

11. Gospel of the Cross

Adrian Ebens

Adapted Transcript - Live Streamed on 28 December 2019

Father, we thank you for the beginning of the Sabbath. We thank you for the sweet rest that comes from our savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath. And I pray that as we spend this time together, that you would bless us. You would open our minds to understand more deeply the truth, because the truth sets us free. Free from sin, sadness, free from bondage, freedom in Christ. And I pray that you'd give me the words to speak as we share together now in Jesus name. Amen.

I don't know how many of you have heard of the poet Robbie Burns. You heard of Robbie burns? You have heard of Robbie Burns. The best laid plans of mice and men. That was Robbie Burns.

There was another saying that he said, and that was, "Oh, that I had eyes to see me as other people see me." You heard that one? "Oh, that I had eyes to see myself as other people see me. Now, why would he say something like that? It's so easy to see the problems that other people have, but this mote that is a log in your own eye to be able to see yourself, and why do we have this problem? Why do we have this problem? The ability to live and express ourselves in a way without thought of the impact that it has on other people. Because we need our needs to be met, we have things that we need to do that we need to achieve in any given day. And if someone is getting in the way they need to get out of the way so that we can do what we need to do.

For many people, there's no thought about the impact of our actions on other people and the things that we say and do. I just want to hold that thought in mind and come across to a statement that Paul made in 1st Corinthians. 1st Corinthians, it's a fascinating statement, chapter two. Verse one. "And I brethren, when I came to you came not with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring unto you the testimony of God, for I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." This is a familiar text to most of us, Jesus Christ, to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Now either Paul has very much narrowed his content of what he intends to preach and share or the cross of Christ encompasses all of Scripture. All of the revelation of God is found in the cross of Christ. And the story, the

basic storyline of the cross of Christ is of course understood by many, many people. But do we understand the cross?

Because as Jesus said, "And if I be lifted up," referring to His crucifixion, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto myself." And I think it would be fairly safe to say that all men are not being drawn to Christ at the present time that maybe there is a problem. We come to Matthew 24, last week we spoke a bit about this. This verse intrigues me verse 14, 24:14. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations. And then the end shall come. So as soon as this gospel of the kingdom, this gospel that Jesus is talking about is preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, then the end shall come.

And so I want to spend a little bit of time thinking about the cross. And one of the best places I like to go is Matthew 16:24, to give you a definition of what the cross is. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, "If any man will come after me and let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." So what is the cross in this verse?

[Congregation: Denying one self.]

Self denial. To deny yourself. When somebody mistreats you and treats you in a way that is unfair, they say something about you that is incorrect, how does self denial manifest itself? How does self denial deal when someone accuses you of something you didn't do? What does self denial do? It doesn't retaliate.

Self denial looks for something in what has been said to overcome evil with good, to find something positive. The cross is a principle to life. When someone comes into the room and they are in a foul mood and they're blustering around and when they walk in, you can feel it, can't you? You can feel the atmosphere and your kind of anticipating and your like, I could just throw a few words in there. The whole thing will blow up.

And I think we've all been in those situations. But when somebody comes in like that and they are manifesting an atmosphere that is irritated, frustrated, annoyed, how do you maintain your peace? How do you maintain your peace in the face of a situation like that? And if someone begins to confront you and to challenge you and the atmosphere around them is accusative and negative, how do you hold your peace? Our natural inclination is when our self is being challenged is to rise up with self-defense and to resist them and put them in their place. But in that spirit of rising up in self-defense, we have been taken

over by their spirit. Their spirit takes us over and we become like them. Is that true? When we become angry, when someone else is angry, when we were completely calm and then somebody does something inappropriate and then we get frustrated and annoyed, their spirit jumps over to us and we become taken over by this spirit. Jesus said in Matthew 5, "Resist not evil." Resist not evil? Shouldn't we resist evil?

Let's have a look at Matthew 5:39. Is it? "But I say unto you that you resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." You ever had someone smite you on the cheek? Yeah, it doesn't feel good, does it? Turn to them the other also, turn and run.

Matthew 5:39. "I say unto you that you resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turned to him the other also." And that is in fact how you resist an evil person. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. To rise up in self-defense and to seek to bring the perpetrators to justice and make them see the error of their ways with the use of force, is to be overcome of evil. If we look at this. This is a challenging... I find this very challenging when people say things that are unfair or unkind, it's hard. It's hard not to want to say something back, but Jesus says, "Take up your cross, deny yourself, take up." How can we deny ourselves? This is the challenge. We need an example of self denial. And I suppose I want to shift sideways a little bit in terms of... And I'm tying these things together, coming back to Robbie Burns, "Oh, that I could see myself as others see me."

