

And Him Crucified
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This morning I wish to introduce you to your Lord in such a way, that you will more truly appreciate **the gospel preached by me** (meaning, Paul). Paul preached the Lord Jesus as our Redeemer.

“And Him crucified. 3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. KJV Romans 8:3-4

Jesus appeared to Saul of Tarsus and declared **I am Jesus whom you are persecuting**. (Acts 9:5) Eight other “I am” statements come to mind:

1. *And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).*
2. *Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12).*
3. *“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture” (John 10:9).*
4. *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep” (John 10:11).*
5. *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11:25).*
6. *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).*
7. *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser” (John 15:1).*
8. *“Truly, truly I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am (John 8:58).*

“But Jesus is the eternal I AM. He was and is and is to come. He will leave the temple, but he will be eternally present with his people – those who call upon him in faith. **This eighth “I am” statement of Jesus establishes him as our Lord and God.** He is our Redeemer and Friend, the source and center of all truth.” [<https://davidbahn-reflections.com/2016/09/28/the-eighth-i-am-statement-in-johns-gospel>]

Furthermore, when Pilate says, “So you are a king?” Jesus answers, You say I am a king. For this purpose I was born, and for this purpose I have come

into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. (John 18:37) Jesus' response to **So you are a king?** could be taken in the affirmative: "It is as you say, I am a king." And this despite Pilate asking a political question, and Jesus' response being a theological/divine or spiritual declaration. And, just the prior evening, Jesus had told his disciples **I am the way, the truth, and the life.**

I say this by way of re-introducing you to your Lord!

So that is who stood before Saul declaring **I am Jesus.** The crucified and risen One who is **the eternal I AM.** The self-disclosure of Christ is also the self-realization of Paul, **Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.** This is, as we say, self-evident, for only a Saul who is listening to His voice could ask, **Who are you, Lord?** (Acts 9:5-6) **when he heard Jesus call his name?!** Because he was listening, Saul went into the city and waited **to be told what to do.** (v.6) **I am Jesus** was both a summation (of who Jesus is) and a summoning (you, Saul, listen to and follow me). Saul didn't just have a strange encounter! He actually met with God in the person of the risen Lord.

Therefore Paul declares in 1 Cor. 2:3: **For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified,** he is reiterating the centrality of Christ and the Cross. Galatians 3:1 reads: **It was before you that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified** underscores exactly the same point. And what is that point?

That Jesus Christ laid down His life to redeem the human race—

Jesus appeared to make a way, where there had been no way before, a way for us back to God, to be reconciled with our Creator. Furthermore this goal, this Redemption was the *enormously fascinating, wondrous matter* that prophets sought to know and angels longed to look into!

Now, if the redemption of the human race was worth Christ's dying on the cross—if it was the dear purchase of His blood—and if that redemptive mission has been transmitted, or entrusted to us *as his followers*—as it undoubtedly has been, the question arises are we willing to pursue that same redemption *for others* even if it were to cost us our life, our blood? Because it has done that, and it might yet demand that again. Winston Churchill, on May 13, 1940, paraphrased the Christian's condition—he was referencing the socialist peril threatening the British empire—we, or course, are facing a more ferocious and daunting foe though our situation carries some traces of that former anti-fascist strife:

"I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat."We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many long months of struggle and of suffering. You ask, what is our policy? I can say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and

with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival.

I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat— Churchill is right about the cost, but our goal is very different: not “survival,” but salvation and for the entire human race and not merely Britain, nor even Western civilization! If we accept that Redemption is the Great Thing, the main thing—as it is and ought to be, the whole edifice of sentimental Christianity comes crashing down. I must clarify what I mean by “sentimental Christianity,” I mean, “Therapeutic Christianity” and the “Prosperity Gospel” and the “Liberation Gospel” and the “Social Gospel” and the “Accommodation Gospel.” The latter is the misleading notion that we “go along to get along.” Our kingdom, like Christ’s, is not of this world—and all these lesser kingdoms shall perish. Only the Church of Jesus Christ will be left standing. Redemption is none of these alternative, false gospels. ***That is what Saul realized as he met God on the road to Damascus—meeting with God is the ultimate game-changer!***

My personal salvation becomes ancillary to the Cause of Christ. We are part of the greatest spiritual movement of all time: we advance the Kingdom of God, the exaltation of our King and the restoration of all things to the glory of God the Father. We are conscripts to His cause; He is not a religious accessory to our life!

Does this mean that Jesus didn’t die for me and my salvation? Isn’t Christianity all about me being readied for my eternal life in heaven? Well, yes and no. Yes, it is about those things, but, no, it isn’t limited to that scale of things, or that scope of things. Nicodemus was saved so as to participate in the resurrection—he took the body down and prepared it for burial—amazingly, this is nothing his closest disciples could do! The woman converted at Jacob’s well, she was saved to witness to the Messiah’s arrival/ reality: ***Come and see! Could this be He? The waters of eternal life welled up in her and her clientele and her whole village was awash with life!*** Christ’s Redemption is “the larger project!” And, in fact, the purpose for your salvation is wedded to the high objective we are discussing: the Redemption of mankind. That cause is worth fighting for, dying for and worth living for. Redemption is for all the sheep, the individual and personal focus, *which is the focus for much of sentimental Christianity*, tends to lose sight of the forest for the trees!

The saving of souls is good, the redemption of mankind is better.
The first is the means, the second the end.

The application of the Cross to the condition of the Gentiles is what Paul focuses on. *Of course he had to be saved first, but being saved is the beginning of a journey—it is not the journey and it is not the destination of that journey!* Their assimilation to the ethnicity, or religious traditions of the Jews was not God's concern. Jesus didn't die *for the Gentiles to become Jews (that could never happen!)*; he died so that they could be reconciled to God, that we might be redeemed.

What touches me is one thing, but it is the human project that must hold first place. **God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son.** The fit between Christianity and modern individualism has always been and must continue to be uneasy. And, frankly, that is **how it should be.** Individualism, in its American form, is a cultural norm, a passing fad, and it is not necessarily a lasting kingdom value—however fond of it we might be. Meaning, because it may be incompatible with denying oneself, and surrendering one's individual rights, independence, autonomy and so on, **to free us to get on with Redemption,** our work(!), we may have to die to it. Are we willing to die to live? Do we believe in resurrection? What is the example Christ set us? Are we willing to preach the same gospel preached by Paul? If so, that is proof of your appreciation.

To speak the truth, to walk in the truth, to embody the truth—Jesus is the truth incarnate!—let's speak truth we are in Him to one another.

Amen.