

At The Cross

A man hanging on a cross only has one future.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in the Son and through him to reconcile all things to himself by making peace through the blood of the cross-through him, whether things on earth or things in heaven. (Col 1:19-20-NET)

On May 17, 2014, Admiral William H. McRaven delivered the commencement address at his alma mater, the University of Texas, Austin. [\(Picture of Texas Longhorns\)](#). His advice to the graduating class of Texas Longhorns was, "If you want to change the world, start by making your bed." He indicated this was the most powerful habit he learned as a Navy Seal. What's up with that? Is that really life altering? Memorable? [Picture of a nicely made bed.](#)

The idea is that the right daily habits will yield compound interest. Now, this is not my opinion, this is the opinion of an admiral and the opinion from research. One study tells us that those who make their bed are more adventurous, confident, sociable, and highly maintained. Those who did not make their bed tend to be shy, moody curious and sarcastic. [Picture of another nicely made bed.](#)

Ultimately, what you experience when you make your bed is structure, cleanliness, productivity, and a boost to your mood. But, you didn't set aside a couple hours to have the preacher inspire or instruct you on making your bed.

But what is true of the bed making habit, is true of **any habit**. And the habit - I am trying to convince you - is worth developing the daily practice of applying Jesus' death benefits to your faith journey.

Jesus' death benefits offer you over 60 benefits to build your faith muscle. Everyone knows that if you want to build your biceps you do some curls. If you want to build your spiritual faith, do some spiritual curls by working Jesus' death benefits into your daily faith routine.

Today, we look at 3: Jesus' death benefit opens the door to God's new covenant; Jesus' death benefit offers unlimited grace; Jesus' death benefit obtains overcoming victory.

I want you to circle three words: opens, offers and obtains.

Our text today makes it blindingly clear that Jesus is superior to all other salvation methods, salvation mantras and salvation messiahs.

If you fail to believe this truth, you will be prohibited from gaining access to many of the death benefits Jesus offers his disciples.

In Phil 2, we see that Jesus came to earth as a servant savior to help a people that were spinning out of control. God saw a people that he loved, spinning out of control and instead of turning his back he came in the flesh to repair the damage.

The second member of the trinity, the eternal and invisible Christ became an embryo, baby, a boy, a servant and a sacrifice. When God became a child, He gave up some stature.

Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in the appearance of a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Phil 2:7-8-NIV)

The God who could defeat armies and control nature like pawns on a chessboard, this God emerged in Bethlehem as a baby. If you read on in Phil 2:9, you see the theme of Col 1, Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name. (vs 9-NIV)

As we will see, Jesus is above all names, above all religions, above all teachers, above all gods and goddesses, and above stars, planets and all cosmoses.

Philippians 2 tells us Jesus was a Servant-King and Colossians 1 tells us that Jesus was a Savior-King.

One day the apostle Paul hears that his new believers in Colossae are starting to devalue the superiority of Jesus Christ. So, he grabs his new believers by their collective lapel and says, “you give me 4 chapters of ancient New Testament biblical text and your undivided focus, and I will clear up the confusion.”

Paul senses that the Colossians are devaluing the superiority of Jesus Christ.

Now, the inspiration of scripture is timeless, so Paul's concern is equally valid today. When we are done, I will make it impossible for you to ever place Jesus on equal billing with Socrates, Buddha, Moses or Mohammed.

Christians of the day were not satisfied with listening to the weekend messages at the local faith community about Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection,

...they listened to conversations in the marketplace, discussions in centers of higher learning and even talked amongst themselves about who Jesus really was.

Slowly false religious and philosophical teachings infiltrated the Colossian Christian church as fake news. Nonsense. Some of the fake news is seen throughout the book as Paul calls it out.

Astrology won't clear up your spiritual confusion.

Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. (Col 2:18-NET)

Mystery religions won't open a greater door to the supernatural.