And it goes back to my conversion experience when I was 17 years of age. And I told a bit of this story last week, it's something I come back to again and again, because, well, that's when my whole life changed. I became completely different person, but being a young 17 year old and listening to all the music of the 1980s, 70s and 80s, pretty hard rock in those days. And being filled with the spirit, the vibration, the frequency of that music, which is rebellion, defiance, resistance of authority and being filled up with that music, I began to act out that kind of a spirit. And my mother came into my room. My room mind you, I'm not paying any rent, but it's my room. In my final year of high school so I'm being looked after, I'm being fed I'm being clothed, electricity is being paid for, I get to shower every day. Do all of those things. I'm not paying anything for it. It's pretty good, ain't it?

But I did have to wash dishes. That was tough. It was really hard. So my mum comes into my room while I'm listening to my music. And she has the audacity

to ask me to clean up my room. Can you believe it? This is my space. Like are you serious? It's my space. Don't tell me what to do in my space. And a spirit came over me that was defiant and rebellious because of all the music I had listened to. I spoke to my mother very sharply and told her to leave my room. Would have be nice to say it that nicely. I didn't say it that nicely. And only that I might be able to see myself as others see me. And in a brief moment of time, as what I said struck my mother, she didn't retaliate. She didn't resist what I said. She simply put her head down and quietly closed the door.

Then I saw myself, my mother had created for me a mirror in which I could see myself because I saw what I did to her, she didn't resist. If she had have fired up and shot back at me, I wouldn't have seen myself because she would have been just like me. Calmly put her head down and closed the door. And that was all it took. That's all it took because it pierced me. It went through me because I saw myself for a brief second of time. And then I desperately wanted to change. I desperately wanted to change. I didn't want to be like this. I've been raised on the commandments, thou shalt honor thy father and my mother that thy days may be long upon the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee. And when I saw the look in my mother's face, it pierced me.

And that's the beauty of the mirror, because I had pierced her with what I said, but her refusal to resist evil, reflected it straight back at me. And it pierced me back. This is a powerful, powerful principle. The Lord used my mother in such an amazing way to just in that brief moment of time, reframe my whole sense of reality and to see yourself as I saw myself at that moment. And I hated what I saw, I wanted to change. I didn't want to be like this. And the spirit of God now was pleading with me, would you like to change? I don't want to be like this anymore. I don't want to do this anymore. And the spirit of God spoke to me and says, "Why don't you ask your mother for help?"

So I went up to my mother, and I was living downstairs and I climbed up the stairs and I went in and I said to my mother, "I'm sorry for what I did. I shouldn't have done that." And then I asked her the question, "Is there anything that I could read, that could help me to be a Christian? I want to be a Christian." Know the song, Lord, I want to be a Christian. Like I said, Gary is having an effect on me. So I took the book Steps to Christ and I began to read and I read about the cross. And again, in the beginning of that book, we see a picture of someone engaged in the work of self denial, self denial. And as I read that story of self denial, the mirror became much greater on what I was as opposed to what he was.

That's a beautiful sound, by the way. Reading the story of the cross and the self denial of Jesus, it showed me what I was like and the judgment that I began to place on myself because of the contrast that I could see between him and how loving he was. I don't know why, but one of the things that challenges me the most is when that soldier struck Jesus in the face and He didn't react. Other than to say, "If I've done evil, then bear witness of the evil. But if I speak well, why do you smite me?"

And just reading these things, it's like, I'm not like that. If someone's struck me, I would lay them out. Well, the feeling and the desire to retaliate, "How dare you touch me." I'm not like this person. And so the cross is self denial. The actual event of Jesus dying on the cross is the full stop punctuation mark of the entire cross experience of Jesus's life of denying Himself in the face of those that sought to destroy Him. He did not resist them. He did not stop them from killing Him. Resist not evil. And in resisting not evil, Jesus has created the purest mirror to show us what we are like. It's the non-resistance of evil that creates a mirror to the evildoer. Any other form of response typically ends in conflict, separation, death.

