

INTRODUCTION

I've always been fascinated by magnets. When I was a kid I had this magnetic toy called Woolly Willy. It had metal shavings inside a clear plastic cover and the face of a man. Woolly Willy had a magnetic personality. You could use the little magnetic pencil to give Willy a beard or hair. But he's so old now, he probably has hair growing out of his ears.

I've entitled this message "The Magnetism of the Cross." Because just as objects respond differently to a magnet, people respond to the cross in different ways as well. I have a couple of magnets here to illustrate three different ways people react to the preaching of the cross. Magnets have a positive and negative pole. Two magnets placed near opposite poles repel each other. And there are people who are repelled by the preaching of the cross. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:18 that the "preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing." When some people hear a message of a savior dying in blood and agony on a Roman cross, they reject that message. They are repelled by the thought of a messy, bloody cross. They want a nice clean, sanitary religion. Even some groups who call themselves Christians have gone through their hymnals and removed every song that refers to the blood of Jesus.

Still others react like wood to this magnet. Wood isn't repelled, nor is it attracted. It has no response to the magnet. And there are plenty of people today who have no interest in hearing about how a man died on a Roman cross two thousand years ago. They are totally apathetic toward the message of the cross. Religious surveys reveal that there is a growing number of "nones" in our nation. These are people when asked about their religious beliefs answer "none." And along with the "nones" we have a growing number of "dones." These are people who were once involved in a local church, but they are "done" with it—and never show up. They are apathetic about the cross also.

But, thankfully, there are multiple millions of people around the world, like me, who are like these nails. When the magnet passes over them, they are drawn to to it. And from the first time I heard about the message of the cross, I have felt it drawing my heart and love like a magnet. Which of these three reactions describe your relationship to the cross?

Let's read the words of Jesus beginning in John 12:27. Remember this takes place just a few days before Jesus will be nailed to a cross. When we read His words, we see that He is struggling with what He is about to face.

John 12:27-36. "Now my soul is troubled. What should I say—Father, save me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name." (Four words to pray when you don't know what to pray)

Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd standing there heard it and said it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

Jesus responded, "This voice came, not for me, but for you. Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. As for me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to myself." He said this to indicate what kind of death he was about to die.

Then the crowd replied to him, "We have heard from the law that the Messiah will remain forever. So how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"

Jesus answered, "The light will be with you only a little longer. Walk while you have the light so that darkness doesn't overtake you. The one who walks in darkness doesn't know where he's going. While you have the light, believe in the light so that you may become children of light." Jesus said this, then went away and hid from them.

We returned early yesterday morning from another trip to Israel. We spent our last day in a beautiful place called the Garden Tomb. Many archaeologists and Bible scholars believe this is the real location of the place of the skull. Since the 4th Century, there is a church called the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. This has been historical location of the crucifixion mainly because in 323 Constantine's mother, Helena, saw that location in a dream. But the features there don't fit with the Biblical narrative.

But in the late 1800s, Horatio G. Spafford, the man who wrote "It is Well With My Soul" was living in East Jerusalem during the time of the Ottoman Empire. His guest for tea one afternoon was British General Charles Gordon. As they sat on the balcony of the American Hotel, General Gordon stared across the way to an abandoned rock quarry. He said, "By jove, that rock face looks like the face of a skull. The word Golgotha, or Calvary, means skull. Years earlier, Byzantine Christians had insisted that this was the place of Calvary.

So General Gordon arranged to buy the property, and over the next decades they brought in British archaeologists to excavate around it. John 19 tells us that Jesus was crucified at the place of a skull, that's what Golgotha or Calvary means, skull. We're also told there was a garden nearby and a rich man's tomb that had never been used.

These archeologists discovered a huge cistern, that would hold 250,000 gallons of water, and a winepress, both proof of a garden there 2,000 years ago. And as they continued to excavate they found a large tomb with three chambers, the kind of tomb a rich man might use. And the tomb was empty and today fifty people in our group can testify that the tomb is still empty. And like we heard a brother shout when we were there a few years ago: "I got GOOD NEWS! He ain't in dere!"

Today, pollution and vandalism by the Muslims have caused the rock face to deteriorate, but you can still see the two eye sockets. But when you look at the pictures from the early 1900s it's hard to miss the resemblance. If it looks so much like a skull 120 years ago, imagine what it must have looked like 2,000 years ago.

So many of us believe this is the place where Jesus was crucified; not on top of the cliff, but at the bottom. So, when I saw it the first time, it gave me a different picture from a song that I had sung for most of my life. "On a hill far away, stood an old rugged cross." So, the cross wasn't ON the hill, Jesus was crucified in front of the rock face. We should be singing "BY a hill far away stood an old rugged cross."

In this message I want to talk about three things that happened at the cross. It isn't proper grammar to end a sentence with a preposition. My three main points all end in a preposition. It may not be good grammar, but it is great theology. We're going to talk about three directions. Just remember these three directions and you'll get this message. Out. Up. To. Someone went OUT; someone else went UP and finally someone else went TO.

1. SATAN IS BEING CAST OUT

Jesus said, "Now the ruler of this world will be cast out." A better translation is that Satan is being cast out; it's a slow but sure process.