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon or Sabbath Day. (Col 2:16-NIV)

Knowledge does not save.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, (Col 8-NIV)

Paul's concerns are equally valid today, as our world slips further into darkness as cults of sexual perversion, leaders using governmental control and planet preservation pundits, tighten the noose around the neck of those who allow Jesus to be just one of the gang or reject him all together.

Paul's objective is to make sure Christ is never disrespected then or now, by placing him amongst a bunch of wanna-be spiritual leaders. Spiritual lights. Spiritual guides.

The Colossians and so many today are satisfied allowing Jesus to be included in the company of Buddha, Moses, Socrates and even Muhammed.

Now, the backbone of Paul's case is that Christ is superior to all other god's and goddesses, to all teachers Socrates and Plato and some local favorites that I will not waste my time naming.

The Christians in Colossae, at least some of them are the object of Paul's attempt to restore Jesus to his rightful place. Supremacy. Superiority.

The way that Paul makes his argument is to show that Jesus occupies the preeminent place, the top rung of the ladder, Jesus claims superiority in creation, salvation, the church and even physics.

If you truly understand the life of Christ, his atoning death and resurrection, it is virtually impossible to not benefit from dozens of Jesus death benefits.

So, Paul goes to work providing a 5-verse argument proving that Christ is superior to all. A close look at Jesus life and you soon realize you are in the midst of remarkable greatness.

^[a] He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn^[b] over all creation,^[c] ¹⁶ for all things in heaven and on earth were created in him—all things, whether visible or invisible, whether thrones or dominions,^[d] whether principalities or powers—all things were created through him and for him.

17 He himself is before all things and all things are held together^[e] in him.
18 He is the head of the body, the church, as well as the beginning, the firstborn^[f] from the dead, so that he himself may become first in all things.^[g]

¹⁹ For God^[h] was pleased to have all his^[i] fullness dwell^[j] in the Son^[k] ²⁰ and through him to reconcile all things to himself by making peace through the blood of his cross—through him,^[l] whether things on earth or things in heaven. (Col 1:15-20-NET)

Paul's driving motivation is to make sure that Colossians and Kansan's do not miss out on Jesus' supremacy, so you won't miss out on Jesus death benefits. Christ's superiority occupies center stage of creation, salvation, church, and even physics.

Paul uses dramatic and compelling language to construct a case for the superiority of Christ.

First, Jesus is in the image of God himself. He is not a lesser god.

Next, Jesus is the first-born over-all creation.

Finally, Jesus is creator of an eternal body, we call the church.

Every benefit comes with a promise. Every benefit is filled with unlimited power. Every benefit will alter your life.

So, let's consider 3 of the death benefits of Jesus death on the cross.

Jesus' death benefit opens the door to God's new covenant (Mark 14:24)

He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, that is poured out for many."

Question: Have you ever gone to a doctor, and after a few questions...you were told to take a **PILL** for what ails you?

It seems too small and too simple to provide the answer, but once you take a few dosages, the pain is gone, the infection is gone, and you are back to full strength once more.

Behind the pill is years of research,

Lots of bio-chemical brain work done by guys too nerdy to interact with public,

Extensive clinical trials,

Countless failures and redesigns,

And millions of dollars,

And finally, government approval.

Wow! That is exhausting just listening to it. In short, concealed inside that innocent looking, small and simple PILL **is a solution** that has the power to **change everything**.

What a fitting comparison/analogy for those two emblems that are shared at communion. Small and simple. And yet, as innocent looking as a piece of bread and small amount of juice, **is a solution** that has the **power to change everything**.

Bread – Power to heal a diseased and afflicted body.

There are NO instructions from the bible preferring a certain type of bread, Matza, or pita. Often unleavened, matza, pita bread gets used because of its connection to the Passover or Jewish culture.

Cup – Power to forgive, deliver a sinful and bound person.

Now, with the cup, it needs to be a little clearer on what to use. In fact, Jesus spells it out clearly, the **fruit of the vine**.