The thing that I find interesting of course is once we... I have this understanding of the self denial of Jesus, that the whole principle of the cross becomes much deeper than this 24 hour period where Jesus was walking towards the cross 2000 years ago. The sufferings of Christ, and this is the thought that stays with me all the time in terms of the cross and what is the cross? And I come back to this again and again, but it wasn't until the birth of my two sons that I really began to understand the depth of the cross.

The opportunity to see you, because the affection you feel for your child, you would do anything for your child. To protect them, to look after them. There's something really eternal about holding your child in your arms. Something so right, beautiful to hold your child in your arms. And having that appreciation and that attachment, that sense of attachment that you have with your child, of course, a child can have this with their parent. We can still have the same understanding that a deep sense of attachment that exists between you and another human being allows you to begin to understand the depth of the cross of Christ.

I was speaking to a friend of mine in Australia, a young mother, and I said to her, as she was playing with her child, "How would you feel if your child, when she's trying to balance, suddenly tripped and she hit her head bang on the

ground?" What would you feel?" Pain, anguish. And she began to cry. I remember that happened with my son when we were playing on the bed and he was just strengthening his stomach muscles and starting to sit up like this. And he over balanced, and then he went off the back of the bed and he hits something there, sharp hit him in the back of the head there. So he was bleeding a little bit from the head. Oh, the pain, the pain that I felt. Oh, why didn't I? Should've...

But he had just got enough strength in his stomach muscles for the first time to whoa. He hadn't done that before. So I got caught off guard. But in that sense of pain, we begin to understand the self denial of Christ. We read the Scriptures. I have loved thee, with an everlasting love, therefore, with loving kindness, I have drawn thee. Text after text of God's love. Oh, how I wanted to gather you as a hen gathers her chicks, but you would not. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. In these statements, we begin to understand the sense of closeness that God feels for us, as His children.

And therefore we can then by implication understand that. Well, the Bible tells us we can look at Isaiah 63:9. It tells us Isaiah 63:8, for He said, "Surely they are my people, children that will not lie." So he was this Saviour. "In all their affliction...

n all their affliction, He was afflicted and the angel of his presence, saved him in his love and in his pity, He redeemed them and He bare them and He carried them all the days of old, in all their affliction, He was afflicted. Then we begin to understand the cross. This is something that I'm drawn back to again and again, I'm determined to know nothing among you, save Christ and Him crucified. Knowing the love that I feel for my wife and my children, and to think how I would feel when they are hurt. We only then have to translate that to what happened on the earth today. All of God's children, every one of us is a child of God, for the 3000 people that committed suicide today. Yeah. 3000 people committed suicide today. What does Jesus feel? In all their affliction, He was afflicted. What about the surviving family members?

I had a colleague of mine in ministry, received a phone call, he jumped off a cliff, ended his life. Pierced me. I was going through so much other things at that time I couldn't even deal with it. I was just numb. And that feeling like, why didn't you call me? Or why didn't I call him? And all the what ifs and I should've. And now he's not here. The pain of separation. That separation, and

then your mind plays over the laughter and the joy and the times that you'd spent together with that person. And now it's never going to happen again in this life. The pain of those things multiply that by 3000 today. You have to put stories to these things. Part of my direction in ministry came about because of a young blended family that I worked with, there was difficulties, I was counselling the family.

One night, I had to go over there, husband and wife are screaming at each other. Things are flying around the room. I took the wife and the child to my home for safety, where they stayed with us for the night, tried to work with the older boy, brought him to my home, trying to encourage him and speak to him. And then two months after I left the area, because I had to go somewhere else, I received the phone call. "We found him on the end of a rope," dead, 16. Go through all that sorrow again, all that trauma in all their affliction, He was afflicted. Multiply that out, multiply that out. How much suffering does Jesus go through? The self denial. The self denial that Jesus experiences is connected to the fact that He is committed to freedom of choice.

The freedom of the human agent to follow the convictions of his own heart. Jesus pleads, He sends His spirits to plead with us, to come into a safer place than where we are. But if we refuse to listen, He cannot overturn His principles and force the individual to walk in a certain way. He is not a God of force. And so His strange act, He turns aside in sorrow while His child takes their own life. And the pain that pierces Him at that moment, wishing He could do something for that child.

