

WHY WE EACH NEED TO “PREACH” CHRIST CRUCIFIED!

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you *hear* the word “cross?” People have different thoughts about the cross, don’t they?

--Some think of it as something that is connected **to a church**—like *in* a church...or **outside** a church...or even **on** top of a church!

--Others think of the cross as something made into a **piece of jewelry**—like earrings or on a necklace.

--Still others think of it as **a burden**—a trial—in their life that they are forced to bear.

--Yet others—and hopefully **you**—think of it as **what it truly is**: a reminder of the place where Jesus died as **our Substitute** to rescue us from the penalty of hell!

--There is one more group—and hopefully this is **not you**—that thinks the cross is...**foolishness!** Is there really such a group? Sadly, there is—and it is probably a **larger group** of people than we realize!

Please take your Bibles and turn to I Corinthians 1; follow along as I read verses 18-25. Right out of the gate—in vs 18—we see the point I made earlier—that some people view the preaching of the cross as **foolishness**. You also may have noticed how many times the words “wise, wiser, and wisdom” appear.

And hopefully you also noticed the emphasis on **Christ and the cross!** Vs 18 refers to the cross, vs 23 refers to both (“Christ crucified”) and vs 24 refers to Christ as “the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

There is way too much here to attempt to unpack every verse, so we are going to use vs 23 as the overarching thought: “But we preach Christ crucified...” Before we get into **why** we preach Christ crucified, we are going to look at **who** is to preach. You already know from the title that “each of us” needs to “preach” Christ.

Why do I say that? Because God through Paul says we should!

1. Why we all need to “preach” Christ

I have “preach” in italics because Paul is not saying that each of us should get behind the pulpit one by one and share a message about Jesus’ death on the cross. That would certainly be an interesting—and probably long—morning service, wouldn’t it? To “preach” means to be a herald—to be a proclaimer—of the gospel.

How do we know that each of us is supposed to “preach” Christ?

A. Because God through Paul says it applies to all of us!

Notice again vs 23. “But **we** preach Christ crucified...” He doesn’t say “I” preach Christ—and he doesn’t say “**me and the church leaders**” preach Christ. The word “we” is a first-person plural and means us...and you. In other words, it includes the speaker and those he is writing to. Who is Paul writing to? **The believers** in the church of Corinth—not just **the preachers!**

In essence, Paul is saying this: “We”—you and I preach/proclaim—Christ crucified! Paul was not the only one who said **each of us** needs to share the message of the cross with others, though. **Jesus** said it, too!

B. Because Jesus says it applies to all of us!

In Matthew 28:19-20, we have some of the **last words** Jesus spoke before He ascended into heaven after His resurrection. These words are often referred to as the Great Commission—and the “marching orders” of the church. I have them for you on your outline.

Mt 28:18 “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All **power** is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”

Power here **is not** a reference to physical might or strength. Jesus certainly has that because He spoke the world into existence! The word “power” here means **authority** and Jesus is reminding His disciples—and us—that He has the right to **tell us what to do** because He is the head of the church!

What did Jesus—the leader of His people—tell **the disciples** to do?

Vs 19. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:” The word “teach” here does not mean just to **pass on information**. It **includes** that, but it means to “disciple” people. It means to tell them about their **need to be saved**—and that Jesus will save them

if they call on Him in humility, repentance and faith. But it also means to teach them how to be a **follower** of Jesus. And once they are saved and become a follower of Jesus, they are to be baptized.

Did the disciples obey Jesus' instruction? Yes, they did! But the disciples have long since **died!** In fact, most of them were martyred at a fairly young age! But the message didn't die **with them**, did it? Why?

Because Jesus built a "propagating provision" into the command. What do I mean by that?

Notice vs 20. "Teaching **them to observe all things** whatsoever **I have commanded you**: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Simply put, the **original** disciples were to tell people how to be saved...and how to be a follower of Jesus. But the **original** disciples of Jesus also taught the **new** disciples of Jesus **how to do what they did**—make more disciples of Jesus!

And you and I are believers in Christ—if indeed we are—because **disciples of Jesus** have been obedient to this command **from Jesus** ever since the **time of Jesus**.

What about **you**? Are **you** obeying this command? **Am I obeying** this command? Not too long ago I was thinking about the **number one** thing I would like to see happen in our church. Want to know what it is? I'm going to tell you anyway, even if you don't! Here it is: **That we would all love God so much that we couldn't help telling people about Him and what He has done for us!**

Back to vs 23. The message, then, is that **all of us** are to preach Christ. **All of us** are to be sharers of the message of the cross with others! That's it for the "who;" let's look now at what this passage says about **why** the message of Christ and the cross needs to be proclaimed.

