

The Lord Jesus said ... My Sheep

Not – I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him *dying* – (though he certainly preached that “Christ died for our sins”) but rather, “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him *crucified*” (2:2).

So while the gospel includes the Lord’s sacrificial death (1 Cor. 15:3), it also emphasizes *how* He died. It demands that His death be on a cross.

The Cross’s Negative

The context in 1 Corinthians sheds light on why emphasis on the cross of Christ is made. Where is man’s confidence placed? Right from the start in verse 2 we read that a Christian is someone who “calls on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.” Then at the end of the chapter it says, “He who glories (or “boasts,” a term denoting what we trust or depend on, where our confidence lies), let him glory in the Lord.”

In between these statements we find the Corinthians putting confidence or glorying in men. “The cross,” Paul objects, is what God used “to destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent” so “that no flesh (man) should glory (boast or trust in themselves or any creature) in His presence.”

Thus the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is God’s means of shifting man’s confidence away from self or any other created thing to Himself. Without this shift, salvation is impossible. For at the heart of salvation is this requirement: man must place his confidence absolutely in God. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

The cross of Christ crosses man out

How does the cross shift man’s confidence? First by exposing fallen man for what he really is. God claims the cross has destroyed the wisdom of the wise and has brought man’s prudence to *nothing* (1Cor. 1:19). How does the cross prove man is unworthy of having confidence placed in man? God claims that in light of Christ crucified no one should glory (put confidence) in men.

hear my voice, and

The cross forever stands as God’s assessment and condemnation of man. When the Son, “who is the brightness of God’s glory and the express image of God’s person,” was delivered into the hands of man by God (Matt. 17:22, Mark 9:31, Luke 19:44, 23:25, Acts 2:23), man took Him and *nailed Him to the cross!*

By nailing Him to the cross man didn’t merely kill Christ, man executed Him! The cross was capital punishment, reserved for the worst of criminals, scum of society judged unfit to live. And who was involved in this stupendous blunder and injustice of murdering God’s Son? Not just the lowliest and worst of mankind but the princes of this world!

Man’s best was represented at the cross! The charge against Christ written on His cross was in every major language: Hebrew, Greek and Latin. These languages represented the best of man’s religion – the most brilliant of man’s wisest – the highest of man’s politics (government). All three came together there against God and His Christ. The world was united at Calvary’s cross.

By crucifying Jesus, man is now exposed in his true condition and for what he is:

... unable to understand God’s wisdom (truth). When man came face to face with wisdom, he crucified Him – in total ignorance of what he did (1Cor. 2:8).

... unable to recognize God. When He was delivered to their hands they did not crown Him with the glory due Him but with thorns and then anointed Him with their spit. And by way of the cross (capital punishment) for the ungodly, they removed Him from their world in judgment.

... unable to please God by religion. In raging hate, religion demanded the Lord’s crucifixion through a perversion of justice.

...unable to govern or rule justly. Politics and rulers in human government knowingly executed the innocent Christ to preserve its power.

What they did to the man Christ Jesus, “God manifest in the flesh,” was the expression of how man felt

they follow me ... John 10:27

about God. What man thought of Christ is what they thought of God. How man rejected Christ was because they rejected God the Father.

So there at the cross the true character of man’s heart and the bankruptcy of his wisdom is exposed in all of its hatred and enmity to God. Man crucified the Lord of glory at Golgotha, the place of a skull – an empty head. And all along they were doing “that which was right in their own eyes!”

Yet God was not defeated in the events of the cross. In His wisdom He delivered Christ Jesus into the hands of man to let their actions at the cross expose them. So 1 Corinthians says concerning the cross, “I will bring to *nothing* the understanding of the prudent ... after that in the *wisdom of God* the world by wisdom knew not God ... He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.”

With unparalleled wisdom, God used man’s wisdom to show man that one is never to place confidence in man.

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God (1Cor. 1:18).

Man is now measured for what he is by what he did to God’s beautiful, holy and sinless Son – spiked Him to a tree as an accursed criminal!

What man is, then, is not seen or measured by his good works, his church-going or religiosity, his care for the poor, the unborn, the green earth or the whales.

