

**Introduction:**

- A. *Illus.*: I remember some years ago hearing **Jay Kessler** tell about a conversation with a young man who told him, “*I don’t believe in God.*” Jay replied, “*Tell me about the god you don’t believe in. Maybe I don’t believe in him either.*”

Lots of people say they believe in God but it isn’t entirely clear what their god is like. Islam’s god, Oprah’s god, Mormons’ god, or the legalists’ god—none of them are at all like the God portrayed in Scripture. And how can we best see the true God? What’s the best vantage point for God-viewing?

**Michael Reeves** writes about “*the kind of Supreme Being I naturally imagine when my mind goes gallivanting. Settled cozily in my armchair, I tend to assume that God must be rather like me. Bigger and better, I concede, but basically like me. Me on cosmic steroids. Then I see the cross, and it is like a defibrillator for the mind.*” “*What kind of God is this,*” Reeves asks, “*who would bleed and die for us?*”

- B. This morning we will be moving around Scripture rather than staying in one text as we usually do. But we’ll begin with Jesus’ prayer in **John 17**, which he prayed on the last night of his natural life. It begins with Jesus looking to heaven and praying, “*Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.*” So Jesus, in this dying hour, was going to demonstrate the glory of God the Father.

He continues, “*For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.*”<sup>3</sup> *Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have*

*sent.*” Jesus concludes his prayer in **vv.25-26**, “*Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.*” Some scoffers suggest that the Father sending his Son to the cross was nothing less than child abuse, but the Father’s love for the Son was never in question—certainly not by Jesus! **Jesus’ purpose on earth was to make God the Father known to us so that, in knowing him, we might have eternal life.**

- C. This morning I want to show you some of what Jesus’ crucifixion reveals of God the Father. The great preacher, **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**, in a sermon on the cross entitled, “*The Wisdom of God,*” said, “*look again and see that it is not only the Son that is involved in this cross. The Father is involved, he is there. Have you ever seen him there? Is there anything higher or more wonderful than to see something of the glory of the everlasting God? It is on the cross on Calvary’s hill that you see the most wonderful and amazing display of this glory that the world has ever known.*” [The Cross, p.72]
- D. Let’s begin to consider what Jesus’ crucifixion reveals about God the Father so we might know and love him.

## **I. JESUS’ CRUCIFIXION REVEALS THE FATHER’S RIGHTEOUSNESS**

- A. Turn to **Rom 3**. The Apostle Paul has made the case from the Old Testament that there is not one person who is righteous. Not one. We are all condemned by God’s laws of righteousness. But then there is a surprise in **vv.21-24...**

That's wonderful news! God's own righteousness is just given to us as a free gift "through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe." Yes, but now look at the price in **vv.25-26...** "God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement." **2 Cor 5:21** puts it even more starkly: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

- B. God hates sin! The Father hates sin. The Son hates sin. The Holy Spirit hates sin. You can't possibly overstate how much God hates sin. Everything in God finds sin revolting; an abomination. There are no little sins for all sins are rooted in a deep moral depravity in each and all of us. Sin stirs God's wrath because it defies him, ruins his creation, and poisons loving relationships with others and with God. He is utterly bound and determined to utterly wipe it out!
- C. In Jesus' crucifixion we see God's righteous wrath because sin is so loathsome to God that when his Son took on himself our sins the Holy God did not soften the blow of judgment. If there had been any way to do so, he surely would have, for the sake of his beloved Son. But God's righteousness gave him no choice.
- D. We see God's righteousness displayed in the laws he gave to Moses, in his judgment on Israel's enemies and on Israel themselves when they abandoned him. We see God's righteousness in the teaching and even the anger of Jesus, but never have we seen it so vividly and convincingly as in the crucifixion. "God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood... **He did this to demonstrate his righteousness.**"

## II. JESUS' CRUCIFIXION REVEALS THE FATHER'S WISDOM

- A. Turn to **1 Cor. 1**. As a preacher of the gospel, Paul had been accused of preaching sheer foolishness. The very idea that God would send his son to die for sinners was “*a stumbling block for Jews*” who could not conceive of their Messiah *dying* instead of conquering, and it was sheer “*foolishness to Gentiles*” who could not imagine such a God, nor even that sin was a problem. So Paul spells this out and then says in **vv.23-25**... Now Christ is the power and wisdom of God in the broadest possible sense, but in particular Paul is pointing to “*Christ crucified.*” There—right *there* on the cross—that is the power and wisdom of God!
- B. Paul continues a few verses later, in **2:7-10**... You would surely expect the genius and wisdom of God to exceed that of human beings but the world’s philosophers do not look for God’s wisdom in the cross. But there it is in terms that can only be made clear by the Holy Spirit.
- C. People tend to think that the toughest question facing those who believe in the loving and powerful God is how he can allow evil. But the question facing God that was devilishly difficult was how the holy God could maintain his righteousness and yet freely and completely forgive sinners whose sin stirred his deep wrath. The solution to that problem is the greatest demonstration of God’s wisdom and power. And that solution was the cross.