2. Reason #1 to preach Christ—Because the wisdom of the world does not lead us to God

That reality is plainly stated in vs 21: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God..." Stated another way, God—in **His** wisdom—determined that man would not come to know God **through** wisdom! Why is that? Is God **anti-intellectual**?

--Is God **against us** using our minds to think through things and live in a wise way?

Obviously not because we spent the last two Sundays looking at God's command in Ephesians 5 to "walk circumspectly"—meaning carefully—"not as fools, but **as wise!**"

Since Paul wrote Ephesians 5—and the book of I Corinthians—both under the inspiration of God, I would add—is **he contradicting himself** by saying we are to "be wise" in **one place**—but that wisdom **doesn't lead you to God** in another place?

--**Absolutely not!** In a nutshell, here's the difference: The wisdom God wants us to seek is from the mind of God as **found in the Word of God!** The **wisdom of the world**, on the other hand, is from the mind of man as found in the **teachings** and **writings** of men!

Back to our verse. Man's intellectual pursuit of wisdom does not lead them to God. Not only that, we see in vs 19 that God **destroys** the wisdom of this world. He declares that He will bring it to nothing; He will render it useless. But why? There are a number of reasons, we'll look briefly at three.

1) If intellect and philosophy were required to know God, **many of us would be in trouble!** Paul says as much in vs 26: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh..." In essence, Paul is saying, 'Look around you, Corinthians. We do not have a lot of intellectual philosophers in our midst!'

2) If intellect and philosophy were required to know God, there would be **arrogance and boasting**. People would be bragging about what **they know**—not humbled and grateful for **what God did**. **If wisdom** got people to heaven, there would be bragging in heaven. If there is bragging in heaven, heaven ceases to be heaven! **Vs 29** "That no flesh should glory in His [God's] presence." Mid of vs 31. "...He that glorieth, let Him glory in the Lord." If you are going to boast, boast in what **God did for you**—not in what you know!

I know I "beat this drum" fairly often, but I'm going to beat it again! Man's wisdom often gets in the way, doesn't it? **Logic is the "lord"** of many; **their** wisdom is the "litmus test" as to whether or not something is true. Their thought process is this: if it doesn't make sense **to me**, it can't be true!

But that so-called wisdom makes them a **judge over** God's Word instead of God's Word being the judge over them! And that obviously leads them **away from** God instead of **to** Him!

3) Because intellect and philosophy **don't lead** to God, people need to know **what does** lead them to God. What leads them to God? How can a person come to know God? Through Jesus and the cross, right? John 14:6 "...I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

Reason #1 to share the message of the cross with others? Because the world's wisdom won't lead them to God.

3. Reason #2 to preach Christ—Because Christ crucified is the power of God

Look at verses 22-24 again (read). "...Christ the power of God..."

Let that sink in: Christ crucified is the **power** of God! But how can that be? How can God in the flesh—beaten...mocked...spit upon—and hanging on a cross half-naked—be declared "the power of God?" One answer might be that "power" here means **authority**—like it did in Mt 28:18. Except it doesn't! **Power** here means what we **usually think of** when we hear or read the word. It means "**physical power**, force, might, and strength." So again, we need to ask ourselves how can Christ crucified be the power of God?

A. God's power is not always about appearance

Vs 22 "For the Jews require a sign..." What's a sign? A miracle, right? They wanted Jesus to prove that He was who He said He was by demonstrating miraculous power. On at least five occasions, Jesus was asked to show a sign—even though as you read the gospels you get the impression that Jesus performed miracles quite often. But those miracles **weren't enough**; they were never satisfied. They always wanted more proof.

People haven't changed, have they? Just as the Jews back then wanted a sign, people now—Jews and non-Jews alike—want God to do something to prove His power.

He did—at the cross! The very thing that looked to be a display of pitiful weakness was in reality a power that is equal to—if not greater than—God speaking the world into existence!

How? Why? Because ... B. God's power is about what it accomplishes

What was accomplished with the crucifixion of Jesus? I probably should have mentioned this sooner, but I'm of the opinion that Paul's emphasis on the **crucifixion of Christ** does not exclude the **resurrection of Christ**. The gospel message includes **both** the crucifixion **and** the resurrection. Neither one can "stand" without the other—and **neither would accomplish anything** without the other!

--If Jesus **did not die**, He could not have been resurrected!

--If Jesus was **not resurrected**, He would have been a liar because He said on numerous occasions that He would be resurrected. As a liar, He would **be a sinner**. As a sinner; He could not be our substitute or Savior. And so "preaching Christ **crucified**" also includes preaching Christ **resurrected**!

--So what does did the crucifixion—and resurrection—accomplish?

In a word...**salvation!**

We see that at the end of vs 18 "...unto us which **are saved** it is the power of God" and at the end of vs 21 "...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching **to save** them that believe."

