

October 30, 2005 by Steve Brandon



Applications of the Cross

(Various)

The cross calls us to ...

1. Live a new way.
2. Live with confidence.
3. Live close to God.
4. Live by faith, not by flesh.
5. Live as Christ lived.
6. Live worshipfully.

On several occasions at Rock Valley Bible Church, I have told you that the crucifixion of Christ is the pinnacle of history. On that day, Jesus received the punishment that sin deserved. No longer did God need to pass over sins that were committed, trusting that atonement would someday be made for them. God could now be just and the justifier of men who have faith in Jesus. The cross is the center of the Bible. The Old Testament anticipates the cross. The gospel writers describe the cross. The New Testament writers interpret the cross.

In recent months, we have looked in detail at the sufferings, the crucifixion, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus. So significant is this event, that I have chosen to take two weeks to step back from this mighty event and reflect upon its significance. Last week, I preached a message entitled, "The Centrality of the Cross." My outline was simple:

1. Believe in the cross (Rom. 10:9).
2. Boast in the cross (Gal. 6:14).
3. Preach in the cross (1 Cor. 1:23)
4. Remember the cross (2 Tim. 2:8).

To be saved, there is no other way than believing in the cross. Believe in the cross, for there is no salvation in any other name. To live with proper affections, the cross must be central in our minds. Boast in the cross, for all other boasting is vain. To minister to others, our message must be the cross. Preach the cross, for this is our hope. To live with hope, we must think upon the cross. Remember the cross. For each point in my sermon outline, we looked at one verse of Scripture that focused upon the centrality of the cross in some area of our lives.

This morning, my approach will be a bit different. Rather than focussing upon a few key verses and focusing our attention upon them in depth, I'm going to look at a broad variety of Scripture. Rather than going deep with a few verses, I'm going to go broad with many verses. In fact, we are going to look at so many verses this morning, that you might consider that my text this morning includes the entire New Testament. My purpose in doing so is simple. I want for you to see the extent of the application that the New Testament derives directly from the cross of Christ.

I have summarized these applications into six points that we will look at this morning. Certainly, these points are not exhaustive in any way. They simply help for us to see exactly how broad and how far reaching is the application of the cross of Christ. The cross calls us to ...

1. Live a new way.

Our first passage we will look at will be Romans 6. As you read the text of the passage below, I want for you to look at the implications of the death of Christ and the life that we should now live. In many of these verses, Paul links our lives with the cross of Christ. Both in His death and in His resurrection.

Romans 6:1-11

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Time and time again in this passage, Paul links our life with the cross of Christ. In Christ's death, we have died to sin (verse 2). We have been baptized into His death (verse 3). We have united in His death (verse 5). Our old self was crucified with Him (verse 6). We have died

with Christ (verse 8). As a result of participating in the death of Christ, so too ought we to participate in His life, through His resurrection. As Christ was raised from the dead, we should "walk in newness of life" (verse 4). As our old self was crucified, "we should no longer be slaves to sin" (verse 6). Since we have died with Christ, "we are free from sin" (verse 7). Since we have died with Christ, we shall also live with Him (verse 8). As death and sin no longer have mastery over Christ, it shouldn't have mastery over you either. The concluding application is found in verse 11: "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (verse 11).

Do you see the thrust of the argument? As believers in Christ, we have become participants in the life of Christ. When He died, we died to sin. When He was raised from the dead, we are raised to live a new way. Such a concept is all over the New Testament. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, we read that "if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." Peter writes in 1 Peter. 2:24, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." In Galatians 6:14, we read, "through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." In Galatians 2:20, Paul puts it like this: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."

Belief in the cross of Christ compels us to live a new way. This is how Paul continues on in Romans 6.

Romans 6:12-14

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.

Belief in the cross of Christ is a transforming belief. Have you seen this transformation in your life? It is the evidence of saving faith. When you trust in Christ, your life will be connected with Christ and your life will be transformed. Being under grace, sin will no longer dominate your life (verse 14). No longer you present your members to sin (verse 13), but you will be presenting your members as instruments of righteousness (verse 13). Is this evidenced in your life? This is the new life in Christ that all believers share in.

The cross calls us to ...

2. Live with confidence.

Next, we will consider Romans 5. As you read the verses below, seek to look at them through the lens of our standing before God. In other words, ask yourself what these verses speak about how God looks upon us.

