

CHAPTER 12

What Does the Cross Mean to an Unsaved Person?

1. To the Unsaved Person the Cross is Foolishness.

The Bible says that an unsaved person thinks that the cross is foolishness. See 1 Corinthians 1:18--"For the preaching of the _____ is to them that _____ (this refers to those who are unsaved) _____."

Do saved people consider the message of the cross to be foolishness (1 Cor. 1:18, 23-24)?

No matter how beautiful a sunset may be, a blind person cannot see it. No matter how colorful a peacock's feathers may be, a blind person cannot see it. No matter how scenic a mountain top view might be, a blind person cannot appreciate it. Those that are unsaved do not appreciate the cross. They are spiritually blind. What does 1 Corinthians 2:14 tell us about the natural (unsaved) man?

The unsaved man considers the message of the cross to be foolishness. He does not see the value and importance of the cross. He does not see the beauty and glory of the cross.

Is the cross important to you? Why? Are you thankful for the work that was done on the cross? What exactly are you thankful for? Do you see beauty and value in the cross? As you think about the cross, do you see the **power of God** and the **wisdom of God** (see 1 Cor. 1:18, 24)? Please explain.

Only the Spirit of God can open the eyes of those who are spiritually blind. If you are saved, was there a time in your life when you did not understand the cross and could not see its value and importance? "*Once I was blind but now I can see!*" Are these words true of you? Has the Holy Spirit opened your eyes so that you can see and understand the cross of Christ and so that you can appreciate what the Saviour did for you when He died?

2. The Cross is the Central Message of the Gospel.

Paul determined to know (and make known) only one thing among the Corinthians: "For I determined not to know anything among you save (except) _____ and Him _____ (1 Corinthians 2:2). Christ's death for us on the cross is at the very heart of the Gospel message (see 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, especially verse 3). If we were to take away the cross, then we would have no good news for the unsaved person. There would be no message of hope. There would be no way for the sinner to get to God. There would be no way to have our sins forgiven. There would be no way to get to heaven. Preachers would no message of good news to preach, and there would be no good news to put in gospel tracts.

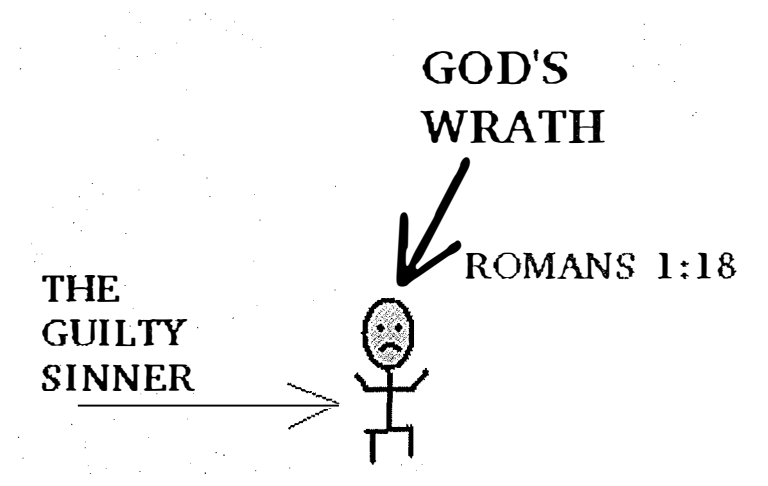
Think about those who have witnessed to you and have told you about the Lord Jesus Christ. Did they tell you anything about the cross? Was this an important part of their message? Did they share with you anything about the death of Christ and what this death means? We want to make sure that we understand the message of the cross so that we can share it with others.

3. The Cross is the Place Where the Wrath of God Struck.

According to Romans 1:18, whom is God's wrath against?