This then is the issue that man must deal with. It’s not what *he does* by man’s standard – but what *he is* by the cross’s standard.

The cross shows man he is nothing religiously, politically or intellectually.

The cross disqualifies man from looking to himself as a means of obtaining salvation.

The cross teaches man not to trust his religious leaders for wisdom of God.

“As many as desire to

The cross removes hope in human government and political leaders as the answer for this world’s problems.

The cross invalidates reformation of deeds and demands radical repentance and regeneration as the only solution for what man is.

The cross makes man’s most serious issue with God his condemnation: not what man does today, but what he did to God’s Son yesterday.

The cross puts both Jew (the religious man) and Gentile (pagan man) on the same ground (Rom. 3:9). We can sum up all that we’ve seen so far with this Scripture: “Therefore let no man glory in men... .” (1Cor. 1-3).

There can be many aspects to one thing. A person may describe his new car by speaking of its comfortable leather interior. To another he might talk about the pleasure he gets from the car’s advanced stereo system. To another he describes the power he enjoys from the car’s large engine. So comfort, pleasure and power are different aspects of the description of the same car.

The dying of Jesus has three major aspects to it as recorded in Holy Scripture:

Christ’s Death - For our sins

When Scripture speaks of the death of Jesus Christ it has in mind man’s sins – *what we do*. “Christ *died* for our sins.” Here the aspect is the punishment Christ bore as our substitute to God.

Christ’s Blood - For our guilt

The blood of Jesus has in mind man’s shamed and guilty conscience that drives Him from God – *what we feel*. “How much more shall the blood of Christ, ... purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” Blood is linked with atonement that covers (removes, remits) our sins from God’s sight so we don’t shrink back from approaching Him.

Christ’s Cross - For our self (sin)

Christ’s crucifixion deals with man’s nature or self - *what we are and think*. “Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world ... We preach Christ crucified.”

make a fair show in the flesh, ...

The Cross's Positive

Something more than man's depravity is revealed at the cross. What followed this work of man that brought him into utter guilt and condemnation? The manifestation of God's unquenchable love for man!

The very One nailed by the sin of man refused to save Himself so that His very enemies might be saved.

The wrath fell not on rebel-cursed creatures but on God's own Son! "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners [enemies], Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

O what a place is this cross!

Here man can realize the evil, foolishness, and guilt of his own way. Yet simultaneously man can behold the glory of the God he hated and mistrusted, and see His pure love and provision to forgive and save him.

**Only there – the cross –
and only then,
can the rebel truly see, repent,
and though guilty and condemned,
trust himself to the One
who loves him unto death,
and not just any death,
“even the death of the cross.”**

The CROSS! God's answer to Adam's sin ... the sin of giving up confidence in God. At the cross man bows the knee to the One revealed in His absolute worthiness to be trusted.

The God "who spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all," I must trust. Where He leads I must follow. Whatever befalls I cannot lose my confidence in Him. As Job expressed it, "Though He slay me yet will I trust Him!"

Alas and did my Savior bleed? And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred Head, for such a worm as I?

Was it for crimes that I've done, He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity! Grace unknown! And love beyond degree!

Well might the sun in darkness hide, and shut His glories in,
When Christ the mighty Maker died, for man the creature's sin.

lest they should suffer persecution

Without the cross man is left standing. He can go on as a moral and wise creature who might need help, but surely not salvation. There is no need for repentance. Man can glory in what *he* can do to help God.

Without the cross there is no faith, no true confidence in God established or maintained. Not having the all-sufficiency of God impressed on his thinking, man continues proudly relying on inadequate human and spiritual sources which continue to keep him from God. But by the effect of the cross man is brought to an end and God becomes his everything, his all in all. It is there at the cross that man can surrender and wholly entrust himself to God.

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30).

Without the cross faith cannot hold because the love of God is not established. There would be no settled and unchanging constant that proves God's love. Circumstances would cause us to say, "He loves me ... He loves me not." But the cross says, "When I was at my absolute worst, God did the greatest thing love could do for me! He forsook His Son for me." I can trust the One who loves me so, even when I don't understand the difficulties He allows. Such love always does what is best! True Christian faith does not require or seek new evidence or fresh affirmation of God's love. True faith says, "Not my will but thine be done."

