

THIS IS MY STORY, THIS IS MY SONG

Why the Cross Is Crucial in Corporate Worship

- Bob Kauflin -

I. Intro

II. The heart of Biblical worship is the exaltation of Jesus Christ and His work on the cross.

- A. The cross of Jesus Christ is shorthand for all that was accomplished through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God.
- B. Pastor and theologian P.T. Forsyth wrote in 1909 “Christ is to us just what his cross is. All that Christ was in heaven or on earth was put into what he did there...You do not understand Christ till you understand his cross.”

III. Brief word on how to approach Revelation

- A. The Revelation of Jesus Christ – God wants us to understand what’s important.
- B. Written to comfort and strengthen the church of the first century, as well as us.
- C. Important for understanding how to worship God.

IV. Who is Worthy?

- A. Chap. 4 & 5 are about the throne, where the sovereign one rules.
- B. He sees a sealed scroll with writing on it. The question comes: Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?
- C. No one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or look on it.
- D. The symbolic importance of THIS scroll is massive. William Hendriksen explains:

“The closed scroll indicates the plan of God unrevealed and unexecuted. If that scroll remains sealed God’s purposes are not realized; His plan is not carried out. To open that scroll by breaking the seals means not merely to reveal but to carry out God’s plan.”

- E. In other words, if the scroll is not opened, humanity is doomed. This scroll has the power to superintend what is going to happen for the rest of time. If the scroll remains closed, history remains directionless and in the end, hopeless.

V. Why is Christ Worthy?

Rev. 5:9-10 (ESV)

Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

- A. Author Graeme Goldsworthy comments:

"Here we see that the key to the truth, all the truth, about the kingdom of God is Jesus Christ in his life, death, and resurrection...John illuminates the central paradox of the gospel. The victory of God was the humiliation and death of his Son. The Lion assumes the meekness of the Lamb and dies to overcome. "

- B. Jesus is worthy of worship because the victory of God was the humiliation of his Son. Because when he was slaughtered like a Passover lamb, Jesus' blood paid the ransom price to free men and women from their bondage to sin. Through His death on a cross Jesus purchased men for God. Moses couldn't do this, nor David, nor Paul. No human had the ability. When it came to this task only the God-man, Jesus Christ, could do what was required.

VI. What Can We Learn?

- A. Heavenly worship is a response to clear objective truth.
- B. Heavenly worship centers around the objective truth of Jesus' work on the cross.
- C. Heavenly worship lasts forever.

VII. Our Response

- A. The Gospel should be a daily motivation for personal worship.
1. The Gospel's function is not restricted to our conversion. It is meant to govern and motivate our entire lives.
 2. We must preach the Gospel to ourselves every day. (Jerry Bridges)
- B. We should help people understand the meaning and effect of the cross in worship.

1. The cross is our means of **access**. We could not draw near to God apart from the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Hebrews 10:19-22 (ESV)

- a. Because of the cross we can draw to God near with boldness and confidence.

in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. Ephes. 3:12 (ESV)

2. The cross is our means of **acceptance**. We are completely forgiven because of the cross.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight. Ephes. 1:7-8 (ESV)

3. Our Savior's work on the cross is the object of our **adoration**.

"In Christ we behold the wisdom, goodness, love, grace, mercy and power of God all working together for the great work of our redemption and salvation. The wisdom and love of God are in themselves infinitely glorious. But we cannot see how glorious they are except in the redemption and salvation of the church which is achieved only in and by Christ." (John Owen, *The Glory of Christ*, p 25)

4. A knowledge of the effects of the Gospel produces a humble, grateful, and secure people.

C. We should be careful about using songs that mention the cross but distort or minimize its meaning.

1. Sentimental
2. Moral example for us to follow
3. Man-centered

“God is love. But the supreme object of the love is himself. And because he loves himself supremely he cannot suffer what belongs to the integrity of his character and glory to be compromised or curtailed.” (John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, p. 32)

D. We should write & sing songs should explain, expound, and extol Jesus' finished work of penal substitutionary atonement on the cross.

1. Calvary means forgiveness for sins, the upholding of God's righteousness, the satisfying of His wrath, the lavish display of His mercy, our adoption into God's family, and His victory over sin, death, and Satan.
2. We should look for songs that develop the themes contained in the cross:
 - a. Sacrifice
 - b. Redemption
 - c. Justification
 - d. Reconciliation

VIII. Conclusion

A. George Orwell (writer from the first half of the 20th century) said, “Sometimes the first duty of intelligent men is the restatement of the obvious.” He also wrote *“To see what is in front of one's nose needs a constant struggle.”*

“Here we must realize that we are dealing with the mystery of godliness, and eternity will not reach the bottom of it nor exhaust its praise. Yet it is ours to proclaim it and continue the attempt to expound and defend its truth.” (John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, pg. 5)

Recommended Reading:

The Cross-Centered Life, C.J. Mahaney, Crossway
The Gospel for Real Life, Jerry Bridges, NavPress
The Cross of Christ, John Stott, IVP
Redemption Accomplished and Applied, John Murray
Valley of Vision, ed. Arthur Bennett, Banner of Truth
The Power of the Cross of Christ, Charles Spurgeon