Looking at the Cross from God's Perspective

Selected Scriptures - John MacArthur

I had on this particular trip for the last month the opportunity to be with unbelievers more than I normally would be, to be in their presence and to be somewhat disconnected from the normal circle of Christian friends in which I live and move and have my being. And it continued to make me grateful for the salvation that God has given to me, to see how people without Christ struggle through life trying to fill it with some meaning. To realize at the same time that I was so privileged, I was unworthy of that privilege and that God in His infinite grace had designed to save me was cause for great joy. And so, I have done a lot of thinking about just the simplicity and the center focus of Christianity which is the death of Jesus Christ on the cross and what it means in my own life. As one who teaches the Bible and studies it and who writes books and who gets into theology and commentaries, it's easy for me to get swept away in the waves of minutia that I deal with and it was very good for me just to be somewhat isolated and very often in a context of unbelievers and to be brought back to the reality of the simplicity of my relationship to Jesus Christ provided by His death on the cross and His resurrection.

At the same time I'm very much aware of the fact that churches are filled with people who...who don't really understand that saving message. That is continually brought home to me. I had occasion when I was back in Maryland at a Bible conference on the Chesapeake Bay to be reminded daily by people who were there that they had attended churches for years and never come to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ until they had listened to Grace To You and heard a clear, clear message on the gospel. I continue to be astounded, I guess, that people can exist in churches over long periods of time and not know the saving truth.

I shared with you that on one of my vacations in the past I had the occasion to read Ian Murray's book on Jonathan Edwards and I read that book with great interest because at the end of it, though he was the greatest theologian maybe this nation has ever produced, certainly one of its profoundest, and though for twenty-two years he preached at the church at North Hampton the unsearchable riches of Christ and expounded the Scripture and was God's primary instrument in the great awakening, and though he was faithful to preach the whole counsel of God, after twenty-two years as pastor his church voted him out. And the reason they voted him out was that he wanted to demand that no one take communion unless they had confessed Jesus as Lord and Savior. They thought that was excessive. And so they voted him out and there he was after twenty-two years of teaching theology and doctrine in its great profundity to that people, he realized that there were unconverted people when he came and there were still enough unconverted people twenty-two years later to vote him out of the church. Perhaps if he were to go back again he might have preached more messages on the simple gospel, lest someone somehow would miss the message that is at the heart of our faith.

It is in the light of that that I want to ask you to turn in your Bibles to *Romans chapter 3* this morning and I want to take us back to the beginning, if I might. It's been a long while since we took a Sunday morning look at the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The time has come for us to review that.

Now the death of the Lord Jesus Christ can be viewed in several different ways and from several different perspectives, as you well know. Most frequently when we examine the death of Jesus Christ we do it from our viewpoint. We come to the cross and see it through man's eyes. We see the cross of Jesus Christ as that act by which Christ provided salvation for us, by which He saved us from sin and death and hell and the power of the flesh, by which He delivered us from the kingdom of darkness and put us in the kingdom of His dear Son, by which He ushered us into that place where we're blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, by which He delivered us from the wrath to come, by which He took us who were enemies and made us friends of God, by which He granted to us eternal life and all that it involves. We see it from our viewpoint. It could be looked at that way and legitimately so.

We also could come to the cross and look at it from the viewpoint of the holy angels. The angels, by the way, look at the cross and they are searching over the cross and they're examining it and looking into the atoning work of Christ, trying to comprehend and understand its great profound mysteries, mysteries which they cannot fully understand because they will not fully experience because holy angels need no redemption. And they see in it the wonder and the majesty and the glory of the mind of God and the goodness of God and the love of God as He provides for unworthy sinners. Theirs is a fascinating perspective.

We could look at the cross from the standpoint of Satan and his demons. They see the cross as that point in which the Son bruised the serpent's head, that point in which the one who had the power of death, Satan, was destroyed by the One who now carries the power of death, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. Demons see the cross through their own eyes. They thought it was their moment of victory and in one split second Jesus showed up in the pit to announce His triumph over them and He has openly displayed His victory over principalities and powers and rulers and so forth. We could look at the cross from the vantage point of demons.

We might even look at the cross through the eyes of Jesus Christ. We might even see it as He must have seen it. We could go through the excruciating agony of that kind of sin bearing and that rejection and hear Him cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

We could also see the cross as the moment of His glory for He said, "If I be lifted up, I'll draw all men to Myself." We could also see it as the verification of His word because He promised that He was going to die and there His promise came to pass. We could also see it as the moment of His greatest triumph when He indeed bruised the serpent's head. We could see it as the great demonstration of His love for He said, *"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."*

You can look at the cross, as it were, through your own eyes. You could look at it through the eyes of holy angels, fallen angels, through the eyes of Christ Himself and see its glory.

