

When Christ Is Lifted Up

“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”
He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.”
John 12:32–33 (ESV)

Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection are the only hope of mankind.

“Lifted up” comes from the Greek word ὑψώω (hupsoo) to lift means to lift up on high, to exalt; to raise to the very summit of opulence and prosperity; to exalt, to raise to dignity, honor and happiness. This is, humanly speaking, a very strange, even ironic, word to use in connection with a gruesome crucifixion. In ancient Israel this crucifixion was exactly the opposite of any exaltation, representing God’s condemnation. “And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.” *Deuteronomy 21:22–23 (ESV)* ““Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’” *Galatians 3:13 (ESV)*. Because of

our sinful nature we are rightly cursed. But Christ bore that curse for us on the tree. Therefore, his curse his crucifixion is also his exaltation. The resurrection proved that God approved Jesus. So, the glory of Jesus Christ is bound up in his crucifixion and resurrection. They go hand in hand. If he was crucified but not resurrected, we would die in ourselves without hope. So this one verse has more than one meaning but they are all interrelated. Christ was lifted up onto the cross, which was humiliation and condemnation. But he was also lifted up from the grave which is his glorification, the irrefutable evidence that everything he did and everything he is is approved by the Lord God Almighty, Father of all.

But "lifted up" has yet a third meaning for us. We must lift up Jesus in our own lives. We must lift him up in our speech, thought and conduct. Jesus has promised that when he is "lifted up" he will draw all men unto himself. The exact phrase is: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." "I" is stated twice to emphasize that Jesus is the crux of our witness. People are not saved by our logic, cleverness or eloquence. We are not supposed to draw attention to ourselves, but to Christ. We do not save people. Christ saves people. We are saved by submitting to the cross which exposes and condemns our sinfulness.

Jesus promises that He will “draw” all men to Himself. He will not draw them to us, or to our group, or to our church. He will draw men to *Himself*. And the word draw is the Greek word which means to drag, literally and figuratively. The vast majority of us are dragged kicking and screaming to the cross. It is a life and death struggle. We resist with every ounce of strength and willpower we have until we are helpless to do anything but submit. The natural man hates the cross. The natural man turns his back to the cross, ignores it, runs away from it. Only when the spirit of God drags a man to the cross will he see it and come under its power. Today many churches do not discuss the cross. They realize how offensive it is. It repels people. It keeps them away. It makes them feel uncomfortable. It makes the church seem judgmental and exclusive. Nonetheless, we are saved only when we look up on the cross and throw ourselves upon God’s mercy. We want to believe that God saves us because we are worth saving, because we are moral, because He sees some special goodness in us which He wants to reward, that we are different from others. The cross confirms that the opposite is true. We deserve condemnation. Indeed, we have earned it. There is nothing morally or spiritually within us

that commends us to God, that sets us apart from others, that warrants salvation.

Lifeguards are taught to swim up to a drowning person, but far enough away to be out of arms reach. He must wait while the drowning person thrashes about until exhausted and no longer able even to try to save himself. If the lifeguard comes too close to soon the drowning person may grab him and drown them both. Only when the drowning person is exhausted and no longer able to struggle can the lifeguard bring him to safety. Today it is unpopular to continually point to the cross, but if we want to see the salvation of others we must ever do so. If we ever hope to grow in grace ourselves, we must continually gaze upon the cross.

Do not let a day go by without being amazed that God saves sinners.