood of Jesus I am redeemed out of the hand of the devil.

- Through the Blood of Jesus all my sins are forgiven.
- Through the Blood of Jesus I am justified, made righteous, just as if I had never sinned.
- Through the Blood of Jesus I am sanctified, made holy, set apart to God. My body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, redeemed, cleansed, justified and sanctified by the Blood of Jesus.
- Through the Blood of Jesus every curse for disobedience is broken.
- Through the Blood of Jesus every blessing of obedience is mine!
- Through the Blood of Jesus the way to perpetual communion with the Father has been opened and no man can shut it.
- Through the Blood of Jesus I am heir and possessor of all the riches of my Father's eternal Kingdom.
- The Blood of Jesus speaks for me today from the mercy seat of God's throne in Heaven.
- Therefore, the devil has no place in me, no power over me, no unsettled claims against me.
- The song of the Lamb surrounds me today with eternal victory and joy.

- I overcome the world, the flesh and the devil through the Blood of Jesus!

The Glory of the Lamb

Jesus still bears the scars and marks from the cross on his glorified body in heaven! He stands as a Lamb as though it had been slain. Charles Spurgeon said that these wounds are “*lustrous with supernatural splendor.*” These are more than mere scars. They are like medals of Glory, still embedded in His body and announcing the message of His grand sacrifice on the cross!”^{xviii}

Jesus went from wearing a cruel crown of thorns to wearing a golden crown of glory, from robes dipped in blood to a kingly robe of splendor, from a mock scepter in his hand to a scepter of authority, from the insults of men to the worship of angels, from the filth of sin to the beauty of holiness...

See his head and hair, once soaked in blood, now dazzling white as snow...See the One whose eyes stung and dripped blood, tears of sorrow, now blazing like fire, like flames of torches...see the face, once swollen and raw from patches of His beard torn out...now his face shines brighter than the sun in all its brilliance...see his body, once stripped naked, now clothed in eternal majesty...see his hands pierced, now bleeding infinite splendor, feet once spiked to a stake of timber, now gleaming like burnished bronze...his side once pierced and now hear him say, “*This wound in my Heart is for YOU!*”

“Every Wound Bleeds Glory”

From victim to victor, from worm to warrior, from humiliation to glorification, from tortured to triumphant, from degradation to exaltation, from a lowly bleeding Lamb to a glorified Lion-Lamb!

He's the One from Whom Glory flows! Glory that flows from Him, and through Him, and Back to Him!

He's the Central Sun in the universe,
He's the Dazzling One,

He's the Outstanding One,

He's the Chandelier of Heaven,

He's the Well Spring of Eternity,

He's the Fountainhead of Glory,
He's the Worthy Lamb of all Glory!^{xix}

Learn to Love

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

One of the primary marks of a disciple of Jesus is love! Scripture makes it abundantly clear that we love because he first loved us. The greatest love ever given was through Jesus at the cross.

“Greater love has none than this that someone lays down his life for his friends.”(John 15:13)

He loved us and gave himself up for us! (Gal 2:20, Eph. 5:2, 25, Rev. 1:5)

Romans 5:8 “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

1 John 4:9-10 *“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”*

We can only love to the degree that we experience and receive his love. God desires that the first commandment to Love God with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength be restored to first place in our lives. We love God because he first loves us with his whole heart, mind, soul and strength, which he showed us at the cross. When we understand and experience this kind of committed love revealed through the cross of Christ, we can then love like he loves, laying down our lives for all those around us, and showing ourselves to be his disciples. As John Stott writes,

“The Cross is the blazing fire at which the flame of our love is kindled, but we have to get near enough for its sparks to fall on us.”^{xx}

John 6:55-56 *“For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.”*

For the Supremacy of Christ in all things,

Jason Hubbard

End Notes

ⁱ Charles Spurgeon, “How Hearts are Softened” *Spurgeon’s Expository Encyclopedia*, Vol. 8, pg 377

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- ⁱⁱ David Bryant, *Christ is All*(New Providence: New Providence Publishers, 2005), pg 45
- ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid, pg 41-42
- ^{iv} Charles Spurgeon, “2200 Quotations from the Writings of Charles Spurgeon” pg 111
- ^v Charles Spurgeon, “*Mourning at the Sight of the Crucified.*” Pg. 190
- ^{vi} Tim Keller excerpt from his talk at Gospel Coalition Conference 2017, “Boasting in the Cross” <http://2017.thegospelcoalition.org/>
- ^{vii} C.J. Mahaney, *Cross-Centered Living*, pg 80
- ^{viii} Jonathan Edwards, *Christ’s Agony*, pg 869.
- ^{ix} Hendriksen, William, *Matthew*, pg 970
- ^x CJ Mahaney, *Cross-Centered Living*, pg 88
- ^{xi} Sandy Kirk, *The Glory of the Lamb*, pg 68-69
- ^{xii} Tim Keller, *Idol Factory*, quoted from sermon by C.J. Mahaney
- ^{xiii} Doug Stringer, *Born to Die*, pg 28-29
- ^{xiv} Dr. C. Truman Thomas, paraphrased on Cross Examination I-IV, from Doug Stringer, *Born to Die*, pgs 2-6
- ^{xv} Samuel Zwemmer, *Glory of the Cross*, pg 63
- ^{xvi} Samuel Zwemmer, *Glory of the Cross*, pg 113
- ^{xvii} Mahesh Chavda, *The Blood of Jesus*
- ^{xviii} Charles Spurgeon, “*Mourning at the Sight of the Crucified.*” Pg. 190
- ^{xix} Sandy Kirk, *Glory of the Lamb*, pg 102-103
- ^{xx} CJ Mahaney, *Living the Cross Centered Life*(Sisters, Multnomah Publishers, 2006) , pg 13