It is good to remember that the greatest thing God could ever do or will ever do for me, is already done! And all the blessings of God that are yet to be experienced flow from the greatest thing God did: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32).

"That, as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:31).

Paul says there's a "gospel" going around that includes Jesus' dying but makes "the cross of Christ of none effect" (1 Cor. 1:17). *It leaves man standing.* But don't fall for it. It might tell man he is of such value to God that Christ proved man was worth loving by dying for him. It might tell man that Christ died to show man an example of love which he is capable of imitating.

for the cross of Christ." Gal. 6:12

A crossless gospel might say that Christ did die for man, but of course that is just a start to salvation and eternal life. God helps those who help themselves and so *you are able* and must contribute to secure salvation. This "gospel" plays to man's sense of self-worth or religious pride.

Adding man's efforts (flesh) to the gospel, Paul says, causes "the *offence* [scandal] of the cross to cease." (Gal. 5:10).

**The offense or effect of the cross
is that *man* crucified the Lord
and is now uncovered as
nothing – without a leg of
moral, religious or intellectual
fiber to stand on – and so must
cast himself wholly on God.**

Paul would not preach a crossless gospel. He determined at Corinth, Greece amidst a culture consumed with wisdom of men such as Plato, Socrates and Aristotle, "not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and *Him crucified*" (1 Cor. 2:2).

So Paul didn't preach the crossless gospel. He didn't fall for it either in his heart. Once he understood the effect of the cross, Paul felt he had no right to live and now only Christ would live through him. He told the Galatians, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth 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" (Gal 2:20).

May we like Paul also conclude, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal 6:14).

Henry Sardina

Chronicle #6 of 'The Gospel of God' series looks at the effects of the cross in other areas of the Christian gospel

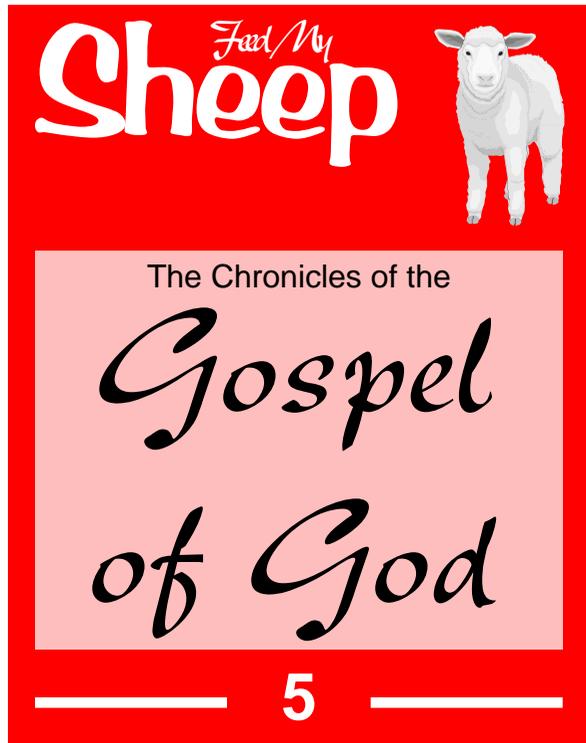
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CHRIST CRUCIFIED

Technically, there is a difference in meaning between the death of Christ and the cross of Christ. This chronicle, with others to follow in the will of the Lord, will attempt to develop these differences to better understand the place of the cross in the wonders of God's wisdom in man's salvation.

The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is emphasized in 1 Corinthians 1-3 as necessary for man's salvation. Notice the question in verse 13 was not:

... Was it Paul who *died* for you? but rather, "Was Paul *crucified* for you?" (1:13).

Note some other Scriptures that differentiate between these two concepts:

Not – the preaching of the *death* ... is the power of God – but rather, "the preaching of the *cross*" (1:18).

Not – We preach Christ *died* – but rather, "we preach Christ *crucified*" (1:23).