

"Lifted Up"

The Lord Jesus said in John 12 verse 32, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And we would all do well today to take a long look at the cross. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We know that the Scripture is what leads us to God in heaven and His Son Jesus Christ. The Scriptures teach us what we know about the Lord Jesus. So we study it again and again! Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

The story of the cross of Christ occupies a large portion of the New Testament. So important is the cross, the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2 and verse 2, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." A sweet lady once said that she had difficulty thinking about the death of Jesus on the cross. And she wondered why we talk about something so awful as crucifixion. Of course, the cross is an instrument of death; but it's also has a message for each of us that is so vital that none of us can afford to miss it.

To contemplate the death of Christ will have a definite effect on the heart. No one can think long and hard about the suffering of Jesus and not be moved by it. There may be many things about the death of Christ we may not understand in this life, still the Bible does reveal some things to us of great value. The New Testament mentions the death of Christ 175 times. And so it's helpful to learn what we can about the death of Jesus and its connection with our salvation and our eternity. It's touching to know that Jesus was willing to give his head to a crown of thorns, his back to a cruel scourging, his hands and feet to nails, and his side to a spear. Asking why Jesus would do this is very, very important.

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The Edmond church will now worship in song, and we'll read from John 12:27 to 32, and then we'll explore how Jesus is lifted up!

Our reading today is from the gospel according to John, chapter 12, verses 27 to 32. "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.' Then a voice came out of heaven: 'I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.' So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, 'An angel has spoken to Him.' Jesus answered and said, 'This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.'" Jesus here was predicting His death upon the cross. Let's pray together. Father we're so grateful that Your son Jesus was willing to die in our stead for our sins. Help us Father to devote ourselves and to be drawn to Him. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Perhaps you've sung James Coats' hymn, "Where Could I Go?": it says, "Living below in this old sinful world, Hardly a comfort can afford; Striving alone to face temptations sore, Where could I go but

to the Lord? Where could I go, O where could I go, Seeking a refuge for my soul? Needing a friend to save me in the end, Where could I go but to the Lord?" At times going to the Lord is the only real option we have. Whether we know it or not, we all need God. We need His love, His peace, His joy, His hope, and His salvation. I don't know where you are in this life, but I know that you need the Lord in your life.

Jesus is real and genuine. He has proven Himself time and again to be everything that He claims. You can trust His teaching and His promises. You can depend upon Him to help you through the toughest of times. Some think of Jesus as merely one among many religious leaders, but Jesus is quite unique. Who else was born of a virgin? Who else fulfilled so many Old Testament prophecies? Who else arose from the dead? Who else could raise the dead, heal the sick, or walk upon water? Now, before someone says that these miracles are just myths, I ask, "Are you sure?" If these are just myths, how do you account for so many disciples holding to them with their last breath?

How do you account for the prophecies that Jesus fulfilled? He was born in Bethlehem, fulfilling the prophecy of Micah 5 and verse 2. He was the seed of woman. He had his hands and his feet pierced as Psalm 22:16 says. He was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver as Zechariah 11, verse 12 says. He was to die with the wicked, and be buried with the rich as Isaiah 53 prophesies. Oh there are dozens of prophecies in the Old Testament about the life of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Jesus fulfilled every one of those prophecies. No other person in all of history has done that or could do that. To fulfill so many specific prophecies shows that He is from God. Centuries before he was born and centuries after, men still looked to Jesus as the central person of all history. For me, this is still 'AD 2016,' that is "in the year of our Lord, 2016."

Unfortunately, many have ignored the Lord Jesus. I was shocked when I learned that the fastest growing religious group in America describe themselves as unaffiliated. Nearly one in four Americans say that they have no religion. Many of these came from Christian homes, and for whatever reason they abandoned their faith in Jesus. They are the "un-churched" and place no allegiance in anything spiritual. Perhaps you're a person choosing to be "without God and without hope in this present world." When you abandon God, realize this! That you also abandon God's help and hope, His peace and joy, and His love and grace.

Where will you go, my friend, to find what only the Lord Jesus can give? No one else has what He has. No one can give you what He can give you. No one will ever love you the way the Lord loves you. You might have a thousand friends in your lifetime, but which of your friends has ever died for you? Which one ever felt the repeated blows of a cruel whip on his back? Which one ever took nails through his hands and feet? Which one ever hung suspended between heaven and earth until he could breathe no more for you? Which of your friends ever took your sins upon himself and died for them? You can search the world over and never find anyone who will love you like Jesus did.

The apostle Paul said in Romans 5 verses 6 to 8, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The Lord Jesus died for us, not because we had befriended Him, but because He had come to love us. We were helpless, ungodly, and sinners; but Jesus died for us anyway. You can't measure that kind of love; it's much deeper than a casual friendship. It's the kind of love that we all long for, the kind of love that we cannot ignore or forget.

It's hard for me to understand what happens in the heart of a person who forgets what Jesus did for him. The Hebrew writer warns in Hebrews 3 verses 12 to 13, "Take care, brethren, that there not be

in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it's still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Yes, sin can deceive our hearts and harden them. People can become enslaved to some favorite sin to the point that they'll desert the church and the Lord. I knew a minister who had a beautiful wife but began seeing another woman. It wasn't long until he had not only left his wife but left the church altogether. Oh he knew that he had sinned, but this man shut all of his friends out and wouldn't talk to anyone. There he was, risking his soul to remain in his sin.

