

The Message of the Cross

1 Corinthians 1:17-31

“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. ¹⁸ For the preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.” ²⁰ Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the-disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. ²² For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. ²⁶ For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. ²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence. ³⁰ But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God - and righteousness and sanctification and redemption - ³¹ that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.”

How is it possible for a man to know freedom from sin, freedom from the dominion of a sin nature, freedom from the practice of sin, and deliverance from the power of Satan, the prince of the power of the air? The answer is found in the *message of the cross!*

The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is portrayed in Scripture not only as an emblem of the love of God, but more as the emblem of God's judgment upon sin. When God's love for the world is presented to us in the Scripture, that love is described in terms of the giving of a Son, the coming of a Savior, the offer of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. But the cross stands as an emblem of the holiness of God, His righteousness, and justice. It was on the cross that Jesus Christ was judged that we might be set free from sin and delivered from the power of Satan, as seen in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Look once more at verse 18 of our text, for that is the verse that I want us to turn our attention to for the bases of these message, "For the preaching (message) of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are saved it is the power of God."

When Paul says, "unto us who are saved," he uses a Greek participle, which indicates a continuous process, something that is going on all the time. Paul is not saying, "unto us who have been saved," but instead he says, "unto us who are being saved." And then he says that "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." And again he uses a Greek participle, which indicates a continuous action; "the preaching of the cross is to them in the process of perishing foolishness."

We have said many times in the past that there are three tenses to salvation: (1) There is the past tense where we have been saved. That initial act whereby we placed our faith in the finished work of Christ, and invited Christ into our lives, and we took up our position as members of God's family. We have been saved is in the past tense. (2) There is also a future tense to salvation, wherein we shall be with Him in glory. The Bible has a great deal to say about the body being redeemed from sin, and delivered from the corruption of our flesh, that will become a reality when Jesus comes in the first resurrection. (3) But there is also a present tense to salvation, which indicates a

continuous process, whereby we are being “conformed to the image of Christ.”

There are times when I don't look like the image of Christ. There are times when I don't *feel* like the image of Christ. But there is a process going on right now, whereby God continues the process of conforming me “to the image of Christ.”

The fact of the matter is, I need God's guidance in my life everyday. I need the Holy Spirit to remind me of who I am in Christ Jesus! I need to be reminded that when I give way to my flesh, I am not acting in the image of Christ!

Thank God for Ephesians 1:11-14 that that when I was saved, I was “predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” This truth is seen in a little sign that sticks on your refrigerator that shows an ugly little caterpillar crawling along, and the caption reads, “Be patient God isn't through with me yet.”

But, another great truth of the Scripture is this – not only is salvation an incomplete process, but so is “perishing” an incomplete process, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that are in the process of perishing foolishness.”

Sometimes as young people begin to walk in the deeper waters of sin, they look around and they do not see the judgment of God, or fire fall from heaven, and they think that they are in pretty good shape. But they are looking at an incomplete picture, for we have been told in James 1:15, “Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.” The Bible is simply teaching us that “death” is the grandchild of “lust.” First of all, “lust”

conceives, and the result is the birth of “sin,” and when “sin” becomes complete it brings forth “death.” **Therefore, you cannot judge sin until you have seen the finished product!** Do not be fooled by the lies of Satan, for we have this promise in Galatians 6:7-9, “Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

There are two things that I want to share with you in this message, as we study the Cross:

First, the message of the cross is indispensable to our initial salvation. Look at verse 21, “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.” The Bible is not saying that **preaching is foolishness**, and the Greek reads like this, “God was well pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.” To a lost and wrapped, the message that we preach is sheer “foolishness,” and they look upon it as “non-sense.”

When we preach the message of the cross, we are displaying the power of God to bring men to salvation, as seen in John 12:32 where Jesus said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” It was this same idea that we have in Romans 1:16 when Paul says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” Now in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 he tells us what that gospel is, “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

I really don't believe that we hear too much gospel preaching today. In our efforts to become involved in this age of sophistication, and in our desire to impress the world with our intellect, we have

forgotten that that “power of God unto salvation” is still “the preaching of the cross.” As far as I can ascertain from the Word of God, **the only thing that God uses to bring men to salvation is the proclamation of the gospel**, which is, “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” The invitation of Jesus found in Luke 9:23 is simply this, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” The invitation of Jesus is simply: “Come and die with me.”

Second, the message of the cross is indispensable to our sanctification. Look at verse 24, “But unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” There are two things necessary for one to live the Christian life – **wisdom and power!**

Wisdom has to do with our **mind**, and this is what Paul was saying in Romans 12:1-2, “I plead with you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” **The Bible is teaching us that we must have “wisdom” to know what to do, to know how to act, to know what the will of God is for our life, to know the profitable thing to do.**

Child of God, God wants your mind. When you come to Christ, you surrender your mind to him. What you believe is important; the development of your mind is important. **We are to grow intellectually in Christ.** According to 2 Timothy 2:15, we are “to study to (show ourselves) approved unto God, a workman that doesn’t need to be ashamed.”

But “wisdom” without “power” leads to frustration. It is not just enough to **know how** to live the Christian life; we must have the **power to do it!** **Now listen carefully right here, you cannot have**

enough rules and regulations to keep folks right with God! Why? Because *flesh cannot police flesh!* Our victory must come as a result of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and being set free because of the Lordship of Christ in our every day living!

Paul put it this way in Galatians 2:20 we have the key, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ living in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Once again, look at the words of Jesus in Luke 9:23-24, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.” **What does the cross say above everything else? Death!**

Let me close by sharing with you Hebrews 10:12-14, “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” ***In Christ’s death, everything sin demanded of us was placed on Him!***

Colossians 2:9-10 reminds us that the atonement Christ made for us included all the power that we need in this life, in death, in judgment, and throughout eternity, “For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And (we) are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.”

The message of the cross cries out to each of us to turn loose the things that are wrong in our lives and yield to the claim of Jesus Christ. The message of the cross provides a way for us to be ***transformed by the power of God***, as we accept His invitation to **“lose”** ourselves in Him.

If you are not saved, why not today?

Every one please stand for prayer.

Father,

I want to follow You. Even in the midst of my fear I surrender and entrust my future to You. I choose life on a higher plain because of my faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.