

The Message of the Cross

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1 Corinthians 1:18 (NKJV) “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.”

What makes Christianity different from other religions? What makes Jesus Christ different from other prophets and teachers? What message sets Christianity apart from others faiths? It is the message of the Cross. The message of the Cross is the central message of the Gospel. The message of the Cross is like the hub on a wagon wheel around which every other truth revolves. If we remove the centrality of the Cross, the entire wheel collapses. When we make any message other than the Cross our emphasis, we spin off on spiritual tangents that make the Cross of Christ of no effect.

A cross is an instrument of crucifixion. Crucifixion is not simply a mode of execution but an instrument of torture. Execution can take place quickly, but crucifixion was designed to lengthen the process of intense suffering with death as its final outcome.

Only Christianity heralds a crucified Messiah. Other religions present standards through which men can become holy and righteous on their own. Christianity denies man this ability. Instead it throws in front of man a blood stained cross that requires repentance, confession and faith. While other religions require men to earn heaven, only Jesus requires faith in His sacrifice. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

The Cross of Christ is a symbol of both hope and scorn. To those who have given up all effort of becoming righteous on their own, the Cross of Christ is their hope and salvation. For those who seek to earn their own righteousness, the Cross of Jesus is an insult. The Cross of Christ activates feelings of great love and adoration from those who admit their guilt and receive His mercy while activating feelings of great hostility from those who resent any implication of their need.

The Cross of Christ confronts mankind with their sinful condition and their need for salvation. A person who acknowledges their need and accepts God's answer, the Cross becomes the power of God unto salvation. People who reject its indictment and offer of forgiveness, the Cross is foolish at best and an insult at worse. No wonder Jesus suffered such hostility of sinners against Himself. No wonder the message of the Cross of Christ evokes such hostility in a politically correct world. The message of the Cross is out of step with a postmodern world in which all “truth” is considered equal and in which there are many ways to God.

The Cross of Christ is God's only means of salvation and marks the literal crossroad between heaven and hell. Will we accept the message of the Cross or will we seek another way? God could have made salvation so difficult that only the elite could attain it. However, He made it so simple that even a child could receive it. God simply requires that we believe the message of the Cross. The apostle Paul declared that it is through the foolishness of preaching that God has ordained that those who believe should be saved (1 Corinthians 1:21). Rejecting the Cross seals a person in their sin.

The Cross is evidence that God has not allowed the age old question of good and evil to go unanswered. People shake their fist and blaspheme God because of life's woes while ignoring the fact that He sent His only begotten Son into this fallen world to suffer and die to deliver them from the very things for which they blaspheme Him. God has not ignored the issue of good and evil. The Cross of Christ stands as God's exclamation point that something

is terribly wrong with this world—that something is terribly wrong with *US*. How could such love, such compassion, such forgiveness, and such goodness be unjustly sentenced to death upon a cruel cross? The reason is that something inside of man's heart is very twisted. By refusing to accept blame for his own sin, man rejects God's only means of salvation. Only as we humbly acknowledge our sinful condition and our need are we in a position to receive the message of the Cross as our only hope of eternal salvation.

The message of the Cross is the basis of our victory. It is the basis of our victory over death for He has made us alive in Him. It is the basis of our victory over hell because He has redeemed us from destruction. It is the basis of our victory over the grave because we will be raised to be like Him. It is the basis of our victory over separation from God caused by sin because through faith in His blood, we are forgiven. It is the basis of our victory over guilt and shame because He has wiped out the handwriting that was against us having nailed it to His Cross. It is the basis of our victory over Satan and his demons because Christ has disarmed them of the weapons they had fashioned against us. It is the basis of our victory over the flesh because we have been crucified with Christ.

In spite of these things, the message of the Cross incites controversy in our souls. Our mind cannot grasp it. Our self-righteousness denies it. Our pride rejects it. Our selfishness despises it. Our stubbornness resists it. We will either surrender unconditionally to its message or reject it completely. There is no middle ground. Either we receive the message of the Cross by faith or else we declare that Jesus died in vain, that the message of the Cross is foolishness, and that we are determined to find our own way to heaven without Him.

Which message will we believe? In the end, which choice will prove to be the most foolish? Will we be found among the wise or among the fools? Eternity is too long and hell is too hot to get it wrong.

The message of the Cross remains the controversy of the ages. Each one of us must decide where we stand in this controversy. Each of us must decide whether we will believe the message of the Cross, ignore it, or reject it altogether. By choosing to believe and receive it, we willingly choose to abandon our own efforts for salvation and embrace God's way. Believing the message of the Cross means ceasing our own efforts to be righteous in order to accept God's free gift of righteousness.

The message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but for those who will believe it, receive it, and proclaim it, it is the power of God unto salvation. Don't be foolish but be wise. Believe and receive the message of the Cross that you might be saved!