You may not be caught up in sin like this former minister was, but your sin can separate you from God and His people, just like it did him. If you say no to Jesus, who then will love you like He did? Who will you find to pay for your sins? No one will, and no one can. You must face the consequences of your sin on your own. Paul said in 1 Timothy 2 verses 3 to 6, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time." Jesus is the only one who could ransom you from sin.

If you reject Jesus, there is no other Savior who can rescue from the consequences of sin. Peter said there is none other name under heaven, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4 and verse 12). There is only one Savior, and that's Jesus Christ. If you choose sin over Him, you need to know what Paul said in Romans 6 and verse 23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The wages of sin have not changed in all these years—it's still death. And I would hate to see you harden your heart against God. If you do, realize that God will say no to you for the life hereafter. My friend, once this life is over, you can't turn back the clock. You can't wish your choices away. You will face the Lord.

Now whether you face the Lord on that day, the day of judgment, with joy and peace or rather not you're going to face it with dread and panic is up to you. You're actually choosing life or death by your choice of whether to serve the Lord or not. If you reject the Lord, you will not find any promise for the hereafter. You might find great success today, you might become rich and famous, you might have great power and influence, and have the pleasures of life at every turn; but if you don't have the Lord Jesus in your life, you're putting your soul at risk of being lost eternally. Paul said in 1 Timothy 5 and verse 6, that "she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives." And I suspect today there are many, many people physically alive but spiritually dead in their trespasses and sins.

What should I do, if I find that I am living without the hope of the cross? Well, take a long, long look at the cross, compare the love of Christ with the way that you're living your life. The cross has a way of humbling us and convicting us of sin. We've all grievously fallen short of the glory of God. We all deserve to be lost, but the Lord out of love paid the price to rescue us.

Perhaps you feel like David. You'll remember King David, David saw Bathsheba bathing, taking a bath, and apparently she was unclothed. Well being tempted, well he sent for Bathsheba and the Bible said that he slept with her. Now when Bathsheba found that she was pregnant with David's child, David then plotted to bring Uriah the Hittite back to cover up his sin. Well, he tried this and that, but all of them failed. And so what he eventually did was that he had Uriah killed in battle and then he married his widow to try and cover things up. David's sin, however, caught up with him. 2 Samuel 12 verses 1 to 6 says: "Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him and he said, 'There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a great many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb, which he bought and nourished; And it

grew up together with him and his children. And it would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, And it was like a daughter to him. Now a traveler came to the rich man, And he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd, And so to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him; Rather he took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

"Well, David's anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, 'As the LORD lives, surely this man who has done this deserves to die. He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and he had no compassion.'"

Now I suspect that if I were David and heard such a story, I too would be angry at this selfish and unjust behavior! David had felt the pain of his sin but thought he had covered it up so no one else would know. Well what Nathan said next must have stunned him.

Nathan then said to David (this is in verses 7 to 9), "You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul. I also gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your care, I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added to you many more things like these! Why, why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight?'"

The most important day of our lives comes when we realize that we too have sinned and we need a Savior. We may not have been an adulterer or a killer like David, but our sins are still real. They can deceive us, they can harden our hearts, they can cost us our souls. Folks we need a Savior! We need Someone who will step in to rescue us, who will pay the price for our sins. Folks, that's what the cross is all about. That is why He died upon the cross! 1 Peter 2 verse 24 says that, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." Now if you need spiritual healing, look to the cross, where Jesus is lifted up and come to Him, penitent and obedient! Let's pray together. Oh Father help us all to love You like You have loved us, and to realize the great price that Jesus paid for us. Father we pray that we may come to be obedient to Your will. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

We live in a confusing world with many competing voices, each crying out with a different message. How can we know what is true? Some today are like Pontius Pilate, who asked Jesus, "What is truth?" If Pilate had been listening more closely to Jesus, he would have found the answer to that question. Jesus told Pilate in John 18 verse 37, "For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. And everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." The way to the truth is Jesus Christ. You can trust Him. You will not be deceived or fooled.

Now Jesus' actions shout that He is real and genuine. His empty tomb cries out that He did indeed rise from the dead. If Jesus arose from the dead, then He truly is Lord and the Son of God. We can trust His words. Jesus said in John 14 and verse 6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; and no one comes to the Father but through Me." He promised in John 8:31 and 32, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." In our confused world, it's reassuring to know the One who is the Truth! By His Word we can know right and wrong. By His word we can know what's true and what's false!

Now if you believe in Jesus Christ and you love Him for dying on the cross, repent of every sin, confess Him as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Baptism into Christ is an immersion in water. And when you're baptized, God will wash away your sins (Acts 22:16), He'll add you to His church (Acts 2:47), He'll make you His child (Galatians 3 verse 27), and He'll raise you up to walk in newness of life (Romans 6 and verse 4). So obey the Lord today!

We hope that today's study about lifting up Jesus has stirred you to consider the depth of Christ's love for you. We hope you'll be drawn to Him. Now, maybe that you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. You can download these lessons or a newsletter online at www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. You can catch this program on YouTube anytime! Just go to "SearchTVMinistry." We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

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