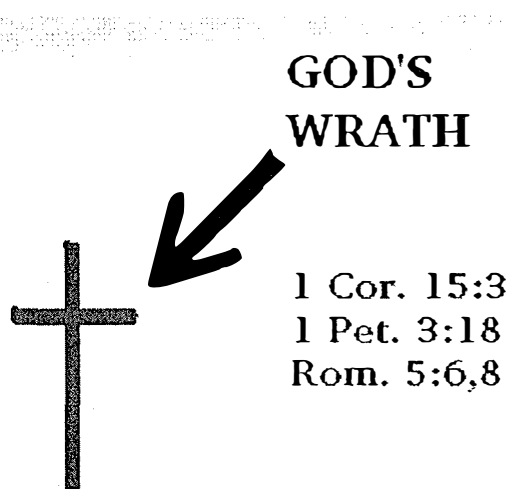
Does that include you (Romans 3:10-12)? _____ In Colossians 3:6, we learn that "the wrath of God is coming on the _____ of _____." Are you a child of disobedience (see Ephesians 2:1-2)? _____ Are you a child of wrath (see Ephesians 2:3)? _____ See also Ephesians 5:6.

GOD IS HOLY (He hates sin), and GOD IS JUST (He must punish sin). God cannot ignore sin and he cannot forget about it. Sin must be judged and the wrath of God must strike. Who deserves God's judgment? Upon whom should the wrath of God fall? The destructive and fatal missile of God's anger should strike whom?



If God's wrath and judgment were to strike us, we would all be doomed. We would be doomed in the lake of fire forever. The good news of the gospel is that the sinless Saviour TOOK OUR PLACE and the judgment and wrath of God struck THE CROSS instead of us:

Christ was treated as if He were the guilty Sinner. (2 Cor.5:21)



Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was treated as a guilty sinner instead of you? Do you believe that He took your place and took your punishment?

The story is told of a pioneer family which was traveling across the Western prairie. One day a prairie fire swept across the prairie grass, and the wind blew right toward the pioneer family. Quickly the father acted. He lit a fire and burned out a section of grass; then he and his family got down and lay on the burned out spot. As the fire swept by, its flames burned the grass all around them, but it did not touch the burned out spot. The fire would not touch the same spot twice. The family found refuge and safety in the place where the fire had already burned.

The fires of God's WRATH are coming in our direction (see Colossian 3:6 and Ephesians 5:6). Unless we find a place of refuge and safety we will surely perish. There is only one place where the fires of God's judgment have already struck: THE CROSS. The guilty sinner must flee to the cross, the only place of safety. God's wrath has already struck there. It will not strike again. By faith, are you clinging to the cross, that place of safety?

4. The Cross is the Only Thing That Satisfies the Justice of God.

God is absolutely JUST and RIGHTEOUS. Consider a just and righteous human judge. Would he be satisfied if a criminal were to be sent off without any punishment? _____ God the Perfect Judge can never be *satisfied* until sin is punished and the penalty is paid.

When Jesus died on the cross, was man's sin punished and was the penalty paid in full (1 John 2:2)? _____ The word "PROPITIATION" is used in the Old Testament, and there it is translated "MERCY SEAT." The mercy seat was the LID which covered the ark which was located in the most holy place in the tabernacle (and later the temple). This lid was made of solid gold (Exodus 25:17), and at each end the gold was shaped into a winged cherub or angel (Exodus 25:18). Inside the ark was placed God's law, the Ten Commandments (Exodus 25:21). How is God's law described in Romans 7:12? _____

Is it possible for any sinful man to keep God's law perfectly (Galatians 3:10; Romans 3:20 and James 2:10)? _____ Are *you* a lawbreaker or a lawkeeper in God's sight?
_____ Thus within the ark, the law cried out with this message:

"There is a penalty for breaking the law and this penalty must be paid! Every lawbreaker must die (Exodus 21:12-17; Romans 1:32; 6:23)! God's justice will not be satisfied until the penalty is paid IN FULL!"

