

# Jesus Christ and Him Crucified

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**1 Corinthians 2:1–5 (NKJV) “And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. <sup>2</sup> For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. <sup>3</sup> I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. <sup>4</sup> And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup> that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”**

Paul was an intelligent man. Paul was an educated man. Yet Paul, in spite of all of his intelligence and education, said that he determined not to know anything except *Jesus Christ and Him crucified*. The message of “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” is the message of the Cross; it is the message of the Gospel. The message of the Gospel is the message of the *Person and Work* of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Paul’s message was clear: Salvation comes only through faith in the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

What is meant by placing one’s faith in the Person of Jesus Christ? It means to believe in the Jesus of the Bible as the only Savior. The Bible tells us who Jesus is. It tells us what He is like. It tells us what He taught and what He requires. Many today preach a “Jesus” that is different from the Jesus of the Bible. Jesus warned His disciples not to receive a false Christ after He departed. Many cults teach and preach another Jesus. Faith in a false Jesus will not save. We must place our faith in the Jesus of the Bible to be saved. Believing in the Person of Jesus also means believing in the exclusivity of the Jesus of the Bible to save. Today it has become popular to be inclusive and tolerant of every religion. It has become “politically correct” to affirm that there are many ways to God other than through Jesus Christ alone. Those who insist that Jesus Christ is the only way to God are regarded as religious bigots. However, consider Jesus’ own claim. He said, “*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*”<sup>1</sup> Peter said, “*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*”<sup>2</sup> If the truth is that there is only one way to God through Jesus Christ, it would be most a betrayal of the human race to teach otherwise. If we want Bible salvation, then we must place our faith exclusively in the Jesus of the Bible. If we want men to be saved, we must preach unapologetically that Jesus Christ is the only Savior.

What is meant by placing one’s faith in the work of Jesus Christ? The work of Jesus Christ refers to His substitutionary sacrifice for our sins on the Cross. Jesus died in our place to pay our sin debt so that we might be forgiven, healed, delivered, and set free. There is no other sacrifice that can take away our sins except the blood of the Lamb of God.<sup>3</sup>

If we get the Person and Work of Jesus Christ *wrong*, it matters not what else we get *right*. When we veer off the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, we enter the doorway of deception and begin preaching another gospel that cannot save. Although Paul knew many things, he determined to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It was the only message that mattered. Paul made it his aim to stay *on message*.

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<sup>1</sup> John 14:6 (NKJV)

<sup>2</sup> Acts 4:12 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> John 1:21 (NKJV)

The message of the Cross is the basis of true unity. Many are striving to obtain ecumenical unity among believers apart from the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Many mistakenly believe that it is the believer's responsibility to work hard to achieve unity in answer to Christ's high priestly prayer in John 17. In order to achieve this kind of man orchestrated unity, Bible doctrine often is set aside. After all, "doctrine divides". Admittedly, personal preferences in doctrinal viewpoints that do not affect salvation must not become issues of contention. However, when unity demands that we compromise the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, then such unity becomes a betrayal of Christ and His gospel. Such false unity is not what Jesus asked of the Father.

Interestingly, Jesus did not pray that believers would be *unified*; He prayed that we might be *one*.<sup>4</sup> It is good that believers be unified, but they can only be unified if they are one. Oneness is based upon a common relationship with the Father and the Son. Oneness among believers is achieved *only* as they become one with the Father and the Son. Let me illustrate. If we try to tune one hundred pianos to one another, there will be great discord. This is what happens when believers attempt to be unified with one another apart from Christ. However, if the piano technician tunes each individual piano separately with a common tuning fork, all one hundred pianos will automatically be tuned with one another in one accord. The common denominator in their oneness is the technician and the tuning fork, not each another. The Father is the Technician and the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified is the tuning fork. Only God can bring believers into oneness in Christ, not men. That is why Jesus' prayer was directed to the Father and not to His disciples: *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; <sup>21</sup> that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. <sup>22</sup> And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: <sup>23</sup> I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."*<sup>5</sup> Oneness comes when believers together make Jesus Christ and Him crucified the Object of their faith.

Commitment to preach the uncompromised message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified is not the source of division among true believers. The real source of division among believers is those who preach another Jesus and another gospel. Attempts to unify believers apart from the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified leads to a counterfeit unity orchestrated and controlled by Satan.