But for this morning, I want us to look at the cross in its relationship to God, to God Himself, God the Father. What did it mean to God? We know what Jesus' death meant to us. We know what it meant to the holy angels, it gave them a new verse to their great hymns of praise. We know what it meant to the demons, it was the end of their control of their own destiny. We know what it meant to Christ. But what did it mean to God? What did the death of Christ mean to God? How did it represent God? How did it glorify God? What is His perspective on that great event?

And to understand that, look at *Romans chapter 3* and follow as I read in verse 24. "*Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles? Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one. Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law."*

Now that great text tells us what the cross meant to God. What the death of Christ, the atoning work of Christ, the blood-shedding sacrifice of Christ meant to God. Four things stand out. It declared God's righteousness, it exalted God's grace, it revealed God's consistency and it confirmed God's Word.

We are in a worship service this morning. It is our intention to worship God. And so it is fitting that we in worshiping Him look at the cross, as it were, in relation to Him that we might worship Him for His righteousness, His grace, His consistency, and His Law, or His Word.

Let's look at the first one. The cross revealed God's righteousness, verse 24. *"Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith, this was to demonstrate His righteousness."* And we'll stop there for the moment.

Christ died on the cross to demonstrate or to reveal or to declare God's righteousness. This is a very, very essential, a very, very important issue. Men have always struggled with this matter. Why? Because when you understand God to be a righteous God and you understand yourself to be a sinner, it puts you in a very difficult position. How can a sinful man be right with God? This is man's age-old longing, how can I know God, how can I be forgiven by God, how can I be right with God...it is that very question that has spawned religion. Religion is in every sense an attempt to answer that question, to solve the cry of the heart of man to appease whatever deity he may believe in, under whose authority he feels himself and under whose judgment he is afraid. How can I be right with God? Is God a righteous, holy, just God? And if indeed He is, then how can I appease Him? How can I satisfy His requirement for holiness, perfection, justice and righteousness and be right with Him?

One sinner in a rather prosaic way put his musings down like this: "*The one wished to dispute with Him, he could not answer Him one time out of a thousand. His wisdom is profound. His power is vast. Who has resisted Him and come out unscathed? He moves mountains without their knowing it and overturns them in His anger. He shakes the earth from its place and makes its pillars tremble. He speaks to the sun and it doesn't shine. He seals off the light of the stars. He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea. He is the maker of the bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south. He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be numbered. When He passes me I cannot see Him. When He goes by I cannot perceive Him. If He snatches away, who can stop Him? Who can say to Him...what are You doing? God does not restrain His anger, even the cohorts of Rahab cowered at His feet. How then can I dispute with Him? How can I find words to argue with Him? Though I were innocent I could not answer Him. I could not plead with my judge for mercy. Even if I summoned Him and He responded, I do not believe He would give me a hearing. He would crush me with a storm and multiply my wounds for no reason. He would not let me regain my breath but would overwhelm me with misery. If it is a matter of strength, He is mighty. If it is a matter of justice, whom will summon Him? Even if I were innocent my mouth would condemn me. If I were blameless it would pronounce me guilty*." (*Job 9:3-20*)

The musings of a man who fears he could never be right with God. Many suggestions are made about how man can be right with God, we call them religion. But apart from Christianity, all of them involve human achievement and works, and they don't satisfy God. They don't make provision for us and they don't make us right with Him. You remember Bildad, the friend of Job, echoed Job's cry? *How can a man be right with God? How can he be clean?* And you remember Paul on the Damascus road, "*What will you have me to do?"* And you remember those who heard Peter cry, *"What shall we do?"* And you remember those in hearing Jesus who said, *"What do we do to work the works of God?"* And you remember the Philippian jailor who said, *"What must I do to be saved?"* How can I connect up with a righteous, holy, just God? That has always been the cry of man's heart.

Now if God were just to move down and forgive man, it would strike a blow against His justice. And someone would say...well God's justice is whimsical, and God's righteousness is capricious and He's on again, off again because some sinners He judges and damns and some He forgives and you can't trust His righteousness and you can trust His holiness and you can't trust His justice to be absolute.