Jesus' death benefit offers unlimited grace. (Rom 3:24-25)

And all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

So, whenever I try to make the idea and concept of grace come alive and really stick with you, I contrast it with justice and mercy. Then you can see what grace is.

So, you get convicted for paying the university to change your kid's SAT scores and also, to put them on the water polo team, even though they cannot swim.

You get convicted of a pay-for-play scandal, the judge sentences you to 10-months in jail and a \$100,000 fine. That is justice. You get exactly what you deserve for cheating and lying. Don't complain about it, what is just is just. You get exactly what you deserve.

Justice is getting exactly everything you deserve.

So, you get convicted for paying a university to change your kid's SAT scores and also, to put them on the water polo team, even though they are afraid of water.

You get convicted of a pay-for-play scandal, the judge acknowledges that this is your first time, you have little kids at home so instead of imposing the normal 10-month jail sentence and \$100,000 fine the **judge is merciful**.

And he simply decides to give you 3 months in jail, imposes 100 hours of community service and reduces the fine to \$10,000. That is mercy. Getting less than you deserve.

Mercy is getting less than you deserve.

That is mercy. Mercy is getting less than you deserve.

There is justice-getting what you deserve.

There is mercy-getting less than you deserve.

So, you get convicted for paying a university to change your kid's SAT scores and also, to put them on the water polo team, even though they don't know how **to swim** and are **afraid** of water.

After sentencing you to 10 months jail time and \$100,000 dollars in fines the judge walks with you to the local jail and opens the jail door and steps inside himself.

And then closes the door on himself.

The judge looks you in the eye and announces, "I am serving your jail time, doing your community service, and paying your fine. Now, make something good of yourself."

That is grace. I will pay your debt to society. I will pay this on your behalf. You are free to go. Totally free. That is grace.

Grace is getting unlimited favor although you have done nothing to deserve it.

Grace is getting far more than you ever deserve. Justice. Mercy. But Grace? Did you know? Grace is not enjoyed or even wanted by everyone. It disturbs so

many. It seems too good to be true, or they would rather work for everything they get.

That is why so many people reject it. I wonder why so many can't trust grace. But, God's grace, when it is fully welcomed and deeply embraced, it transforms people and rearranges the human heart profoundly and permanently.

Grace destroys pride.

Grace removes self-sufficiency, one rung of the ladder at a time. Plank by plank. Confidence in self and pride cannot co-exist and co-labor in a grace filled heart.

God's grace when it finds a home in your heart, turns you into a gracious person. God's grace when you own it and it arrests you, turns you into a forgiving person. A quick to forgive type of person.

Can I give you some important news about grace? Listen carefully.

No other religion offers free forgiveness and a new life for those who have done nothing to deserve it.

Jesus' death benefit obtains overcoming victory. (Rev 12:11)

But they overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.

I love what Rev 19:11, tells us about the day of Jesus ultimate victory. On that day heaven will open and God's people, his church will triumphantly descend from heaven, a reverse rapture and we will join with Jesus as he finishes off the enemy one last time and get us ready to reign and rule with him for eternity.

Let me just read right from my bible, Rev 19:11-14.

Just as the Israelites sacrificed a lamb on Passover, God sacrificed Jesus on alter of the world to clear the world of sin.

Father,

Today I declare Jesus Christ, as the image of God himself. Everything, absolutely everything, was created by Jesus, and for Jesus. So, everything got started in him, and finds its purpose through him.

Jesus offers God's grace freely to all who will receive it and grow in it. One day, when the age is over Jesus triumphantly will return with heaven's army to slash, silence, slay the Evil One's army and cast the Devil and his army into eternal darkness.

What a great day of victory that will be for the church. So, we give a loud shout of praise to our Jesus Christ our King. In Heaven's honor, we applaud the One who died on a cross to rescue us from sin by His grace. In Jesus Name, Amen.