Apart from a common faith in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, the church will die of a thousand heresies. The church at Corinth was divided into factions over partisan issues.<sup>6</sup> They were not unified in the message of the Cross. Failure to preach the exclusive message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified opens the door to competing gospels that undermine godly unity. Failure to preach the message of the Cross opens the door to false teachers, false prophets, false Jesus', false gospels, and false spirits. The final end of such is an apostate church. Paul said, *"But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!"*<sup>7</sup> Commitment to the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified protects the church against the intrusion of "another Jesus", a "different gospel", and a "different spirit". Preaching the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified is God's chosen method of gathering His wheat and sifting out the tares.

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<sup>4</sup> John 17:20-26 (NKJV)

<sup>5</sup> John 17:20-23 (NKJV)

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:11 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 (NKJV)

Different gospels are false gospels. False gospels include the social gospel, the prosperity gospel, the self-esteem gospel, the good works gospel, the cultic gospels, etc. False gospels cannot save those who believe them and they damn the souls of those who preach them.<sup>8</sup>

Those who preach a gospel other than Jesus Christ and Him crucified are called “enemies of the Cross of Christ”<sup>9</sup> Although Paul could have easily said they were “enemies of Christ”, he specifically called them “enemies of the Cross of Christ”. Why are they called “enemies of the cross of Christ”? They are called “enemies of the Cross of Christ” because they deny, diminish, or defile the message of the Cross. Some *deny the efficiency* of the Cross by asserting that salvation does not depend upon faith in Christ and His Cross. Others *diminish the sufficiency* of the Cross by asserting that salvation comes through the Cross *plus* something else (keeping the law of Moses, performing good works, belonging to a certain religious sect, being baptized, etc.) Those who *defile the message* of the Cross assert that the Cross provides grace and freedom to continue in sin. Those who deny, diminish, or defile the message of the Cross generate divisions contrary to the Truth. Those who champion the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified are the true and faithful ministers of the Gospel

Jesus Christ and Him crucified is the *object* of saving faith. Faith itself does not save if the object of faith is wrong. Placing faith in a chair will not save you from your sin. The only object of saving faith is the Person and Work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. When people do not place their faith exclusively in Jesus Christ and Him crucified, it is because they have misplaced their faith in something else.

The people in Corinth began misplacing their faith in personalities and in church ordinances. Some placed their faith in personalities such as Paul, Apollos, Cephas (Peter), and even Christ (not that they placed their faith in Christ but used the name of Christ to claim superiority). Those in Corinth also misplaced their faith in church ordinances such as baptism and the Lord's Supper. They believed their own baptism was superior to that of others.

Disunity is the natural result of misplacing our faith in something other than Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Paul asked, “Is Christ divided” (meaning into partisan factions over ministers and ordinances)? The answer is no. Believers are declared to be one body in Jesus Christ. When people place their faith in church ordinances rather than in Jesus Christ and Him crucified, they make the Cross of Christ of “no effect”<sup>10</sup>, meaning they render the work of Christ on the Cross of no profit to them.

The only message given to the church to preach is the message of the Cross. The message of the Cross is like the hub of the wheel around which every other doctrine and teaching revolves. Remove the message of the Cross and everything else collapses. Although the preaching of the Cross is foolishness to the perishing, it is the power of God to those who are being saved.<sup>11</sup> Paul declared, “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*”<sup>12</sup> The message of the Cross is the means by which the *penalty* of sin is paid, the *power* of sin is broken, and the *presence* of sin will one day be removed.

In the wisdom of God, He has ordained that through the foolishness of the message preached—the preaching of the Cross—that men will be saved: “*For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of*

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<sup>8</sup> Galatians 1:6–10 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> Philippians 3:18

<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:17

<sup>11</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:18 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> Romans 1:16 (NKJV)

*the message preached to save those who believe.*<sup>13</sup> Many churches have strayed from God's chosen method of preaching to save the lost. In its place they have devised less offensive methods—even worldly methods—to attract sinners into the church. Methods may attract a carnal crowd but they cannot resurrect the dead soul of a sinner. Only the message of the Cross can awaken sinners to their lost condition and save them from their sin. If we want to see people saved and transformed as they were in the glorious days of former generations, then we must get back to preaching that old, old message of the Cross. It is still the only message that can save.

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<sup>13</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:21 (NKJV)