## III. JESUS' CRUCIFIXION REVEALS THE FATHER'S POWER

- A. Paul spoke of both the wisdom and power of God displayed on the cross, where the witnesses saw only foolishness and weakness.

- B. In his letters Paul identifies four formidable enemies certain to defeat us all: the irresistible **power of sin** embedded in our very natures, **the** Law of God which then condemns us for the countless sins we all commit, and everlasting **death** and hell which is the wage and penalty of sin. These are all the weapons of **Satan** and his dark army who war against our souls with little hindrance from us. We were utterly defenseless against these enemies.
- C. But God brought all his power to bear to defeat them for us through Christ. The cross displays God's omnipotence! **Michael Reeves** writes, *“Would you ever have dreamed that the Almighty would make the definitive display of his power there, nailed to a cross between common criminals? There seems to be nothing powerful about that man in the throes of death. Yet, hanging there, he is crushing the head of the Serpent, tying up the strong man, driving out the prince of this world, destroying death, putting the spiritual powers to open shame and triumphing over them. On the cross we see true, pure power, used as it should be: to bless.”* [Rejoicing in Christ, pp.60-61; loc 892]

#### IV. JESUS' CRUCIFIXION REVEALS THE FATHER'S GRACE

- A. The cross of Christ reveals both God's twin virtues of mercy and grace. Mercy, because in his wisdom the Father found a way to forgive our sins through Christ; to wipe the slate clean. Grace goes farther—much farther, for grace freely grants God's *favor* to those who have no right to forgiveness, let alone favor.
- B. Turn to **Rom 4**. Here Paul is making the case that no one is good with God because they keep God's rules. Remember what we saw in chapter 3: *“All have sinned and fall short*

of the glory of God.” But then he points to the case of Abraham in vv.3-5...

- C. This week I happened to read a sermon by a great theologian, **John Murray**. He pointed out that if God only forgives our sin—only wipes the slate clean—it is kind of a zero sum accomplishment. We’re no longer reckoned as sinners but we can’t exactly be called paragons of righteousness either. We’d be innocent but not virtuous. **But here in Rom 4 we’re told that our faith secures actual positive righteousness for us.** Not our own, but God’s. Remember **2 Cor 5:21**: “*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*” Can you imagine that!? Not only are all our sins forgiven but we are given credit for being as righteous as God, because Jesus’ righteousness is credited to us! It is even *embedded* in us as our new nature thanks to the Holy Spirit.

*Illus.:* I was explaining this to my friend who is a new believer and he said, “*That sounds like it means we have an obligation to do righteous things.*” “*Exactly,*” I said. You might say that we’ve always had the obligation to do righteous things, but now we have the *capacity* and the *inbred* desire, because we are *in Christ*.

## V. JESUS’ CRUCIFIXION REVEALS THE FATHER’S LOVE

- A. “*God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*” [Jn 3:16]
- B. **Lloyd-Jones** showed me that God did not merely say to sinners (as some claim), “*I forgive you even though you have done this to my Son.*” That is only a small part of the demonstration of God’s love. “*No, he himself smites the*

*Son. He does what you and I could never do. He pours out his eternal wrath upon him and hides his face from him. His own dearly beloved, only begotten Son. And he did it in order that we should not receive that punishment and go to hell and there an eternity in misery, torment and unhappiness. That is the love of God. And that is the wonder and marvel of the cross, **God punishing his own Son, in order that he might not have to punish you and me.*** [p.81] Because he loves us that much!

- C. **So Rom 8:31-32** says, “*What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*” He concludes a few verses later: “*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, **will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***”

## **CONCLUSION**

There is more, of course. No matter how long, or how deeply, we peer into the glory of the cross, we will continue to see more and more of the glory of God the Father, Son and Spirit. On the cross we see most vividly what God meant when Jesus was called Immanuel: **God with us.**

**Martin Luther** rightly said, “*The cross alone is our theology.*” There is nothing to be known of God that is not traceable to the cross of Jesus Christ and his resurrection. **Michael Reeves** writes, “*What kind of God is this who would bleed and die for us? ... There on the cross is displayed the glory, the wisdom, the righteousness, the love, the justice, and the power of God. And*

*none of it looks anything like what you'd expect. ... [O]n the cross we are given not only the sweet salvation of God but **the counterintuitive revelation of God.***"

Jesus prayed to the Father, "***I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known*** in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

There is one thing left to say? Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ who died for you? There is absolutely no other way to be reconciled to God, and there is no way to find life now or forever *except* by being reconciled to God through Christ. Jesus himself said, "*I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*"