From the first time Satan slithered his slimy soul in the Garden of Eden and tempted Adam and Eve to sin, he has had a stranglehold on humanity. He is called the prince of this world. He's not the prince of this planet, because the Bible says the "earth is the Lord's and fullness therein." Satan is not the prince of the world of humanity, for the Bible says, "God so loved the world."

Satan rules over a world in which people embrace the belief that they have no need for God. There is no Creator. Earth and life just happened as the result of an evolutionary hiccup. Man is the master of his own fate. That's Satan's kingdom.

Satan's ultimate goal was to destroy God's redeemer Jesus. He tried tempting Him in the wilderness but He failed. Satan manipulated the Jewish leaders to develop a deep hatred for Jesus and he hatched a wicked plan in their minds to kill Jesus. The night of the last Supper we're told that Satan entered Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus. With every trial, denial, torture, and wound, Satan had to be pumping his fist, saying, "Yes!" And as they nailed Jesus to a cross, the devil probably howled with glee, because he knew no man had ever come down off a cross alive.

But Jesus had a totally different perspective on the cross. He said, "When I go to the cross, I'm going to be casting the devil out." AT the cross, Jesus disarmed Satan of his two most effective weapons. His first weapon is guilt. He is called the accuser of the brothers and the sisters. He accuses us before God and he accuses us before ourselves. "Look how wicked and sinful David Dykes is!" And he'll come to you and lay a guilt trip you. He'll whisper, "You're no good; your no good, baby, you're no good."

At the cross, Jesus paid for the forgiveness of our sins. So whenever the accuser tries to lay a guilt trip on you, just say, "I know I'm not good. But I have been washed in the blood of Jesus and I am a sinner saved by grace. There is therefore NO condemnation, because I am in Christ Jesus."

Satan's second weapon is fear. Particularly, Satan wants us to fear death. He tries to plant seeds of apprehension and worry in your mind about death. He and his organized demonized army want us to believe that death is a scary experience and that we shouldn't talk about death. Everybody knows they're going to die, they just don't want to talk about it.

But on the cross, Jesus destroyed Satan and his fear-mongering about death. The Bible says in Hebrews 2:14-15: "Jesus also shared in these, so that through his death he might destroy the one holding the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death."

Not only did Jesus cast Satan out, it says in Hebrews 2 that when Jesus died, He DESTROYED the one who kept people in fear of death.

AT the cross, Satan was dealt a mortal wound. He knows he is a defeated foe, and he knows that his days are numbered. He knows that one day he will be cast into a bottomless pit. Meanwhile, he is trying to create as much chaos as possible in the time he has left.

When you study World War II you discover that as the retreating Germans were losing and being pushed back toward their country, they engaged in a scorched earth policy. They burned everything they could so the approaching enemies wouldn't have those resources.

Since the cross, the devil is conducting a scorched earth policy in the lives of people. He's trying to do as much damage as possible until the deadline of his incarceration.

In the 1970s, Hal Lindsey wrote a book entitled, *Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth*. I disagree with that title. "Satan is Alive, but he hasn't been well since he was defeated at the cross." He was dealt a mortal blow at the cross.

And Satan knows that he is headed for a place of eternal punishment. Revelation 20 tells us where his final destination is. In Revelation 20:10 we read, "The devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and Sulphur where the beast and the false prophet are and they will be tormented day and night forever." The first direction is that Satan is being cast out.

2. THE SAVIOR WAS LIFTED UP

Jesus said, "If I am lifted up from the earth..." Then the Apostle John explained that Jesus said this to indicate what kind of death He would die.

I have heard some preachers use this text to mean that if we just lift up the preaching of the cross, that people will be drawn to faith in Jesus. But Jesus said this to leave no doubt that He would be nailed to a Roman cross and that cross would be lifted up so that everyone could see Him.

In John 3 Jesus was having a conversation with Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a religious Jew who was a member of the ruling party of the Sanhedrin. Jesus told this religious man that He

had to be born again. Jesus also told Nicodemus how He would one day be lifted up on a cross. He compared the cross to a story from the Old Testament that would have been familiar to Nicodemus and every Jew.

Jesus said, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." (John 3:14-15)

This happened in Numbers 21 and I taught about it a few weeks ago in WEBS where we are studying every miracle in the Bible. The people were out in the desert and they had been complaining so much that God sent a tangle of poisonous snakes into the camp. Many people were bitten and many were dying. The people repented and cried out to Moses to take away the snakes. When Moses prayed, God said, "I won't take away the snakes. But I'll give you something better. I'll give you a cure." He had Moses make a figure of a bronze snake and put it on a tall pole. And for every snake-bitten person who looked at the snake on the pole, they would be instantly cured. Even today, the image of a snake wrapped around a pole is a symbol for Medical care and Pharmacies.

That snake story might have just been an obscure Old Testament miracle, but Jesus elevated it when He compared it to being lifted up on the cross.

God's instructions to those Israelites in the desert is the same He gives to us today. He told them to look and live. They had to admit they had a problem: A snakebite is hard to ignore. They had to believe God's Word that if they looked they would live. Then all they had to do was LOOK and LIVE.