Once every year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would enter the holiest of holies with the blood of the sacrificial animal. What would he then do (Leviticus 16:14-15; Hebrews 9:3-7)? _____

The *blood* on the mercy seat foreshadowed the crosswork of Christ, and had this message:

"The penalty has been paid in full! A substitute has died and all the demands of justice have been met! Instead of judging the guilty lawbreaker, God is now free to be merciful to him!"

God is completely *satisfied* with the work which the Lord Jesus accomplished on the cross, ARE YOU? Faith says, "***God is satisfied*** and so am I (Romans 3:25)--***it is enough*** that Jesus died and that He died for me"!

When you think of the big word PROPITIATION (see 1 John 4:10), just think of the word SATISFACTION! Because of the cross, God's justice was completely satisfied, and God is now free to be MERCIFUL to sinners. Are you satisfied with what Christ has done for you on the cross?

5. The Cross is the Place from Which God Offers Peace to Man.

God has a wonderful "PEACE PLAN" which was made possible only because of the cross. "When we were _____ we were _____ to God by the _____ of His Son" (Romans 5:10).

The word "to reconcile" means "**to change completely.**" For example, if a husband and wife are at war with each other, they need to be **reconciled**. Instead of being "at war," there needs to be a complete change in their relationship so that they can be "at peace" with each other (1 Cor. 7:11). Often both parties are wrong, and both need to change and fix things in order to restore a right relationship.

Man, because he is a sinner, is an E _____ of God (Romans 5:10). The Bible says that God is _____ with the wicked _____ (Psalm 7:11). God has *never changed* His attitude towards sin. God hates sin (He always has and He always will) and God must judge sin. Because our sin was placed on Christ and because God's anger fell upon Him (the One who was our Substitute--2 Cor. 5:21), God is able to reconcile us unto Himself (2 Cor. 5:18-20)! God's command to every sinner is this: "Be ye _____ to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). Instead of being at war, the believing sinner has P _____ with God (Romans 5:1). Through the death of His Son, God has made it possible for men to have a right relationship to the living God without COMPROMISING or CHANGING His holy character! His holiness, His righteousness, His hatred of sin--these have all stayed the same!

Have you been reconciled to God? Have you made peace with God on *His terms*? Christ died on the cross to remove the hostility which existed between a holy God and a sinful man. By faith, have you accepted God's "peace plan"?

6. The Cross is the Place Where Man is Set Free From Sin.

What terrible slavery do men find themselves in today (John 8:32-34)?

_____ As you think of people living today, can you find examples of this kind of slavery? Who is the only Person who can truly set people free from sin (John 8:36)? _____ Man's freedom from sin was obtained through the great work of REDEMPTION which Christ did on the cross. Without the cross there could be no freedom from sin.

Freedom is costly; it does not come cheaply. The freedom that we enjoy in our country **cost** something. Men and women paid a great price, often with their own blood, so that we could live in a free land. We remember this each Memorial Day. So also the Saviour paid a great price to redeem and set free sinful men (1 Peter 1:18-19). He paid a great price (1 Cor. 6:19-20) so that we could be free. Are you thankful for the sacrifice of our soldiers on the battlefields of past wars? Are you thankful for the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross?

Christ has set us free from the **PENALTY OF SIN**, because He took the penalty instead of us. Christ has set us free from the **POWER OF SIN** because He provides the believer with daily power to live for Him and to have victory over sin. (Do believers always take advantage of this power? Do believers always enjoy this victory? Why or why not?) Christ has made it possible for the believer to be someday set free from the very **PRESENCE OF SIN**. In heaven we will sin no more. It will be impossible to ever sin again! The Son shall make you free indeed! All of these great benefits were made possible only because of the cross!