Romans 5:1-11

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. 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. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Paul says in verse 1 that we have peace with God. The big question in life isn't whether or not you are at peace with God. The big question in life is whether or not God is at peace with you! Through Jesus Christ, we have no reason to back away from God or fear the condemnation which is due to us. Rather, we can live with confidence.

God's love is so great for us in Christ, that He died for us ... while we were helpless (verse 6). When we couldn't help ourselves, God helped us. God's love is so great for us in Christ, that He died for us ... while we sinners (verse 8). When we were separated from God due to our sin, the death of Christ removed the separation. God's love is so great for us in Christ, that He died for us ... while we enemies of God (verse 10). When we were at enmity with God and hated Him and were at war with Him, He reconciled us to Himself and made us His friends.

The implications of these things for our relationship with God is huge! We can stand with confident assurance that God loves us. If He loved us when we were at our worst, certainly, He still loves us now. We can live with confidence.

In Colossians 2:14, we read that God "canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:24 that "by His wounds we are healed." The writer to the Hebrews says that "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all" (Heb. 10:10).

As believers in Christ, we stand before God completely reconciled to Him. There is nothing anymore between us and God. To be sure, there used to be something. There used to be our sin standing in the way, blocking our access to God, and causing us to live in fear. But, by faith, everything that was between us and God was nailed to the cross. The pathway between us and God is now free and clear. God holds nothing against us now. "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

And the clear application of this is that we ought to live with confidence. Live with boldness. Live with assurance. Live your life knowing that

there is nothing between you and God that would cause God to look down upon you with a condemning heart. Know that you are loved in Christ. Ephesians 5:25-27 puts it as clear as any verse can put it: "Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of the water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless."

We don't have to live in fear, always trying to please our heavenly Father. Because, in Christ, God is perfectly satisfied with us. In Christ, God is perfectly pleased with us. We are "complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10). Continuing on in Romans, we read in chapter 8, verse 1 that "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." God is satisfied completely in Christ! God's love for you in Christ is unconditional. This ought to free you up to live with confidence.

Think about your relationship with your fathers. I know that some of you had a terrible relationship with your father. I know that some of you had a father who loved you conditionally. He loved you "if." He loved you *if* you performed up to His standards. He loved you *if* you received the grades that He wanted you to get. He loved you *if* you earned the awards at school. He loved you *if* you had the type of friends that would impress him. If that's your image of what God is like, remove the thought from your mind. For, this isn't what God is like!

God is like the father who loves his son regardless of how well he performs. God is like the father who communicates his love for his son in words and in actions. God is like the father who expresses his love for his son. I was fortunate to have a father like this. When I was a boy growing up, I knew that my father loved me. I knew that nothing that I would do would cause that love to diminish. He was a physician with a busy schedule, so it's not like he was always around. It's not like he pampered me and babied me as I grew up. I just knew that he would be there and that he would be faithful. I knew that he was looking out for my best. I was involved in athletics all the way through college. Never once did I ever feel any pressure from him to perform to a certain standard to be accepted. I know that his love for me would be consistent whether I was an all-state player or rode the bench as a third-string substitute player. Do you know what it produced in me? It has produced a confidence in the way that I have lived my life. I haven't lived on pins and needles, knowing that my acceptance was based upon my performance. I haven't lived in fear, thinking in the back of my mind, that he might turn on me. I haven't feared that other people might not accept me, for I knew that at home, my acceptance would always be there.

This is the meaning of 1 John 4:17-18, "By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgement; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love." Do you live with confidence? Do you live, knowing that all of your sins have been paid for upon the cross of Christ by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone? Such living will produce a living with confidence.

The cross calls us to ...
3. Live close to God.

When I say, "live close," I simply mean that you should seek intimacy and communion with Christ. This is the teaching of Hebrews 4. Consider the following Scripture.

Hebrews 4:14-16

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.

In verse 16, we are told to "draw near with confidence." The reason why we are to draw near is because our high priest is one who has been among us! Our high priest is One who has been tempted. Our high priest is One who has endured the temptations without ever sinning. Many of these temptations came throughout His life. He was tempted by Satan. He was tempted by the insults of the religious leaders. He was tempted by His wavering disciples. But, the greatest of these temptations came through the cross. He suffered more than any one of us ever will be. And yet, Jesus came through all of that suffering without sin. And it is this very fact that gives us confidence to draw near to God.