If we think about all the details of the things that happened today, how many young people today overdosed on drugs, how many parents have found their children dead from meth, amphetamine, cocaine, heroin. I think our societies in Australia and America are pretty much the same. The country, rural towns of Australia, are decimated. Meth is everywhere. Suicide is through the roof. I'm pretty sure it's the same here. How does Jesus deal with that? How do you cope with that level of pain? Because if we keep talking about it, the level of uncomfortability starts to get to a point... I've got to switch it off, stop the pain, turn it off. I can't think about this.

[Congregation: Can't even watch the news.]

Can't watch the news. I cannot think about it. And that introduces a whole range of things, but these are just statistics, but I speak to them in the form of

a story. My wife was the head of the hydrotherapy department in the Adventist Hospital in Sydney. And she had a number of staff under her, and one morning, one of the young girls walked in and the look on her face was the look of death. And she took her aside and said, "What's wrong? Are you okay?" She said, "My boyfriend made me have an abortion." Just this vacant stare.

What does Jesus feel? This thought of this young woman, I killed my own child. Now, apparently for some women, they don't seem to have a problem with this apparently, but for most women, how do you deal with the thought of having taken the life of your own child? And then multiply that out. Today, 125,000 abortions today, just can't get my head around it. And Christ sees all of this. He knows the suffering that's going to come because I've talked to some women in their 60s, in their 70s, the sense of sorrow at the abortion that they did in their 20s. It follows them all through their life. And Jesus carries the weight of those things in self-denial. For us, we would say, "Well, we should stop this, stop it." But how does He stop it? With more killing? How does He stop it? How do you stop this?

All the men on the internet now are crawling around looking at all the child pornography sites, predators, and then going out looking for children. Really, wouldn't it be good just to just get rid of them? Just annihilate them, kill them. Maybe we could start there, couldn't we? A lot of people would say, "Yeah." We could have done that in the beginning, couldn't you? When Satan popped up his head, God could have just finished him and all the angels. Would you do that to your son? Yeah. Okay. Just up the morphine and just into bliss.

Would we do that to our children? Mercy killing and who decides? And what if two days after we did that, they decided to repent and turn around? How would you know? Difficult, isn't it? So, what would the angels think? Okay. So if we want to survive in this place, we better keep our heads down. Because if we get out of place, we're going to die. Welcome North Korea. God has not given us the spirit of fear. Couldn't do it. Not possible to go in that direction. Once we walked down this path and we start to think of the love that God has for us, we begin to comprehend the value of the human soul that today. And we might think of the 13 million women, children, and some men that are used for personal pleasure for other individuals.

Young children, women, girls, that are just used for pleasure against their will, by force. Jesus feels it all. Every one of them, 13 million that we know about. Having last year, walked through the streets of Bangkok and seeing some of

the sites and looking at some of these poor young ladies and the tray that they're involved in thinking, how are they surviving? Many women transported from different countries and used. You listen to a few testimonies of some of these women that have escaped from the situations they've been in, you can't keep listening to this stuff, it just... and this is the tragedy, is that to survive, you have to do one of two things.

You have to harden yourself and not care, or you have to get more strength from somewhere to continue to love unconditionally and to maintain a connection with those around you and to continue to support them. There's only two options. How do you get the strength to continue to care about other people? And we'll talk more about that tomorrow, but I want to follow this line of thought because if our Father in heaven and His son, today has been a pretty tough day for them in terms of the deaths of individuals and the sorrows, and let alone the screaming between people. You look at the statistics and people are shocked when I say that in Australia, one woman dies every week at the hands of their partners or former partners. One woman a week dies, killed by their partner or former partner.

A domestic violence episode in Australia is reported to the police every two minutes. Every two minutes. And then you step over to Africa. In Australia is 50 women a year in Africa it's 50 women a day. And your mind is, it just blows out. You want to start telling the stories of those 50 women today that were killed and the pain and the anguish that was involved. And then we move over to Asia. Same, 50 women a day in Asia are killed. As one of my friends was telling me that in Thailand saying, you're telling me this, someone dies in the West and it's all in the news. Life to you seems to be valuable. In Asia it's not so much that way.

The BBC reported in 2018, that 137 women everyday around the world are killed by their partner or former partner. 137 a day. That probably makes the home the most unsafe place for a person to be. And at 125,000 abortions a day that makes the female womb, the most deadliest place to live on the planet. A quarter of the population of the world is wiped out every year, 40 to 50 million people a year, children. And you start thinking about these statistics and I think about them and then I try and comprehend how that God, He had a relationship with every one of those individuals. He cared for them deeply.

