



Cross on a Chain

SERVICE SCHEDULE

~Scripture – [**Luke 23:13-17; 23-56**]

~Video – “**What Is Good About Good Friday?**”

~Worship with music

~Sermon – “**Cross On a Chain?**”

The cross is more than a good luck symbol that many people in the western world wear around their necks. I'm not saying that it is necessarily BAD to wear a cross around your neck, but I'm just saying it is far more than just a decoration, or a good luck symbol, like a rabbit's foot. My contention this evening is that the meaning of the cross is so weighty in human history, so important a symbol to the future of the world, and to each of us personally, that it cannot legitimately be worn as simple jewelry without considering its importance to us personally regarding its impact upon us and upon humanity! The cross is the crux of Christianity! If Christianity is the one true religion that we Christians believe it to be, that would make the cross the crux of all of human history – the most important event that has ever occurred in human memory! “Crux” is a word, probably borrowed from Latin, which means an intersection - where roads meet – a crossroads - a central focal point. Its extended meaning refers to something that stands out as something upon which everything else depends upon. A philosophical system, for instance, will stand or fall upon a single founding premise or principle. If that one premise is not true, then none of the thoughts and ideas and hypothesis that are built upon that premise can be relied upon to be true either! *Marxism is a good example of a well-intended idea gone horribly wrong! It is built on the premise that equality and fairness should be the driving force of all societies. All wealth and goods should be distributed to the populace equally. But in the nations it has been tried in the last century, the Marxists have been responsible for the brutal deaths of upwards of 100 million people – and some historians put that number at 200 million! They *pauperized* their countries by incompetence, corruption, and inhuman brutality! Granted, it is an idea begun with the best intentions, but since the founding premise is wrong, it will go wrong every time! Bernie Sanders is *insane* to think Marxism will be different if we try in here in the States! But those who follow him and his like, being ignorant of history, have great hope! But it is a dangerously false hope! Obviously, dangerous idea can do a huge amount of damage!



That is just one example. I could go on to others and talk about them for a week – maybe a month! But what about the cross of Christ?! Could the cross be a false premise and a dangerous one at that? If the cross is a false premise, then all of Christianity is false and perhaps destructive to humanity! Critics of Christianity will point at the church and say “*look at all the damage the church has done over the last two millenniums*”. And I would have to say that unfortunately it is true! But it is true not because the cross of Christ is a false premise, but because major parts of the church inexplicably have presumed to redefine salvation! In a number of Christian denominations, the centrality of the cross was abandoned long ago! The churches have basically redefined salvation by adding other elements to salvation. A few branches of the Christian church declare that some sequence of sacraments are needed for salvation, and that only **they** can administer those sacraments. Another branch will say that good works and working for social justice are the source of salvation! Others say we must follow a human prophet! They have turned the TRUTH of salvation through Christ alone on the cross on it’s head!



It was certainly not something they got from the Bible – not even remotely! But in this way, the ministry of the cross has been circumvented, and myths regarding salvation and the means of salvation have been **implanted** and then **cemented** into the minds of the people! How tragic! But, I have to say, salvation seems a lot easier this way, because a person could just go on living pretty much as they had before, or in the ungodly way they see people living around them! Then the “new creation” that the apostle Paul spoke of so eloquently was pure imagery - a fantasy, and not a reality! But, many branches of the universal church, Christendom, have at some point lost hope that “transformation” is even possible! I would say this happens because they indeed never were “saved”, and never discovered what it means to be saved! Thus they redefine the essence of salvation, basically by dumbing it down! They seem to not be aware of the scriptures clear teachings on the work of Christ!

Listen, when the cross is no longer the crux of Christianity, then Christianity has become something else – a deformed hybrid of some sort! It becomes a means of circumventing the justice of God – a way to avoid it! The work of Christ done on the cross cannot share that central space with *anything* else, or the whole process of salvation becomes distorted and perverted with manmade additions! The truth of scripture clearly tells us that only the ministrations of the cross of Jesus Christ are needed for salvation! In fact, God insists upon it! He wants no human interference! The cross is enough – more than enough – and nothing is needed in addition to the cross! When Jesus called out from the cross “it is finished”, He meant it! Christ on the cross broke the chains that manacle us to the curse of sin and death that we brought down upon ourselves in Eden. He thus gave us *freedom*!