He is qualified to be our high priest, precisely because of the death that He died. This is what is said in Hebrews 7:26-27, "For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. The death of Christ ought to draw us close to Him. Ephesians 3:12 says that "in Christ Jesus we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him."

Think about this. Through the death of Jesus Christ believers in God have access to the very throne room of God. We have the ear of God! Coming before a sovereign ruler is a fearful thing. In ancient times, even a wife had difficulty in entering the king's throne room. Esther, the queen of the land, knew that if she came to the king into the inner court without him extending the golden scepter, she was in danger of dying! (Esther 4:11). But, we can come to the throne of God and seek mercy and grace to help us. The cross calls us to draw near to God.

What is amazing about how God calls us to come closely to Him is the fact that at one time, we were far from Him. In Ephesians 2:12, we read that all of us Gentiles, "were once separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." As Gentiles, we had no hope of the Messiah coming to rescue us. As Gentiles, we couldn't live with the people of God. As Gentiles, we had no promise of God to cling to. As Gentiles, we were hopeless. But Paul says in the very next verse that "In Christ Jesus, you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13). We now have a claim to Messiah! We now are part of the people of God. We now have many promises to claim! It means that we can (and ought to) draw near to God.

Peter said (in 1 Peter 3:18) that "Christ died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God." It was the

death of Christ that took those who were far off and brought them near to God.

God isn't against us. God doesn't hold us at arms' length. God is for us. Think about the implications of this. "If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:31-32). The reasoning goes like this: "Since God gave His Son for us, which was the ultimate gift that He could ever give us, how can we conceive that that now God wouldn't be willing to give us something that is far less!" In other words, suppose that your father was particularly wealthy and he owned an entire lake in Minnesota. The lake covers an area of 300 acres. Included in this is a large cabin on several hundred acres of land. At one point, he transfers ownership of this lake to you, complete with the entire land surrounding it. Now, do you not suppose that he will give you a lawn mower to mow the lawn? Do you not suppose that he will give you a basketball to use on the basketball hoop attached to the cabin? Of course He will! So with God. If He has given us the greatest gift He could give (i.e. His Son), will He not give us all other things we need?

We simply need to live close to God and pour out our hearts before Him. "Cast all your cares upon Him, because He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). We know that He cares for us, because He died for us. It is for this reason that the cross calls us to live close to God. It is through the cross that God has given us great access to God. We should come to Him.

The cross calls us to ...

4. Live by faith, not by flesh.

For this point, we will begin in Galatians 3:1-6. The churches in Galatia were under attack. They had started well in the faith, but then they began to entertain some religious "experts" who began to draw their attention away from simple faith in the sufficiency of the cross into keeping the laws of God. And so, Paul writes, ...

Galatians 3:1-6

You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

They had clearly heard the message of Christ. Paul says that Christ was "publicly portrayed" before them as "crucified" (Gal. 6:1). By this, I believe that Paul preached to them the gospel of the grace of God in the cross of Christ in so uncertain terms. Surely, the message of being saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, plus nothing would have come to the Galatians.

So, in verse 2, he asks the obvious? Did the Spirit come by works of the Law or by hearing with faith? Of course, they knew the answer to this question. They knew that it came by "hearing with faith." In verse 3 comes the rebuke: "Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" This is an obviously rhetorical question that must receive the answer, "no." You are saved by faith. You are perfected by faith. You are to live by faith! Their error was that they were trying to be "perfected by the flesh."

I will tell you all, that this is your tendency. This is the tendency of us all. We have the constant pull in our lives to try to be "perfected by the flesh." This is especially true as we grow in our Christian lives. For when we do, we begin to see our lives changed and conformed to the image of Christ. Our habits begin to change. The sinful habits are removed from our lives. Righteous habits replace them. We obtain a consistency in our Bible reading. We attend a home Bible study. We are involved in evangelism. Our children are attending AWANA. We begin a verse-memorization program. We start praying with some consistency. We love reading Christian books that help us with our walk. Pretty soon, we are quite consumed with the "Christian life!" All of our spare time is consumed with our "Christian life!" We then become pretty satisfied with our "Christian life!" And ever so slightly, we begin to trust in our own "righteousness" before God. When you do that, you are not living by faith anymore. When you do that, you are being perfected by flesh.