God wants, however, you to know that His nature is immutable in any attribute and that His justice, holiness and righteousness is immutable and unchanging and absolutely consistent. And so God devised a plan which would demonstrate, reveal His righteousness. Verse 24 says *we are justified, we are made right with God as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus*.

Now listen, there is nothing any person can do to be made right with God. There is nothing any person can do to satisfy God's requirement for holiness and righteousness. There is nothing any human being can do to

settle God's justice. And so if we can't do anything, the initiative has to be with whom? With Him. And so says Paul...we are justified as a gift by His grace. God gives us a justification, a righteousness. God gives us a right relationship with Him. We couldn't do it. We could never satisfy His righteous demands. After all, Jesus said, *"Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect."* And we remember the words of Isaiah, *"All your righteousnesses are as filthy rags."* We could at our best only be filthy rags. We could never be perfect, therefore we could never achieve a relationship with God that satisfied God. So God had to give us a gift. He had to give us, in other words, what we couldn't earn. That's a gift, isn't it? You don't earn a gift. If you earned it, it isn't a gift, it's pay. So He gave us a gift.

But in giving us a gift somebody might say, "God is not then a just God because it's not just to give you a gift when you don't deserve it. God is not a holy God because He's overlooking your sin. God is not a righteous God because He's tolerating your unrighteousness. God is accepting you as you are which means He's lowered His standard." That would be the accusation. And it would readily be on the lips of a Pharisee, believe me. And so says Paul, but God did give us a gift, it came out of His grace which means it was undeserved, unmerited and unearned. And He gave it to us through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. The word "redemption" means a ransom. You know what a ransom is, somebody kidnaps a child and hauls them off somewhere and calls up and says..."The ransom is $200,000. You want to buy this child back that's the price." Ransom means to pay a price to buy somebody back. It was used in ancient times to buy a slave out of bondage unto freedom.

And so, God says, "Look, I'm going to give you the gift of a right relationship with Me, the gift of forgiveness of sins, the gift of eternal life, but the price will be paid." And it was paid, He says, in Christ Jesus. It isn't that God capriciously or whimsically just shoves His justice aside, shoves His righteousness aside, His holiness aside and says I'll love for a while, I'll be gracious for a while, I'll be merciful a while and I'll ignore those other things. No. God's holiness, God's righteousness, and God's justice can never be set aside. God will always operate consistent with His nature. And so whatever He does that is good and gracious and merciful will also be holy, just and righteous.

How did He do that? He did it through the price being paid by Christ Jesus. In other words, He was so holy and just and righteous that some price had to be paid for sin. The price was set, death. But He was so loving, gracious and merciful that He gave His own Son to pay the price. Justice was satisfied and so was grace. Holiness was satisfied and so was mercy. Righteousness was satisfied and so was love. And so it says then in verse 25 that *God displayed Christ publicly as a propitiation in His blood.* Stop at that point.

God displayed Christ publicly...what does that mean? Just what it says. He lifted Him up where all could see and He made Him to be a propitiation. That word, hilasterionin the Greek, means a satisfaction... a satisfaction. The criticism, you see, was that God was not righteous, just and holy if He just overlooked sin because, you see, the end of verse 25 says, *"In the past God had been forebearing and passed over sins previously committed."* How could He do that and be just? How could He wink at, as it says in *Acts*, the sins of all those generations, how could He tolerate all of that? Because somebody was going to pay the price. How could He forgive sinners? How could He just forgive them and still be just? Because the price would be paid. His justice, and holiness and righteousness would be satisfied.

I suppose to some people it seemed as if divine justice was sleeping, as if divine righteousness had gone on a vacation, as if divine holiness had slipped into a coma. Men sinned here below and got away with it. They lived, they prospered. Where were the wages of sin? What about the soul that sins, it shall die? And then all of a sudden along come these preachers saying He's going to forgive, He's going to forgive, He's gracious and loving and merciful. He's going to forgive. And the question immediately arises... Wait a minute, wait a minute, God is holy and righteous and He can't just be overlooking sin, it has to be punished. It can't just be excused. It can't just fade away. It can't be ignored.

