

Series in 1 Corinthians - #3

## **The Cross of Christ**

Text: 1 Corinthians 1: 17-18

### **Introduction**

I think one of the characteristics of human beings is that we get bored easily. Perhaps more today than ever when 'new' things are constantly bombarding us, but as a general principle we often get tired of the 'same old – same old'.

The stark simplicity of the message of Christ was under attack in Corinth **as it is** around the world today. So as we delve into our text today we see that Paul reminds the Corinthians and via his words he reminds us that we deviate from the cross at our peril. One cannot preach the gospel, without the centrality of the cross. And whenever we attempt to communicate the good news of the gospel without the centrality of the cross of Christ, we are in grave danger of jettisoning the very thing that will give us stability and effectiveness.

This morning our text breaks down into 3 clear points:

- The Preaching of the Cross
- The Perishing and the Cross
- The Power of the Cross

So, look with me to these two verses and then across God's Word as we grapple with the centrality of the cross.

#### **1. The Preaching of the cross**

1 Corinthians 1:17 <sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

## The significance of the message

The Cross – **is design, not disaster**. We refer to this often here – that God had a plan, that plan was worked out in eternity past long before the creation of human beings, and that in God’s foreknowledge and omniscience He has never been caught short so that this was plan ‘b’ because plan ‘a’ didn’t work.

Hebrews 12:2 <sup>2</sup> **looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**

Hebrews 12:22-24 <sup>22</sup> **But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, <sup>23</sup> and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, <sup>24</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.**

While the cross represents a rescue mission to save human beings, it was a plan set in place, not a desperate response to an unexpected problem.

## The cross – **honour, not humiliation**

The naked, shameful exposing of the Son of God to the violent mob, the unlawful execution and the torment of crucifixion was not ‘humiliation’ but rather the way to honour.

Philippians 2:5-11 <sup>5</sup> **Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

## The cross – **triumph, not tragedy**

What looked on the surface as failure, as loss, as victory for sin, and evil and the evil one, despite the pain was not tragedy.

Colossians 1:12-20 <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. <sup>13</sup> He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. <sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup> And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. <sup>19</sup> For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup> and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

### **The significance of the method**

Why is such an apparently old-fashioned method still at the heart of the gathering of God's people? Because God ordained the method.

1 Corinthians 1:17 <sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

### **Preaching is not superseded by philosophy**

Paul clearly tells us that the level of oratory is not the issue, nor the greatness of the logic or the weaving of philosophical ideas. Many tickle the ears of people today by appealing to their greed, their desire for health and wealth, and success and an easy life, on God's nickel or dime. That is what Paul refers to as 'eloquent wisdom'. And words of eloquent wisdom empty the cross of Christ of its power.

### **Baptism not superior to preaching**

And while baptism is most certainly an act of obedience that every believer should obey as soon as they understand what it symbolizes – there is no 'power' in baptism – and Paul indicates that while he was thrilled that he baptized some people – the task

to which he was called and we are called is to preach the gospel, but which the cross is not robbed of its power.

## 2. The Perishing and the cross

**In verse 18:** 1 Corinthians 1:18 <sup>18</sup> For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

These people are described as PERISHING. What is **the condition of the perishing?**

They are **disintegrating**: Luke 5:37 <sup>37</sup> And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed.

They are **deteriorating**: John 6:27 <sup>27</sup> Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.”

They are **disorientated**: Luke 15:4 <sup>4</sup> “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?

They **face destruction**: Acts 27:34 <sup>34</sup> Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you.”

What is the **conviction of the perishing?**

- To them the cross is nonsense

Follow any stream of posts on online articles. Listen to the vast majority of editorial comments on our media. Consider the underlying nature of conversations of the average Canadian and there is a huge disconnect between the event of Christ on the cross and reality – and to them even if it may be a true event historically, its meaning is nonsense.

- To them the crucifixion is a scandal

The crucifixion may be seen as being unjust, a travesty of justice, a typical example of a good man being dealt with wrongly in a

flawed system – but to the ones who are perishing it is a scandal, not a conviction trusted by faith.

But now I turn to you brothers and sisters who have embraced the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal saviour and Lord = and according to Paul for us who are being saved, the cross is the power of God. Power = dunamis = in English dynamite.

### **3. The power of the cross**

Folks the cross has power both initially and continually for the believer:

#### **The initial power of the cross**

##### **To rescue the perishing**

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

##### **To reassure the doubting**

John 5:24<sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

#### **The continual power of the cross**

##### **As the believer’s acclamation**

Galatians 6:14<sup>14</sup> But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

##### **As the believer’s attitude**

Matthew 10:38 And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

##### **As the believer’s activity**

Galatians 5:24<sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

## Conclusion

So, this morning, we have joined two sets of parents who have brought their child before the Lord in front of you, asking that you would help them fulfill their responsibilities to raise these children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

These children are not yet saved. They are wonderful bundles of potential, for sure! But they are little sinners, born dead in transgressions and sins.

That is why the message of the cross must always be at the heart of what we lay out when we speak of our faith and the means by which we can respond to God's grace.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. These children will need to hear this umpteen times, until one day the Holy Spirit will take that message, have convicted their heart and mind of their sinfulness and they will throw themselves upon the Lord calling upon His name.

My question for you, individually this morning is HAVE YOU DONE THAT? Have you recognized that you are perishing? Have you recognized that you are lost and undone before God? Have you thrown yourself upon His grace, so clearly demonstrated in the cross of Christ where Jesus died for YOUR sins?

This morning there are simply three steps you need to take which are as simple as 1, 2, 3.

A – admit your need

B – believe in Christ

C – confess Him publicly

Jesus indicated that children get this better than adults – so this morning will you come in childlike faith and indicate that you are trusting the Lord Jesus Christ?