What do you do? You either harden yourself to survive, to protect yourself or you gain strength to continue to love and to hold on. It's a hard thing to hang

on, to love someone that hurts you, that does bad things to you. To continue to keep your heart open when they're lying about you and saying all manner of evil against you, it's just easier to just cut them off, just cut them loose. And I'm not saying that in our love for people, particularly in a situation of domestic violence, that a woman should turn up every day to be beaten by a man that's in an abusive situation. She should step out of that situation. Absolutely. She should step out of that situation, but the heart situation of feeling towards that individual, do you cut that person off in your mind in order to survive?

This is what the cross speaks to us about this self denial. The world is heading into a really, really dark period again. I know that in Australia, very similar to America, people are getting really angry, that all kinds of things, people are getting offended about everything. "I'm offended, offended," and this constant mirror, as people get offended and they don't deny themselves, people don't have any opportunity to see myself as other people see me. The only way that you will see yourself as other people see you is self denial, to provide that mirror, to plant that seed, maybe in that individual that may grow five to 10 years later. That for a moment in time, they saw themselves in an act of self denial by someone who was under the spirit of Christ.

And I was able to overcome evil with good, by not retaliating. The lesson less this world has of those individuals, the guaranteed spiral that we all go down. We're only 70 odd years out from the Second World War, and we're forgetting already. The nations are getting angry. The big nations, America, China, Russia, are preparing for war again. And the loss of millions of lives because people are hardening themselves to the pain that they are dealing with. And the more you harden yourselves, the more movies you watch with death and destruction and annihilation, the greater the chance of the loss of human life. The more you harden yourself, the greater the chance of the loss of human life and all those things.

I've asked myself, I've asked the Lord many times, how do you keep doing these? When I think about all the statistics I think about, and I invite you to think about these things, because this is reality, the reality of the sorrow that our Saviour feels. And I just want to transport that picture of my mother when I looked at her face and she put her head down in sadness, I saw the face of Jesus at that moment. And I saw His suffering in my mother. And in seeing, I didn't know that at the time, but I'm looking back now, that was Jesus who was suffering in my mother. Because in all her affliction, He was afflicted, but He

felt that suffering with her. And I saw Jesus in my mother. And that is what turned me around completely.

This is what the world needs to see. The world needs to see a group of people that love not their lives unto the death, that are able to be self denying. The problem is I'm not capable of doing those things. I can't do it. In myself, I'm completely incapable, but to behold Jesus in this capacity to behold Him and think about this more and more that I think about this. I see His self denial and I am drawn into that self denial. By beholding, you become changed and I'm beholding the cross of Christ every day. And Paul talks about this in 2nd Corinthians 4:10. 2nd Corinthians 4:9,10, some of the modern translations, because the eclipse the meaning, the true meaning of the cross, they change the text, but in the King James, it gives it the correct tense. Paul says, verse nine, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed.

2nd Corinthians 4:9, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed. Always bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. That moment of self denial when someone accuses you, someone attacks you, someone yells at you and that meek loving response, allows Jesus suddenly to flash into the life of the individual and the mirror is created. And the sinner sees himself in that mirror and conviction takes hold of the soul. And then there's an opportunity for repentance. But as long as we are seeking to bring the perpetrators to justice, there is no mirror established. There is no self denial. And we continue. Paul says, "Always bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus." And this is the true meaning of the cross. As it says in Hebrews 6:6, let's go over there. Hebrews 6:6.

I know some of us have heard these passages, but as long as I continue to speak, you will hear these words often. "If they shall fall away to renew them again, unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves, the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame." That moment, just think about it. That moment, where someone yells at you, for whatever reason, as that person is yelling at you, Christ is being pierced in that person because there's those angry, tortured feelings are so far into Christ. And as He's giving them life and they are expressing in this angry tone, it pierces Christ.

And because of the atmosphere that they are creating as He is being pierced, the only way for you to give a cup of cold water to your Saviour in that moment is to be crucified with Him as those, that atmosphere hits you and your flesh

wants to respond and you stay there and just let it pierce you. Bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, overcome evil with good. This presents the cross in a completely new light, but I've said this before, this view of the cross is something that's very inconvenient. It's an inconvenient truth. Apologies to Al Gore.