What's the question we should ask ourselves when we hear the word "save, saved, or salvation?" 'Saved from **what**, right?' From our enemies? From financial ruin? From death? Or from hell? How can we tell?

Context, right? Look at verse 18. "For the preaching of the cross is to them **that perish** foolishness; but unto us **which are saved** it is the power of God."

Being "saved" then—in this context—is the opposite of **perish**. But what does it mean to **perish**? Does "perish" mean that our physical body dies and that our soul—our invisible, immaterial part—**ceases to exist**?

No; it doesn't mean that at all! Here's why!

John 3:36 "He that believeth on the Son hath **everlasting life**: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the **wrath of God abideth on him.**"

--Can the wrath of God—His anger and hatred of sin—abide on someone if they **cease to exist**?

John 5:24 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and **shall not come into condemnation**; but is passed from death unto life."

--If you believe on Christ, you **will not** come into condemnation. But if you don't believe on Christ, you **will come** into condemnation. Can you be condemned—after you die—if you cease to exist?

John 8:24 "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."

--What would be so bad about "dying in your sins" if you cease to exist?

Mt 25:41 "Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into **everlasting fire**, prepared for the devil and his angels:"

--Again, I ask—would you really be "cursed" if you cease to exist? Can you depart from Jesus—to be cast into everlasting fire—if you cease to exist?

So why is Christ crucified—and resurrected—the power of God? What did it accomplish? It saved us from the second death...from eternal separation from God...from a place Revelation 20:14 and 15 calls the lake of fire!

Reason #1 to preach Christ? Because the wisdom of the world doesn't lead to God.

Reason #2 to preach Christ? Because Christ crucified is the power of God

4. Reason #3 to preach Christ—Because Christ crucified is the wisdom of God

How is the crucified—and resurrected—Christ the **wisdom** of God? Most of you know the answer because I've given it to you before. But for those that weren't here—and to refresh the memory of those of you who were—here is how Christ crucified and resurrected is the wisdom of God. For us to be saved—to be freed from the punishment of our sin and to dwell with God forever—these 3 **attributes** of God had to be satisfied.

A. God is holy! In fact, God is **thrice** holy. Twice in the Bible—once in Is 6:3 and again in Rev 4:8—it says that God is "Holy, Holy, Holy." To be holy means to be separate from sin. **Hab 1:13** says that God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." That means any sin **disqualifies us from heaven**. Only **sinless people** can dwell in the presence of God—meaning every one of us is **disqualified**.

B. God is just. That means sin needs **to be justly punished**. So our sin doesn't just keep us out of heaven, it also needs to be paid for. What is the penalty for sin? Death; eternal separation from God.

C. Thankfully, God is also love! And because God made man in His image—and for the purpose of having a relationship with Him—God desired to **rescue man** from his sin. But to do that, God had to devise a way for sin to be **punished**...and for man to be honestly declared sin-free—even though he obviously wasn't!

And if that isn't difficult enough, there were literally billions of people who were all in the same boat. Not only that, God's plan also had to involve giving **mankind a choice** to respond because He made them with a free will. On top of that, there was one last consideration—man could not **save himself** or he would become proud and take credit for getting to heaven, thus ruining heaven!

So what was God's plan?

God humbled Himself...by becoming a man...so He could come to earth...to live a perfect life...to die a horrible death...to pay the debt **He required**...the one that **we owed**...so that **we** could be forgiven and become **His children**...and **dwell with Him** in heaven!

God's **holiness** is satisfied because Christ's righteousness—His perfectness—is counted as **being placed on** those who trust Jesus as their Savior.

God's **justice** is satisfied because He Himself **was punished** in our place.

God's **love** was satisfied because people could now have a relationship with Him if they so desired. The problem of **innumerable people—and sins**—was solved because **an infinite Being**—God the Son—died.

And because God did it all, He rightfully **gets all the glory!** Man could not boast because all he or she did was simply receive what God gave. Jonathan Edwards put it like this: "You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary!"

Do you see now why Christ crucified—and resurrected—is the wisdom of God; maybe even the pinnacle of the wisdom of God? What about you? What is your opinion of the cross? You have one; we all do.

So, what would God have us do in light of His Word this morning?

There are two groups of people here this morning—those who are born again; and those who aren't.

1. If you are born again...if you are forgiven...if you are a child of God, the crucified and resurrected Christ is the power and wisdom of God. Are you sharing that message? Jesus Himself said we should be.

--Let's ask God to help us be better about sharing it.

2. If you are not born again...if you have never trusted Jesus—and Jesus only—as your Savior, you are doomed; you are hell-bound...you will not escape the judgment of God. If that's you, come to Christ. Do not reject the wonderful provision God gave for you to be forgiven—His Son!