No amount of optimism, no amount of love or grace or mercy can put sin aside and stop requiring its penalty. A holy God could never bypass sin and be complacent about evil. And even though He loved the sinner

deeply, He cannot forgive the sinner unless His justice is satisfied. So the question is...how can a sinful man become acceptable to a righteous God? Somebody has to pay the price. And God out of love chooses not to punish the sinner but to punish His Son, therefore does He preserves the integrity of His nature and His reputation and give place to His grace as well. If the sinner were to suffer for his own sin, he will suffer eternally and even eternity cannot pay the price or eternity would end. But God is gracious and provides a sacrifice. Jesus Christ died the death that you deserved. He became sin who knew no sin. He died in our place. He is our substitute. He had to be man to die as man, He had to be God to overcome death and sin. And so the God/Man had to suffer. Jesus said, *"The Son of Man must suffer and be killed."* He knew it. And the early church preached why Christ must need to have suffered. The sacrifices of all the bulls and goats couldn't do it, *Hebrews 10* says, *"By the blood of bulls and goats has no flesh been sanctified."*

It isn't animal sacrifice that did it, that was just a picture of the sacrifice to come. It isn't human achievement, nothing you can do will satisfy God. A price has to be paid, it is the price of bloodshed and death. Christ paid it. *Psalm 49:7 and 8* says, *"None of them can redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for him for the redemption of their souls is costly."* The price is higher than any human being can pay, but it was paid by Christ. No sinner could atone for the sins of fellow sinners, so Christ the perfect One paid the price of divine justice and bore the sins of the whole world. The death of Christ then was not only an act of grace, it was an act of justice.

Would you please note in verse 25 it says that *He is a propitiation in His blood through faith*. And at the end of verse 26, *He is the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.* This provision, this sacrifice of Christ is appropriated through faith--through faith, through believing. That is so very essential, so very basic to our faith. You appropriate the work of Christ by believing...true faith.

So, God in the cross puts His justice, righteousness, holiness on display. So just and righteous and holy is He that even as much as He wants to forgive the sinner, He cannot do it unless the price is paid even if the price has to be paid by His own Son. That's how just God is. He can never be accused of being unjust or unrighteous. His justice was satisfied by the perfect, spotless Lamb who paid the perfect price. We then were not redeemed by corruptible things but by the precious blood of Christ. We see then in the cross the justice, the righteousness of God.

Secondly, the cross exalts God's grace. The cross exalts God's grace. Verse 27...again somebody is going to pose another question, if this is all God, then what part do we have in it? And the answer is none, basically. There is no place for boasting. *"Where then is boasting? It is excluded. It is excluded."* Salvation is totally His work. Scripture makes that abundantly and profoundly clear, *"For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any should boast."* Every component in salvation is the work of God. He even activates, quickens and livens our faith so that we can believe.

And so, says Paul, "*Where then is boasting? It's excluded."* There isn't any place for boasting, it is left out altogether. *"By what kind of law?" verse 27 says. "Of works? No, but by a law of faith."* In other words, if I don't have anything to do about this, if this isn't by works, how does it work? When he says "*by what kind of law?"* let me help you with that. The word "law" here means principle, not so much a fiat as we think of a law like the Ten Commandments or some law that God has laid down, but a principle, an operative principle. Used it the same way in *Romans 7* and elsewhere. But he says...All right then, if this salvation isn't something that I do by my works and I can't boast about it, then by what kind of principle does it work? Of works? No, but by the principle of faith. Only the principle of faith will exalt God, glorify God because it takes all out of man's hands. The law here, or the principle, or the method by which salvation works is the method, principle, law of faith. And so when we can do nothing more than just receive the gift by faith, we know it's the gift of grace. And so God's grace is exalted here. The only one who can boast is God, for He by grace...back to verse 24...has given a gift to us which we can only receive or reject. We have no part in it except to take it. He cuts the ground out from under the feet of those who say I always do the best I can, I always live a decent life, I'm a good person, surely God will not overlook me. And he simply says it's all God's work.

Then in verse 28, *"For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law."* The only contribution we make is to believe and even the believing is a work of God within us. Remember what Paul said in *1 Corinthians 15:10, "I am what I am by*...what?...*by the grace of God."* The hymn writer said, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame...that is anything that man can design...but holy lean on Jesus name." And so the principle, Paul says, under which we operate in terms of salvation is a principle of faith in response to grace.

We look at the cross, what do we see? God's righteousness on display as the penalty is being paid, the ransom price. We look at the cross, we see God's grace on display, He does it all. Christ pays the price and God moves toward us in grace giving us the gift. All we can do is refuse or receive it.

Now, this is the very heart of salvation, saving faith. And because he makes such an issue out of it, verse 24 he says *"justified by grace;" verse 25, "we receive it through faith;" verse 26, "we receive it through faith;" verse 27, "it's not law it's faith;" verse 28, "it's faith not law."* That's a lot of faith emphasis and because of that I need to say to you that it is faith that is at the heart of our Christianity.