It messes up your day to have to think about the suffering of Jesus all day. I've got things I need to do, things I need to get done. Thinking about Jesus and He's in excruciating agony because in reality, if Jesus walked in through that door now, He'd still be carrying that cross. His back would be lacerated. He'd have the crown of thorns. Blood would be coming down his face, because that's what He's experiencing right now. In the spirit, not in the flesh, in the Spirit, just as a father or a mother is pierced by the agony of seeing what is happening to their child, as it says in Hebrews 6:6, they crucify to themselves afresh the Son of God in the spirit.

And so the cross continues and that's why it says in Revelation 13:8, Christ who was slain from the foundation of the world. From the very beginning of earth's history, when Adam sinned against his maker, Christ was pierced in His soul. The anguish that He felt when Adam and Eve turned against Him, every parent knows that when children make decisions and they turn against them and they cease to worship the God that they worship, that it pierces parents with an unspeakable grief.

Of course the child knows nothing of the pain. And if they are aware of it, they choose to ignore it because if they become aware of it and they start to think about it, then now you have to change and they don't want to change. So they cut it out. And this is the whole principle of sleep. In order for us to enjoy our life, to live the good life or whatever life we want to call it, to do the things that we want to do, we have to sleep to the sufferings of Jesus. We have to stop thinking about the sufferings of Christ. Because if you think about how much He's suffering at the moment, you have to change. You have to become a different person. When your Saviour, if you love Him, you can't be passive to that. You have to change. You must respond. How can I make your life easier? Knowing of course that every time you get irritated, every time you get angry, every time you express yourself, selfishly you pierce Him. Don't you want to stop that?

That's what the new moon's about, receiving the spirit in greater measure. Receiving the spirit, pray for the spirit. The Father is more willing to give His

Spirit to His children than we are to give good gifts to our children. He's more willing to do this, but we need to ask. Ask and you shall receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened unto you. Do we wonder why we pray so little, the only reason we can pray so little is because we sleep so much. Because when you sleep, you don't feel the pain of our Saviour. You don't feel the pain. And so you don't need to pray. But when you begin to feel the pain, you begin to pray.

And this is what happened to the disciples. We see in the disciples in Matthew 26. And it is little wonder that we read in the parable of the 10 virgins in Matthew 25. How many of the virgins slept?

[Congregation: All.]

All the virgins slept. What is the meaning of this parable of the sleep? I believe that it is explained to us in Matthew 26, when the disciples are sleeping to the sufferings of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Because as they are seeing their Saviour in agony, that they love Him so much, rather than enter into His sufferings with Him, into the fellowship of His sufferings, they go to sleep. The natural human response to that kind of intensity, and to see Jesus staggering and groaning, sweating drops of blood. They can't deal with it, their natural response is, but He was going to become our King and throw off the Romans and now... Let's go to sleep and we'll be good in the morning because Jesus fixes everything. He knows how to deal with it. He knows how to fix it, but they woke up too early. It's like the time when my first son was born, my wife had an 11 hour labour and she was having a lot of difficulty. And there's this wonderful word called epidural.

And my wife had an epidural and three o'clock in the morning we both went to sleep. And then I heard a baby crying and I wake up and I'm like, "Yes." And then, oh, it's the suite next door. How are we still in labour? No. The disciples sleeping to the suffering of Jesus. We have to understand when we look at particularly Peter and I think many of us identify with the Apostle Peter, how could it be? Verse 38, Matthew 26:38 then said He unto them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, tarry ye here and watch with me." What would you do?

Like He's reaching out to you and saying, please help me, I'm really, really having a hard time. And He went a little further and fell on His face saying, "Oh my Father, if it'd be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I

will, but as thou wilt." And He cometh unto the disciples and he findeth, them asleep. I thank you God, I'm not like Peter. Jesus says to him gently "Peter, couldn't you watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray." Jesus is not saying watch and pray because He's upset that He's not doing and looking after Him, He's concerned for Peter that if you don't pray, you're not going to be ready for what's about to come upon you.

I'm worried about you, Peter, you need to pray Peter. I'm worried about you. Jesus is worried about him when He's got the whole weight of the world? Can you imagine the whole weight of the sins of the world upon Him at that moment, He's sweating drops of blood and He's worried about Peter being able to get through this next moment in time. He went away again and prayed a second time and prayed saying, "Father, Oh my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." And He came and He found them asleep again.

