

GOD'S WORD IS LIFE

Pastor Mark Anderson

The Cross at the Fault Lines

Where Certainty Breaks, and Christ Alone Remains

We live in an age addicted to polarities. Every question fractures into warring camps: order against freedom, tradition against progress, authority against choice. And these aren't shallow squabbles—they tap into the bedrock of what it means to be human. On one side stands the fortress of stability, but its walls can harden into a prison. On the other side stretches the frontier of liberation, but its horizon often dissolves into chaos. Each pole captures something essential, but each is a half-truth.

These binaries matter because they reveal the fault lines—places where the ground of our culture, our institutions, and our own hearts is already shaking. But if we stop there, all we have is the endless clash.

Here's the scandal: the cross doesn't negotiate a middle ground or smooth over the fault lines. It brings the whole structure down. It crucifies the self that clings to either side for safety, and from that death raises a new life that is not our project but God's gift.

Each week, we'll take on one of these major fault lines —Identity, Scripture, Salvation, Politics, God's Wrath, and Technology—and ask not how these issues make us feel, but what the gospel does to them.

OUR LIVE ZOOM STUDY BEGINS NEXT WEEK:

TUESDAY, AUGUST 26, 6 PM, PST

SATURDAY, AUGUST 30, 11 AM, PST Get the links at: www.pastormarkanderson.org

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1. IDENTITY: Who Is This “I” We Keep Referring To?

The question of identity is not a modern curiosity—it is the riddle of every age. We ask, “Who am I?” Some answer by pointing to the roles and orders of creation, as though a label could carry the whole burden of existence. But when those roles harden into certainty, they become masks behind which we hide our fear of the abyss. Others answer by dissolving all structure, insisting that the self must be invented anew each day. Yet what freedom is this, when the task of creating ourselves leaves us weary and anxious? Both answers, in their own way, are evasions. They keep us from facing the truth: that before God we are naked, without excuse. The cross tears away both the mask of certainty and the illusion of self-creation. In its shadow, a truer word is spoken: that we are sinners, and yet beloved, put to death and made alive in Christ.

WEEK 2. SCRIPTURE AND THE AUTHORITY CRISIS: Are We Talking To Ourselves?

We are tempted to make the Bible into an echo chamber. Some raise it as a banner of certainty, wielding it as a weapon to silence doubt. Others soften it into metaphor, reshaping it so that it always agrees with our age. In both cases, we are no longer listening—we are only speaking to ourselves. But the Word of God is not tame. It comes as a voice that interrupts us, a voice that contradicts us, a voice that takes away our illusions. It does not serve our agendas. It passes judgment on them. And yet, precisely in this judgment, it announces mercy. To read Scripture is not to master a text, but to be mastered by the living Word that kills and makes alive.

WEEK 3. SALVATION AND THE INTOLERABLE MERCY OF GOD: You Don’t Deserve It. That’s Why It’s Grace.

Nothing is harder for us to accept than mercy. If salvation were a task, we would gladly take it up, because then we could measure ourselves and point to our achievements. If salvation were merely therapy, we could keep it safely in the realm of feelings, managing it as we manage all other comforts. But salvation is neither of these. It is the act of God who takes the whole matter out of our hands. That is why grace is intolerable—because it exposes the futility of all our ladders and leaves us with empty hands. And yet, only empty hands can receive. On the cross, God Himself bore our refusal, our pride, our schemes to save ourselves—and in bearing them, He forgave them.

WEEK 4. POLITICS: Jesus Will Not Join Your Side—He’s Too Busy Tearing Down Your Idols.

Every age is tempted to conscript Jesus into its causes. Some would have Him defend the structures of nation and order. Others would have Him dismantle them in the name of progress. But He will not be enlisted. His kingdom is not of this world, and His cross reveals how deeply we confuse our projects with God’s will. For the cross unmasks all our kingdoms—whether built on power or revolution—as grasping attempts at self-salvation. It shows that even our noblest causes are riddled with self-justification. Yet the cross also opens another kingdom, one not built by our striving but given in grace. The question is not whether Christ is on our side, but whether we dare to stand before Him when He comes to judge our idols.

WEEK 5. THE WRATH OF GOD: Erase Divine Judgment—and You’ll Just Reinvent It.

We flatter ourselves that we have outgrown talk of wrath. Yet we cannot stop pronouncing judgment. Our world is full of tribunals—personal, social, political, ideological—each one demanding penance, each one enforcing righteousness. When we erase the wrath of God, we do not abolish judgment; we only hand it over to ourselves, and our judgment is always merciless. The cross reveals a deeper truth: that wrath is real, but it has already been borne. God’s judgment fell on His own Son. This is a word so unbearable to our pride that we would rather reinvent wrath in our own image than receive the mercy it brings. And yet here is the gospel: the wrath we fear has been taken from our shoulders, so that grace might be spoken in its place.

WEEK 6. TECHNOLOGY AND THE IMITATION OF OMNIPOTENCE: Trying to Be God Makes You Less Human

The machines themselves are not the problem. They are the fruit of human reason, and in their proper place they are good gifts. The danger comes when we begin to believe that the gifts can replace the Giver. We harness nature, we manipulate the body, we dream of silicon immortality—and we forget that we are dust. The temptation is as old as Eden: “You will be like God.” Yet the more we try to ascend, the more we fall into the abyss of our own making.