Now I want to give you a little test to help you examine your faith. I'm convinced that churches are filled with people who have a kind of faith that doesn't save them. James called it a dead faith. *Second Corinthians 13:5* says, *"Examine yourself whether you be in the faith."* You want to be sure your faith is real.

Now, as you look at yourself and you're asking...am I really a Christian, have I really appropriated this gift that God gives, have I believed genuinely? What do you look at in your life to discern whether your faith is real? What are the marks?

First of all, let me show you some things that neither prove nor disprove saving faith, okay? I'm going to give you a little list of things that don't prove anything. You could be a Christian, you could not be a Christian and still have these things. They don't prove or disprove saving faith. But you need to know what they are so you're not deceived.

Number one, visible morality...visible morality. What do I mean by that? Well some people, they're just good people. Some of them are very religious, like Mormon people who on the outside appear very moral, or Roman Catholic people or any other kind of religion. Some people are just good people. They're honest. They're forthright in their dealings. They're grateful people. They're kind people. And they have an external, visible kind of morality. By the way, the Pharisees certainly rested on that for their hope. They're loving people, some of them are tender-hearted people. But of loving and serving God, they know nothing and feel nothing. Whatever the person does or leaves undone does not involve God. This person is honest in his dealings with everybody except God. He won't rob anybody but God. He is thankful and loyal to everybody but God. He speaks contemptuously and reproachfully of no one but God. He has good relationships with everybody but God. He's very much like the rich young ruler who says, *"All these things have I kept, what do I lack?"* This is visible morality but it does not necessarily mean salvation. People can clean up their act by reformation rather than regeneration.

Secondly, another thing that doesn't prove or disprove saving faith is intellectual knowledge...intellectual knowledge. This doesn't prove true faith. Knowledge of the truth is necessary for salvation and visible morality is the fruit of salvation but neither one equal salvation. You see, you can know all about God and you can know all about Jesus and who He was, and He came into the world and He died on the cross and He rose again and He's coming again, and you can even know more of the details of His life, you can understand all of that and turn your back on Christ. The writer of *Hebrew*s writes to those in chapter 6 who knowing all of that refused Christ. In chapter 10 he says, *"You're treading underfoot the blood of Christ by not believing what you know is true."* There are many people who know the Scripture and who have knowledge but are bound for hell. You will never be saved without that knowledge but having that knowledge doesn't necessarily save you.

Thirdly, religious involvement...religious involvement is not necessarily a proof of true faith. There are people who have, according to Paul in writing to Timothy, *2 Timothy 3:5*, a form of godliness but powerless, an empty kind of religion. Remember the virgins in *Matthew 25* who were waiting and waiting and waiting for the coming of the bridegroom who is Christ, and they're waiting and waiting but when He comes they don't go in. They had everything together except the oil in their lamps. That which was most necessary was missing. The oil probably emblematic of the new life, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, they weren't regenerate, they were religious but not regenerate. You can have external visible morality, intellectual knowledge and religious involvement and it may not indicate genuine faith.

Fourth, active ministry. Balaam was a prophet, Saul of Tarsus thought he was serving God by killing Christians, Judas was a public preacher, Judas was an apostle. Remember *Matthew 7, "Many will say to Me, `Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name and done many wonderful works? Cast out demons in Your name?'* And He says to them, *`Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity, I never knew you.'"* Ministry activity, that's not necessarily a proof of saving faith.

Number five, conviction of sin...conviction of sin. Lots of people feel bad about sin. Listen, this whole world is full of people that are just guilt-ridden to the core. You know, fifteen years ago we used to talk about people going to psychology, going to the psychologist and we used to say, and it was pretty true from tests, that most of the people who went to the psychologist were suffering from guilt. People used to write books about that. I remember the Meninger Clinic put out tremendous amount of material on the fact that all these people were suffering from guilt.

Well, the psychologists of the world have absolutely no answer for guilt because the only answer is the gospel. What has happened in the last fifteen years is you don't have any people at all today who feel guilty because we've come up with a new psychology that eliminates the guilt. Now all we do is we displace the guilt on somebody else and the new therapy is to make the person utterly irresponsible for any of the guilt that they might feel inside and to free them from that guilt and you do that by making the ultimate virtue pride, the ultimate virtue self-fulfillment, self-aggrandizement, self-glory, self-esteem and that eliminates the need to feel guilty. So we really have come up with an utterly ungodly, unchristian, unbiblical psychology that has taken the guilt issue and eliminated it.