I find that really hard to read. Because I'm looking at my own nature, sleeping to the sufferings of Christ because it requires of them a self-denial that is greater than what they want to give. A yielding up of themselves. Satan of course is busy with his angels trying to make them heavy and... But if they had have prayed, if they had have held on, they would have been able to be alert and awake. And of course, in that slumbered state, there's nothing worse than to be aroused out of a slumbered state when you haven't had any prayer and evil is upon you. That's not a good place to be. We've all been there, haven't we? I've certainly been there.

And we get this in large doses, particularly those that like to visit very contentious Facebook websites, and people are sending you messages with, Barbs and you get up in the morning? And if those that are hooked, they jumped straight onto Facebook and people are Barbing you and you haven't prayed, and they say these really nasty things. How dare you? Better to pray first than to do that. Sleeping to the sufferings of Jesus. Think about Him. Can you go whole weeks, months without thinking about the sufferings of Christ? For all the time you are not contemplating that, you are asleep, you're asleep.

And I said to my Saviour, "What do you want me to do? I don't know how to respond." He says, "Could you watch with me for one hour?" Just knowing that you're thinking about me, just knowing that there's someone on the earth thinking about how I'm feeling, that helps me. It helps me. Just know you're thinking about me. That's why we have a morning and an evening sacrifice,

twice a day. Think about the sufferings of Jesus because He's going through all of this. And why is He going through all of this suffering? Why is He going through this process? Why is He willing to put up with all of these things as simply put, it gives you and me more time to become Christ-like. And we ask the common question. If Christ would come tonight, would you be ready?

So it gives us more time. But to give you more time, every time He takes a breath, it's intense agony for Him. Of course, the beauty for Jesus is that He is a Sabbath keeper. And as He lies down in the bosom of His Father on the Sabbath, the Father gives Him strength. He strengthens His Son, He gives him... He breathes upon His Son. He holds Him tight. He dwells in the bosom of the Father, John 1:18 to strengthen Him to face another week of being beaten and being pierced and whipped and yelled at and screamed at and abused the whole week.

He's still dealing with it. His Father's holding Him on the Sabbath to strengthen Him. This perception of the cross changes their whole reading of the Bible, because it takes someone who has become hardened to the reality of relationships that can read stories in the Old Testament, like the plagues in Egypt and the slaying of the firstborn and say, well, they were the enemies of God anyway, so good readings. Putting my people into slavery? They should die, but you can't think like that when you understand what the cross really is, you can't, because the reality is that when those... And I see this picture, I see a picture of an Egyptian mother holding the dead form of her son and daughter and screaming and howling. Do you think Jesus doesn't feel that? It's agony for Him.

When you have this perspective of the cross and the infinite love of God for His children, you can't marry these things together. That God is destroying in the Old Testament. You have to become hardened in your spirit to believe this. You have to look away from the cross. But when you look at the self denial of Christ and the fact that He's intimately connected with every human being and in all our affliction, He is afflicted, that view of the cross radically alters your reading of the Bible. It has to, it demands it of you.

And we read in Isaiah 43, exactly what happened in Egypt and other nations around about. "For I am the Lord, thy God, the Holy one of Israel thy Saviour. I gave Egypt for thy ransom." So if God gave Egypt for the ransom of Israel, then did it cost our Father something to give that ransom? He paid a ransom price. 43:3, but not only Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba. He had to give them up in order

for Israel to be able to escape from Egypt. He didn't want to destroy Egypt, but the only way for Israel to be set free was He had to yield up His protection of the Egyptians and to allow them to suffer from the hands of the destroyer. And so what I'm seeing in Scripture, which to me is an absolute revolution in terms of understanding how we read the Bible is that every time somebody is destroyed in the Bible and killed, Christ is crucified.

Every time someone dies through violence, through whatever action, all of the stories, the Old Testament is a picture of the cross of Christ. And then you start to see a picture of the cross that to the best of my understanding, and I would love to be wrong that the world has never heard. Never heard it. It's a complete revolution in understanding.

You begin to comprehend. And I think in my mind, the time of the flood, the last gasps of life had of millions of people in the flood, but Christ who is our life, is there with them. He's experiencing to the very last, their last anguish breath, their terror, and their fear, He feels it all just like He did on the cross. What He manifested 2000 years ago is a revelation to our dull senses of the sufferings of Christ throughout all human history.