It really begins to come out when you start to fail in some of your Christian duties. When you begin to slip in your Christian devotion, due to the busyness of life. You miss a meeting. You are three weeks behind in your Bible reading. You lapsed into some of your sinful habits that you thought that you had conquered. It's been months since you have witnessed to anybody. And then, you find yourself in a church worship service, supposedly worshiping God, knowing full well that you aren't doing all of the Christian things that you used to be doing.

What's your perspective in all these things? Do you feel that you are not worthy of worshiping God, because you have failed Him? Do you feel as if God disapproves of your worship? Do you try to make a deal with God? "I'm going to start trying harder!" When you start thinking this way, you have forgotten that you are justified by faith in the cross of Christ. You are "seeking to be justified by law" (Gal. 5:4). You have "fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4). You have begun to live by flesh." But, you need to "live by faith, not by flesh."

The solution to your situation isn't to make a deal with God to try harder in your obedience. It's not about trying harder to obey. It's about faith in Christ to forgive. It's about faith in Christ to "perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you" (1 Peter. 5:10). The work of God that you need to perform is the work of faith. Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom God has sent" (John 6:29).

If you feel in any way that your acceptance before God is based upon your own works, then you are under a curse. Look down at verse 10 (of Galatians 3), "As many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.'" The solution is to come to God by faith, saying to Him, "Lord, in recent days, the worries of the world have consumed me. I acknowledge the waywardness of some of my ways. Lord, you certainly know the situation in my life and the struggles that I am having. I make no excuse for failing to grow in my sanctification these past few months. But, I know that I can come to you by faith. I know that it is by Your grace through faith that the promises of Christ are applied to my account. I believe that Christ accomplished all my redemption for me. I trust that you will reckon righteousness to me, apart from the works that I am attempting to

perform." Having come to Him like that, freely worship Him in faith, knowing that you are forgiven all! And then, the grace of God within you will work its work of practical purity in your life.

Our tendency is to submit ourselves to all of the standard, cultural laws of the Christian culture in which we live. Our Christian sub-culture has created a bunch of standards that we have to live by if we are going to remain in good standing among the church community. We conform to standards such as what we eat, what we drink, what we wear, what we do with our entertainment, and who we associate with. These standards are no different than the ones of which Paul solemnly warned those in Colossae. He said, "Why do you submit yourself to decrees such as, 'Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!' (Which all refer to things destined to perish with the using) -- in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?" (Col. 2:20-22). He said, "These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence." (Col. 2:23). All of these things are attractive to us! We like to have a list of do's and don'ts. Because, in them, there is an appearance of wisdom in them. They seem to draw us closer to God! And yet, all of those types of things are fleshly things! They profit nothing! Earlier Paul told the Colossians not to be intimidated by those who would hold such standards and seek to compel you to keep them as well. He said, "Let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day" (Colossians 2:16). Live by faith, not by flesh.

That's certainly not to discourage you from doing good works. But, please remember the source of your good works. They flow out of your salvation. They are motivated by your salvation. They add nothing to your standing before God. This is explained clearly in Ephesians 2:8-10, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." And so, certainly, perform your good works. But don't live or trust in your good works. Trust in the cross! Live by faith, not by flesh.

The cross calls us to ...
5. Live as Christ lived.

When I talk about living as Christ lived, I'm talking here about following the example that Christ left for us. There are many passages of Scripture that link the cross of Christ and the example that it is for us to follow. Let's begin with Philipians 2.

Philipians 2:1-8

If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The humility of Christ is to be our **humility**. His humility was demonstrated in the incarnation. His humility was demonstrated on the cross. Who are you to be proud of anything, when the Lord of the universe took the lowest place among us. God came as a servant, who would die as a falsely accused prisoner. There is no room for pride in our lives!

It was the humility of Jesus that caused Him to consider others as more important than Himself. In Romans 15:2-3, Paul speaks about how we ought also to be concerned with the well-being of our neighbor. "Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached Thee fell upon Me.'" It is the cross that calls us to be considerate of those who are weak in faith, by seeking the well-being of our neighbor.

Not only are we to follow in the humility of Christ. We are also to following in the **suffering** of Christ. Consider the following verses ...

"Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2:21).
"Since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose" (1 Peter 4:1).
"Take up your cross and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24).