Now what happens in the church, instead of the preacher standing up to preach freedom from guilt to guilty sinners, they expect him to preach self-esteem to ego-centric people. The whole climate has changed. And we have been skewed in our message because we have allowed the philosophy of the day to create a new kind of sinner who thinks he feels no guilt. And the most important thing you can preach to a bunch of sinners is the sin of their lives and the law of God which they fall short of and the impending judgment they await. But that message is not popular because the new philosophy and the new psychology has long ago eliminated guilt. We don't have people feeling guilt anymore because they've learned that therapy can tell them they can put that guilt on somebody who did something to them. And now I don't care who you talk to, when they go into that kind of situation of counseling they will inevitably say...I have been abused... I am a victim...I am not responsible for the way I am. And so the sinner is dispossessed of his guilt and dispossessed of a direct approach of the gospel. I liked sinners better when they felt guilty. They were much easier to deal with.

But there are some people who do feel guilty, some people who do feel guilty about sin. Felix trembled under the preaching of Paul, but never left his idols. The Holy Spirit convicts many of sin, righteousness and judgment and many that He convicts don't respond with true repentance. Some may even confess their sins. Some may even abandon their sins and say I don't like to live this way, I want to shape up, amend their ways, but not necessarily come to saving faith. That's reformation, not regeneration and no degree of conviction of sin is conclusive evidence of saving faith. Believe me, even the demons are convicted of their sin that's why they tremble, but they're not saved.

Number six, assurance...assurance. Some people say, "Well I must be a Christian, I feel like one, I think I'm one." Listen, just think it through. If to think you're a Christian makes you a Christian then nobody could be deceived, right? Because as soon as you thought you were a Christian you'd be one. So you could never be deceived. The whole point of Satan's deception is to make people think they're Christians who aren't. That's the whole point. Many people feel sure they're saved, they're not. I'll tell you, there are millions of Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses and Christian Scientists who believe they are on their way to heaven, they're not. People say, "God won't condemn me, I feel good about myself, I have assurance, I'm okay." That means nothing necessarily.

Number seven, the last one, a time of decision. I hear people say, "Well I know I'm a Christian because I remember when I signed the card...I remember when I prayed a prayer...I remember when I went forward in the church service...I remember right where I was." I've heard people say, "I remember right where I was the moment I did that." Oh really! Listen, because you remember a moment doesn't mean that moment meant anything, doesn't mean that decision was valid. Nobody's salvation is verified by a past moment. People have prayed prayers and gone forward in church services and signed cards and gone into prayer rooms and been baptized and joined churches and never had saving faith.

So those are some of the non-proofs. They don't really prove anything. You say, "Well then what does prove saving faith?" Well let me just give you quickly a list.

One, love for God. Now you're talking...now you're talking down about the heart because *Romans 8:7* says, *"The carnal mind is enmity against God."* The non-Christian resents God, rebels against God down inside. But the regenerate mind is set to love the Lord with all heart, soul, mind and strength, his delight is in the excellency of God who is the first and highest affection of his renewed soul. God becomes his chief happiness. By the way, there's a great difference between such love for God and the selfish attitude that focuses only on my own happiness and sees God as a means to my end rather than as me to the end of glorifying Him. In fact, Jesus said, *"If you love father, mother more than Me, you're not even My disciple," Matthew 10:37*. Do you love God, do you love His nature? Do you love His glory? Do you love His name? Do you love His kingdom? Do you love His holiness? Do you love His will? Supreme love for God is decisive evidence of the true faith. Is your heart lifted when you sing His praises because you love Him?

Secondly, repentance from sin. The proper love for God must involve a hatred of sin. That's obvious. Who wouldn't understand that? If I loved somebody, you assume that my loving them means that I seek their well-being, right? If I said to you I love my wife but I could care less what happened to my wife, you'd question my love because true love seeks the highest good of its object. So if I say I love God then I will have to hate sin because sin offends God. Sin blasphemes God. Sin curses God. Sin seeks to destroy God and His work and His kingdom. Sin killed His Son. And if I say I love God but I tolerate sin, then you have every reason to question my love. I cannot love God without hating that which is set to destroy Him.