7. The Cross Is the Place Where the Burden of Sin Drops Off.

In the book *Pilgrim's Progress* John Bunyan wrote,

I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, **and a great burden upon his back.**

Now I saw in my dream that the highway up which Christian was to go was fenced on either side with a wall that was called Salvation. Up this way, therefore, did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, **because of the load on his back.**

He ran thus till he came to a place somewhat ascending; and upon that place **STOOD A CROSS**, and a little below, in the bottom, a sepulcher. So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with the cross, **HIS BURDEN LOOSED FROM OFF HIS SHOULDERS**, and **FELL FROM OFF HIS BACK**, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulcher, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.

Yes, burdens are lifted at Calvary! Apart from the cross the burden and weight of sin could never be removed. It is only at the cross that a person can find complete forgiveness of sins. "In whom we have redemption through His _____, the _____ of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7). We have forgiveness through His blood! If Christ had not shed His blood and died on the cross then there could be no forgiveness. Instead of forgiving our sins God would have to judge our sins. But when Christ died on the cross God judged our sins (when He judged our Substitute) and now God is free to forgive the sinner.

Have your sins **all** been forgiven (past, present and future sins)? How do you know this? What must a person do to have complete remission or forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:43)?

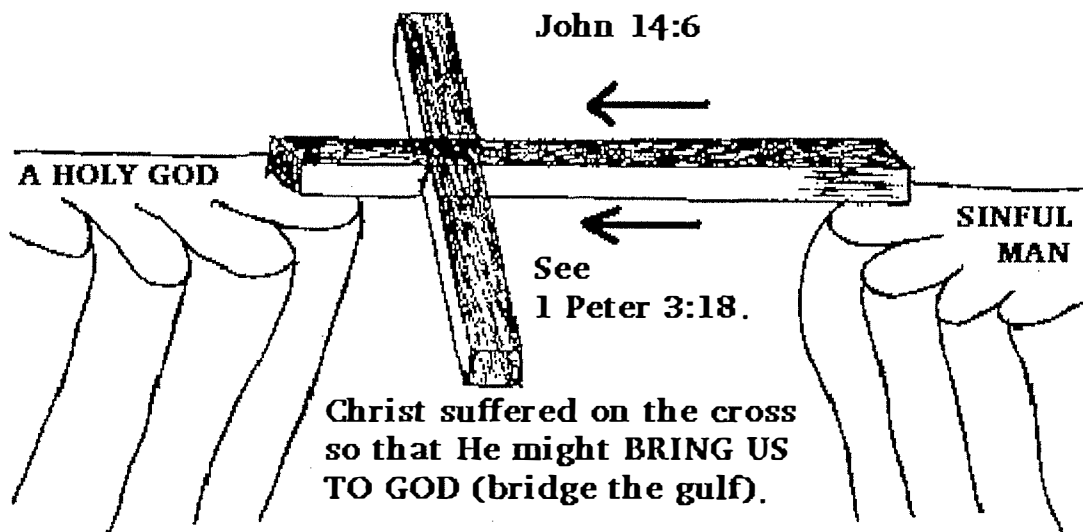
_____ Have you done this? Have you received complete forgiveness of all your sins? Those who continue to reject Jesus Christ will someday die in their _____ (John 8:24). If Christ had not paid the penalty of sin when He died on the cross, **then we would all die in our sins** and there would be no hope or salvation for anyone.

8. The Cross is the Only Bridge That Can Cover the Great Gulf Caused by Sin.

There is a great GULF or SEPARATION between God and man. What causes this separation (Isaiah 59:2)?



Men try to bridge this gulf in many ways. Some try good works; some try keeping the law. Others try loving their neighbors. Some try to be religious, etc. None of these bridges work. There is nothing that man can do to bridge the gulf. God had to do something to bridge the gulf:



Are you trusting the way of the cross as the only way to get to God (see John 14:6)? If we could get to God any other way (if any other bridges could work), then why did Christ have to die? Compare Galatians 2:21. There is only **one way** for sinful man to get to a holy God! As the hymn writer says, "The way of the cross leads home."