It's the same for us today in 2020. We have to admit we all are sinners. We've been snake-bitten by the venomous poison of sin. We must believe God's Word that Jesus on the cross will cure our sin problem. Jesus said, "The Son of Man must be lifted up and everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life." So we only have to look and live. What a simple solution! God didn't say, "Bow down before the snake!" He didn't say, "Bring an offering to the snake!" "Bring a sacrifice to the snake!" All God said was "Look at the snake and you will live."

Now of all the symbols used for Jesus, the snake may be the strangest of all. To call someone a snake is not flattering. If you say about someone, "He's like a snake in the grass." That means you can't trust that person.

If anyone had ever dared to call Mohammed a snake, they would be instantly beheaded for blasphemy. So why then did Jesus chose this picture for Himself? It's simple. A snake, the serpent in the Garden, was the source of temptation for sin. We associate a snake with sin. And Jesus openly identified with the snake because on the cross, He became sin for us. He bore our sins in His body on the tree. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "God made Him who knew no sin (Jesus) to be made sin for us; so that in him we might we might become the righteousness of God."

The old devil was kicked OUT. The precious Savior was lifted UP.

3. SINNERS ARE DRAWN TO.

This message is about the magnetism of the cross. Jesus said, "I will draw all people to myself."

So are ALL people being drawn to Jesus now? No. Remember our magnet? Some are repelled and some are unaffected. So why did Jesus say He would draw ALL people TO Himself. There's at least two deeper meanings. First, Jesus will be at the end of the pathway for every person – whether they believe in this life or not. Every knee will ultimately bow and every tongue will ultimately confess that Jesus is Lord. But there's a second meaning in what Jesus said. The word "all" is also used to mean "all kinds." Jesus is drawing all kinds of people to Himself. In Revelation 7 we read about a great multitude in Heaven from "every nation, every tribe, every people group and every language will be gathered there."

Have you ever thought about it? Jesus-followers come from many nations and there isn't a single predominant language or nation? Islam is connected to the Holy Sites in Saudi Arabia. Islam's language is Arabic, and to truly understand the Koran, a Muslim must learn Arabic. The five daily prayers are recited in Arabic.

Judaism will always be tied to Jerusalem, and Hebrew is the language in which the Torah should be read. Every boy or girl who goes through a bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah is required to learn Hebrew.

But think about our faith in Jesus. There's no central language or location. It is truly made up of all kinds of people who have been drawn to Jesus as iron filings are drawn to a magnet. Then when a person comes to Christ, they don't have to learn a new language or travel to a certain place to complete their faith. Jesus said, "I will draw ALL KINDS of people to myself."

And Jesus said earlier in John that there is another force at work when a person is drawn to Jesus. In John 6:44 Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day." And the Father continues to draw millions of people to Jesus. So, here's a trivia question for you.

What is the top tourist attraction in the world? If you said Disney World you'd be wrong. The top attraction in the world is the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul, which is visited by 91 million people annually. Disney World comes in a distant 12th with 18 million visitors a year. But to me, the number one attraction in the world is the cross of Jesus. Billions have experienced the attraction of the magnetic cross of Jesus. I mentioned the old hymn, the Old Rugged Cross earlier. I have always loved the second verse that says, "Oh, that Old Rugged Cross so despised by the world; has a wondrous attraction to me."

I have a birthday coming up this month. I'll be 58. It was on March 11, 1962 when I was born again. I don't remember the name of the preacher, but I remember the message. It was a message on the crucifixion of Jesus. When I was young, I had a drug problem. My parents drug me to church every Sunday. Because I had grown up in the church I had already heard all the stories about Jesus. I had heard all about the crucifixion and the resurrection. But on that

evening, I came to realize for the very first time that when Jesus died on the cross, He was dying for MY sin. And that night, the magnetic power of the cross tugged at my heart and I was drawn to become one with Christ. That's why the cross will always have a wondrous attraction to me.

Have you felt the tug of the cross? Have you been drawn to the sacrifice on the cross? Jesus died for your sins, and if you haven't done so yet. All you have to do is to look and live.

TAKE-AWAY TRUTH: YOU HAVE A LIMITED OPPORTUNITY TO RESPOND TO GOD'S OFFER OF SALVATION.

Jesus knew he was only a few days from the cross so He said, "The light will be with you only a little longer. Walk while you have the light so that darkness doesn't overtake you... While you have the light, believe in the light so that you may become children of light." (John 12:35-36)

As far as the Gospel accounts go, Jesus never addressed the multitudes again. All the remaining communication will be with the disciples.

And I can't guarantee any of you that you'll ever have another chance to hear the Gospel after today. So like a lot of those cheesy television commercials say: "Hurry, this offer ends soon."

So, if you feel your heart attracted to the magnetism of the cross of Jesus, don't resist it. Don't hesitate. Come to Jesus today. As Jesus said, "While you have the light, believe in the light, so you can become children of light."

OUTLINE

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TAKE-AWAY TRUTH

YOU HAVE A LIMITED OPPORTUNITY TO RESPOND TO GOD'S OFFER OF SALVATION.

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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