~**FREEDOM** – from condemnation through reconciliation! “*The wages of sin is death*” –

[**Rom. 6:23**] – This is the over-riding problem between God and humanity! It is impossible to correct from our side, so God had to correct it from His side! This is why the common misconception cannot be true – that “*All paths lead to God*”! In no other religious ideology/tradition does God Himself take care of the sin problem! Instead, in every other religious system, humans attempt to bridge the gap themselves and are doomed to failure! God is not impressed by our efforts to appease or impress Him! So God intervened! The Son of God was sent from heaven to take on human flesh to do what no other human could do – and that is to live a perfect life, and then it was His mission to die a vicarious death as a representative of all humanity – a scapegoat – just **one life** big enough to pay for the justice of God held in reserve against all humanity! Someone had to pay for sin, but if *we* were forced to pay for it, we would be condemned to Hell! So *Jesus* paid for our sins with a terrible punishment! By offering up His own perfect life, Jesus literally has saved our imperfect and sin-soiled souls from Hell and purchased a place for us for in His Heaven! Let me reiterate - *everyone* has earned death – [**Rom. 3:23**] – but one Man, God’s Son, was sent by God to die so that all do not have to die! It was so over-the-top costly to God in terms of pain and suffering, that it is hard to wrap our minds around it! We access this wonderful salvation *by simply humbling ourselves and asking for it!* We cannot try to earn it or we would distort it like everyone else that has tried to do *more* that simply accept salvation as a gift of God!

FREEDOM – For RELATIONSHIP with a pure and Holy God whereby He can love us and and we can love Him! This would not be possible before Jesus made it possible! *COVID vaccine – a great many people are finally feeling at least somewhat free of the COVID-19 threat! What a blessing! Even though it has only been a year, this period of isolation has seemed to have gone on endlessly. But with the vaccines now, many people are feeling that they no longer need to be isolated because they are protected! Likewise, the cross of Christ gives us protection! It has accomplished what it was meant to accomplish, and it stands between us and God’s judgment! We will never taste the wrath of God, because Jesus already did! Instead. the way is cleared to be *reconciled* with God. Our estrangement can be OVER! We can come home to our Creator! But there is only one way to be loved by God and that path leads through the cross! It is through Christ’s work on the cross that we are protected from God’s wrath and invited into His love! When we trust Christ’s sacrificial work, and entrust ourselves to it, body and soul, we are freed by God to step over the fence that is between us, and approach Him with confidence – a confidence based upon Jesus and His work on the cross, and not our own feeble, pathetic attempts to endear ourself to God! [Eph. 2:13]



FREEDOM – [Heb. 2:14] – Freedom to live without fear of death! This passage suggest that the enemy of God, Satan, uses fear to keep us separated from God! Fear paralyzes us! Once it gets the best of us, fear sends us into depression or anxiety, or panic, anger and defensiveness, hostility, frustration – all of which oppose the work of God in us! *One thing I have definitely noticed this past year of people-avoidance and mandatory mask-wearing, is the great fear of some people! I’ve suffered through wearing these things outside of my home because I have been asked to, not because I am afraid! I’ve had added incentive to wear the mask because my chemo treatments have taken my immune system down. My mask-wearing has been a simple acknowledgement of my extra vulnerability to *any kind* of virus or bacteria! But I am not afraid to die! I mean, pf course, I don’t want to die! I want to be here for awhile and open jar covers for Karen and do the things that she can’t do around the house and in maintaining our property. But if I have no choice, and I have to go, this life is not all there is for me! I have connections in high places, and a much bigger life waiting for me than I can ever experience in this place! When I go shopping, it makes me sad to see the **fear**, the **frustration**, even the **hostility** in some people’s eyes when they see me in their isle, and they will hastily move on to another row. They are afraid because this life is it for them – all they have! They’ve put all their value upon this life! But the cross is our assurance that God has made a **greater life** for us and we don’t have to fear the death of this life!

My friends, this is the great meaning behind the cross. It is **more than enough** to meet our need to be free – to be saved – to come near to our Creator-God!