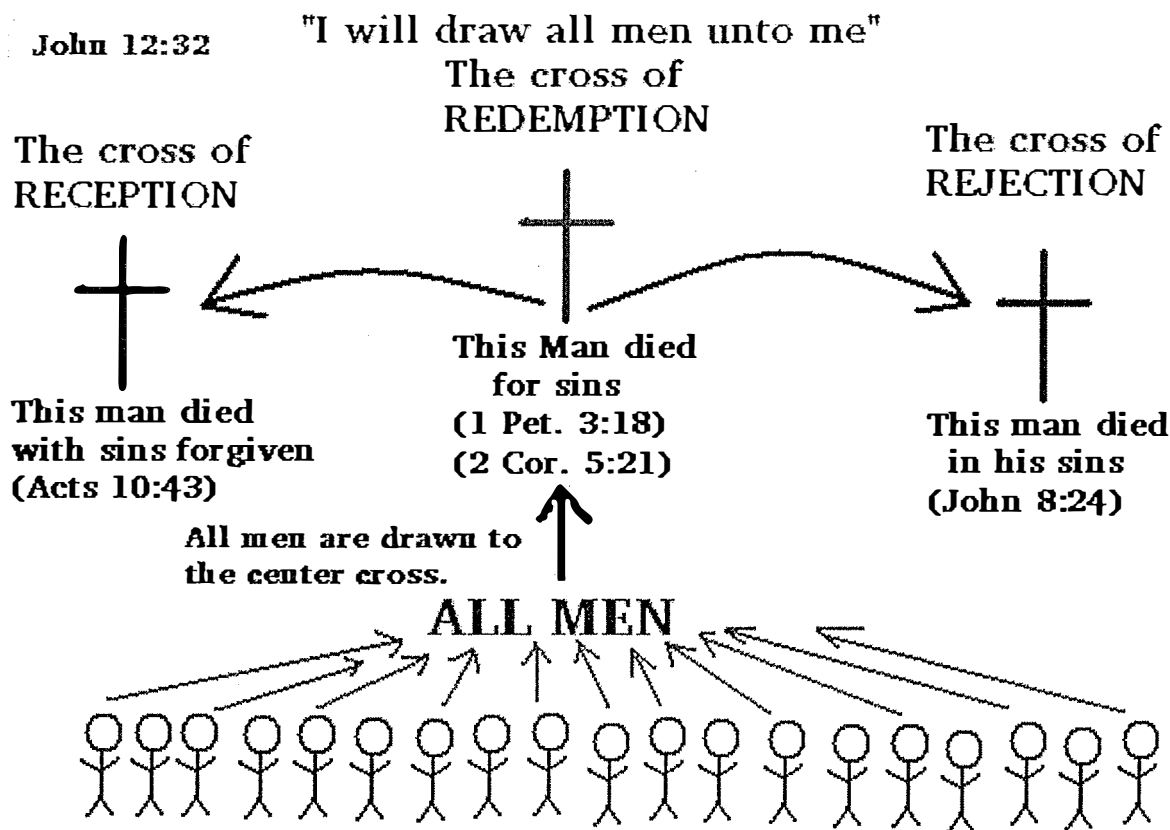
9.The Cross Forces Every Person to Come to a Personal Decision.

When the Lord Jesus died, there were two crosses--one on His right hand and the other on His left (Mark 15:27). The Lord Jesus draws all men to that center cross where they must choose to receive or reject the Crucified Saviour:

"And I, if I be _____ (on the cross) from the earth, will draw _____ unto me."

(John 12:32; see also verse 33)

On one side of the Lord Jesus was a criminal who rejected the Lord, and on the other side was a criminal who received the Lord. Every person must make one of those two choices:



What choice have YOU made? What will YOU do with the cross of Christ?

WHOM WE HAVE PIERCED

"CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES."
— 1 COR. 15:3



Jack Hamlin