It is this view of the cross that I believe will draw all men unto Him. But in that drawing power, because to me, this view of the cross has an overwhelming drawing power on my heart. I can't resist it. I cannot, it's so compelling. It is so beautiful. It is so precious that I must submit myself to it. This view of the cross demands of humanity a response, you cannot be passive. You cannot sit in church on Sabbath or Sunday, and go [yawn]. You can't have that response to this view of the cross. You must either fall on that rock and be broken, or that rock will crush you in the hardening of your heart. In the total resistance of, I will not submit to this self denial. That level of self denial is not needed, not required. And I will not submit myself to it.

There's no other way that I can... As I read the scriptures to bring into harmony the fact that for me to live the 50 odd years that I have lived in the sufferings that Christ has gone through to protect me and to give me this life makes my soul of infinite value. Doesn't it? To Him. Psalms 40:5, the thoughts of God towards us cannot be numbered. You are of more value than many sparrows. And if I have that value to Him, how then do you take something that is of infinite value to yourself and go, "I'll drop that in the fire."

It doesn't make any sense to take something of infinite value and He's, "Oh, I'm done with you, in the fire. Bye. I don't need you anymore." You do that to

something that has no value to you anymore that... And this is the terrible tragedy of the view of mainstream Christianity is ultimately the end of the wicked tells us that God comes to a point in His experience where He decides, you have no more to Him. No wonder people are having trouble. No wonder people are taking drugs, no wonder people are going off the deep end, no wonder people are atheists.

Because of this understanding. And so I invite you to think upon these things. It is this view of the cross that has completely transformed me. As I look upon this cross, the sufferings of Christ, the self denial, the passage of Scripture that I looked over before, what does it mean bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, crucifying, afresh.

We all know the text. I am crucified with Christ. Well, if I'm crucified with Christ, then Christ is still crucified. Isn't He? It doesn't say I'm crucified like Christ. I am crucified with Him, which is proof that His agony is still living on day after day after day in the terrible things that are taking place. We will never throughout the eons of eternity, exhaust the depth of God's love and the anguish and the suffering that He's gone through over the last 6,000 years, we will never exhaust the boundless ocean of that love. I cannot comprehend it. Eternity will never unmask it, never fully reveal what He went through. We will never know the full extent of what the Father and His Son experienced to guarantee for us a life of absolute freedom, and liberty, and love and joy and peace.

Never. It's just too great. It's too great for me to comprehend. And so at this time of the Sabbath and the new moon, where the Spirit of God is moving, it offers us that opportunity to think about this and to begin to awaken from our slumber. Why have we not heard this? For those of us who have walked in the Advent Movement, this message was preached 120 years ago. How can we not be talking about these things? It's in our writings, it's been given to us, but why don't we see it? Because it's the offense of the cross. The cross is offensive to human flesh. We need to sleep to the sufferings of Christ so that I can live my life. I can do the things that I want to do, but it says in the Book of Peter, that we can hasten the coming of Christ.

And by holding the sufferings of Christ, determining to know nothing among us save Christ and Him crucified and dwelling on that self denial to be changed into that image so that when we are in public with others or with our families, and we begin to emit that mirror of self-denial so that those around us can begin to see themselves as we see them. Then a great reformation will begin

to take place amongst God's people. And they are the thoughts that I would like to leave you with tonight. Tomorrow, we want to go more as we advertised into the judgment. The judgment. And the thought obviously came to me that if God is not the one that is actually destroying people, then God is not the one who is deciding to destroy people. He's not condemning people, as Jesus says in John 5, "My Father judges or condemns no one." And I didn't get that memo when I was younger. Somehow I missed that one.

I got the, God's going to get you. I got that memo. And I was afraid. But I want to end with the thought of the amazing love of God, amazing love of God to go through this suffering for us. And as I said in the beginning, it was when I glimpsed the suffering of my mother, for that brief moment, my whole life was changed. I thought of her instead of me, and that changed my whole life. And I believe the same thing will happen by glimpsing Christ and thinking of Him rather than me. Shall we pray?

Father in heaven, I thank you for the gift of your Son. For you so loved the world that you gave your only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Thank you for showing us Lord Jesus, your great self denial. You demonstrated it. It is breathtaking, it is incomprehensible to me, but it is beautiful. It is attractive. Give us this spirit, help us, that we might be that mirror to those around us, to not retaliate, to not strike back, to resist not evil, but to overcome evil with good by denying ourselves, that Christ may be glorified in all. And I thank you in Jesus name. Amen.