An application of the cross calls for us to suffer as well ... even when suffering without due cause (1 Pet. 2:18-20). This was the example of Christ! His suffering was completely unjust! Too often we seem to be too concerned about our own rights.

We are called to follow in His **perseverance**. Hebrews 12:3 says it this way, "Consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart." Jesus endured until the end! You can endure to the end as well!

We are called to follow in His **forgiveness**. "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32). Where has Christ forgiven you? On the cross. What are you to do in return? Forgive others. According to what standard? According to that standard of Christ's forgiveness.

We are called to follow in His **love**. "Walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma" (Ephesians 5:2). It was the love of Christ compelled Him to offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. His love was great. We saw already in Romans 5 that He loved us when we were helpless, sinful, enemies. That's how we ought to love others. We are to love and sacrifice, even for our enemies. Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount that we should love our enemies (Matt. 5:44). Jesus modeled such love on the cross when He prayed, "Father, forgive them,; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Husbands, you are called to love your wives and sacrifice for them as Christ did for you. Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." If we are called to love our enemies as Christ did, how much more are we to love our best friends ... our wives.

Notice how every single one of these applications all come back directly to the work that Jesus did on the cross. We are called to follow His example and live as Jesus life.

The cross calls us to ...

6. Live worshipfully.

When I say "worshipfully," I'm seeking to sum up all of the admonitions in Scripture that call us to express our praise and adoration to God for what He accomplished on the cross. There are many verses that explicitly make this connection. A good place to begin is with ...

Ephesians 1:3-14

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

It is the redemptive work of God in Christ causes praise and adoration to be offered up to God. In verse 3, it is God who is to be "blessed," because of the spiritual blessings that we have. And every single one of the spiritual blessings that we have can trace back their lineage to the cross of Christ. For the blessings are "in Christ" (verse 3). Three times in this passage, Paul speaks about how the work of redemption culminates in the praise of God. It is God's choice of us "in Him" (verse 4) (that is, in the cross of Christ) that ought to culminate "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (verse 6). It is God's predestinating us "through Jesus Christ" (verse 5) (that is, in the cross of Christ) that is also "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (verse 6). The redemption that we have in His blood (verse 7) and the inheritance that we receive through the work of Christ (verse 11), should end in "the praise of His glory" (verse 12). The coming of the Spirit to seal the believers "in Christ" are to find their culmination in "the praise of His glory" (verse 14). If God's plan of redemption ends in the praise of Him, ought we not to be a worshipful people?

Peter said almost exactly the same thing: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3-4). God is to be blessed because of the saving work that He did in us through the cross. Philippians 2:9-11 speaks of the praise that is given to Christ, who humbled Himself: "Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." It's the work of the cross that lifted Christ high to receive praise and glory and honor.

This is the picture of the worship in heaven. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever" (Revelation 5:12-13). Whenever the Scripture refers to Jesus as the Lamb, it is refers to Him as the slaughtered sacrifice upon the cross. It is because Jesus offered Himself up upon the cross that He is the recipient of praise and glory and honor. "Because of the suffering of death, [Jesus was] crowned with glory and honor" (Hebrews 2:9). In Colossians 2:12, we are to "give thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light."

When Paul finished writing his doctrinal section in the book of Romans, which deals with our salvation through the cross of Christ, he pours out praise to God.

Romans 11:33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

The response to our salvation is to use our bodies as "living sacrifices." Paul summed our lives up well. He said, "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (Romans 12:1). The cross calls us to live lives of worship.

Conclusion

In wrapping up my message this morning, let me simply remind you of my main point: the entire New Testament gives an interpretation of the cross of Christ. It has been my burden this morning to show you how often the cross is central to the applications made in the New

Testament. It may very well be that you have been overwhelmed with all of the applications that I made for you today. That's perfect. I tried to overwhelm you. I wanted for you to see how often and directly the New Testament writers look back to the cross to produce appropriate application to instruct us in the ways in which we should live. Perhaps you could focus your attention upon the one or two points of application that are really pertinent for your life today.

In overwhelming you, I have made my point. The New Testament writers are relentlessly pointing back to the cross of Christ as that event that generates an endless supply of applications for us to live. So, be aware of this when you read your New Testaments. Realize how cross-centered the apostles of Jesus were. Realize then, how cross-centered you need to be as well, as you live out your faith in Christ.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 30, 2005 by Steve Brandon.
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