So, true repentance involves confession, it involves turning from sin. I should be grieved over my sin. I should ask myself, do I have a settled conviction of the evil of sin? Does sin appear to me as the evil and bitter thing it really is? Does conviction of sin in me increase as I walk with Christ? Do I hate it not merely because it is ruinous to my own soul but because it is offensive to my God whom I love? Does it more grieve me when I sin than when I have trouble? In other words, what grieves me the most, my misfortune or my sin? Do my sins appear many, frequent and aggravated? Do I find myself grieved over my sin more than the sin of others? That's the mark of salvation, true saving faith...it loves God, it hates what God hates which is sin.

Thirdly, it manifests genuine humility...it manifests genuine humility. This obviously comes through in the Beatitudes, the poor in spirit, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, those who in *Matthew 18* are like a little child humble and dependent, those who are in self-denial, willing to take up their cross and follow Him. The Lord receives those who come with a broken and a contrite spirit. *James* says *He gives grace to the humble*. We must come as the prodigal son. You remember what He said in *Luke 15*,

I think about verse 21, He said, *"Father, I am not worthy to be called Your Son."* There's no pride, there's no ego about religious achievement, spiritual accomplishment but genuine humility.

Fourthly, there's a devotion to God's glory. True saving faith that manifests genuine salvation shows devotion to God's glory. Whatever we do, whether we eat or drink, we are literally consumed with the glory of God. We do what we do because we want to glorify Him. Oh sure, we fail in all of these things but the direction of our life is in loving Him and hating sin and being genuinely humble and self-denying and knowing our unworthiness and being totally devoted to the glory of God.

Number five, continual prayer, humble, submissive believing prayer marks true faith. We cry "*Abba* (daddy) *Father"* because the Spirit in us prompts that cry. Jonathan Edwards once preached a sermon titled, "Hypocrites are deficient in the duty of secret prayer." It's true. Hypocrites may pray publicly because that's what hypocrites want to do is impress people, but they are deficient in the duty of secret prayer. A true believer with true saving faith has a personal prayer life, private prayer life, seeks communion with God.

Number six, another mark of saving faith is selfless love. *John* says if you don't love your neighbor, your brother or one in need, how are we to believe the love of God dwells in you? And also *in 1 John 3*, *John* says, *"If you love God you'll love whom God loves."* And we love Him and others because that's the response to Him loving us. *John 13* says, *"By this men know we're true disciples by our love for each other."*

Number seven, separation from the world. Paul told the Corinthians that we haven't received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God and *John* put it this way, *"Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* A true believer is separated from the world.

Again I say, we fail in all these areas but these are the direction of our lives. We aren't perfect. We haven't arrived. But we love God and want to love Him more. We hate sin and want to hate it more. We have a genuine humility and want more of it. We are devoted to God's glory. We have a prayer life that is private and personal. We have a love for others that comes from God and we find ourselves disassociated from the world as a general rule.

And then just two others, spiritual growth is another mark. If you're a true Christian you're going to be growing and that means you're going to be more and more like Christ. Life produces itself. If you're alive you're going to grow, there's no other way. You'll improve, you'll increase, you'll grow because whoever has that new work begun, *Philippians 1:6, is going to see it perfected,* it's going to go on, it's going to keep moving. The Spirit is going to move you from one level of glory to the next. So you look at your life, you see spiritual growth, you see the decreasing frequency of sin, the increasing pattern of righteousness and devotion to God.

And then finally, obedience...obedient living. *Every branch in me bears fruit*...bears fruit, says *John 15* and *Ephesians 2:10* Paul says, *"Look, you are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained that you walk in them."* That's obedience. We are saved unto the obedience of faith.

Look at your life, do you see all those things, including selfless love, separation from the world, spiritual growth and obedience? If so, that's evidence of a saving faith.

Now back to our text. The cross declares God's justice and righteousness. The cross exalts God's grace which is appropriated by faith. Thirdly, and just ever so briefly, the cross reveals God's consistency...the cross reveals God's consistency. Look at verse 29. What's the point here? Well, the Jews are going to say... Look, we are justified by the works of the Law, and now you're coming along and preaching to all these Gentiles that they are justified by faith. Does God have two ways? Does God require works from us and grace and faith from them? Is God a merciful saving God toward Gentiles, but a legal condemning God toward Jews? Do we have two different means of salvation?

Of course you realize, don't you, that the Jews believed they were saved by their works so they were concluding that Paul was preaching a new way of salvation which was not consistent with God's way. Paul says, *"Is God the God of Jews only?"* No. *"Is He not the God of Gentiles also?"* Yes, and they would have to agree. Yes, God is the God of all men. *Isaiah 54* says *the God of the whole earth shall He be called. Jeremiah 16:19, the nations shall come unto Thee from the ends of the earth.* They knew that. *Zechariah 2:11*, "*And many nations shall be joined to the Lord and shall be My people."* They knew He was the God of Jew and Gentile.

All right then, since indeed God is one, that's the Greek order in verse 30 of *Romans 3*, you see He is one at the end of the verse in the NAS (New American Standard version), it really should go with the word God. *Since indeed God is one, He will justify the circumcised...*that's Jews *by faith...and the uncircumcised...* that's Gentiles *through faith.* Now here you see God's consistency.

You look at the cross and you see since indeed God is one, if God is one God and He is the God of all men and He is the God of Jews and Gentiles, then He is one God over all men who will have one way of salvation. He will justify all by faith. God saves all the same way and He always has...always by faith, always apart from works, He is one God with one way for all men. God never changes... absolutely consistent.

The cross didn't introduce a new way of salvation, it simply covered the sins of all the past believers and all the future believers who came by faith. How was Noah saved? Go back, way back to Noah. *Genesis* says *Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.* How was Moses saved? Go all the way back to *Exodus, Moses found grace in the eyes of the Lord.* How was Abraham saved? *Romans 4* is all about that. *Verse 3* says, "*Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."* That's clear back in *Genesis 15*. Always the same, by grace through faith, by grace through faith. In the Old Testament they believed all that God revealed. They didn't have Christ yet. They believed all that God revealed. The same in the new after Christ. No one is, no one has, no one ever will be saved any other way than by faith as God graciously offers forgiveness through the sacrifice of His Son which covers the sin of sinners before Him and after Him.

So the cross from God's perspective declares His justice, exalts His grace and reveals His consistency. Lastly, this is rich, confirms God's Law...confirms God's Law. Verse 31, some of the Jews are going to say, "Oh, all right, salvation is by grace through faith, forget the Law. There's no Law. If there's no works then the Law is useless, pointless. Just why in the world did God go through all of that? Why did He go through all of that Law stuff if we aren't saved by keeping the Law? *Do we then nullify the Law?"* And he says, megenita(?) in the Greek, no, no, no, no, *no, may it never be. On the contrary, we establish the Law.*

What do you mean? Putting Jesus Christ on the cross to pay the penalty for sin ought to show you how serious God is about His Law. Even if it took the life of His own Son to satisfy the demands of that Law for death for sin, He would pay it. His Law is holy, His Law is just, His Law is righteous and Christ's death proves it. Nothing is more of a reflection of God's Law as holy than the death of Christ. It was God's Law that put Him there because all the violations of that Law had to be satisfied with a penalty and God couldn't violate His Law or penalty and so He put Christ on the cross.

And so, God's Law then is established as holy, righteous, good and is affirmed as the standard by which we are to live. Its purpose was to show us sin, it did. Its purpose was to show us God's pattern for holy living, it does. Its fulfillment in terms of the demand for death was paid by Christ, its fulfillment in terms of the demand for life is made possible through salvation. What a great affirmation of the Law. Look at the cross. In it you see God's justice, God's grace, God's consistency, you see God's Law. And it's all for His glory. No wonder the Reformers said, Sola gratia, sola fide, sola deo, gloria, "By grace alone, by faith alone for God's glory alone." And the song writer said, "O what a Savior is mine, in Him God's mercies combine, His love will never decline and He loves me." Justice and mercy meet on the cross.

This, beloved, is a precious treasure. Salvation not as we view it or as angels or demons or even Christ views it, but as God views it opens up to us the avenue of worship in which we appreciate, adore, express our love and affection to our great God for what He has done for us. Let's bow in prayer. Our Father, one man has penned it this way, "When I stand before Thy throne dressed in beauty not my own, when I see Thee as Thou art, love Thee with un-sinning heart, then, Lord, shall I fully know and only then how much I owe." We worship You, we adore You, we express our love and affection to You, we exalt You for this great salvation which You have provided for us.

While your heads are bowed for just a moment, if you do not know Christ but you desire to receive the salvation that He offers, the forgiveness of sin and eternal life, will you in the quietness of your own heart say...Lord God, I believe in Jesus Christ, I believe that He God in flesh died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sin, rose again, provided perfect satisfaction and I receive the gift of salvation in His name, turning from my sin I commit myself to follow Him. Pray that prayer and may true salvation be yours this day. Amen.