

The Centrality of the Cross

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1 Corinthians 1:17–18 (NKJV) *“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. 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 is the central message of the Gospel? If you watch some Christian television programs or read the best-selling Christian books you might think the central message of the Gospel is “How to become a better you!” or “How to have your best life now!” or “How to be rich and wealthy in this life!” or “Prayer shawls, festivals, and the Torah!” or “How to find your pathway to happiness!” or “How to invoke Glory clouds, gold dust, and angel feathers!” or “How to laugh your way to heaven!” Neither Jesus nor the apostles preached a Gospel like any of these messages today. Somehow the church has drifted from the Gospel that they preached: *“For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”* (1 Corinthians 2:2 NKJV) The Cross of Christ has always been the central message of the Gospel.

The message of the Cross is like the hub of a wagon wheel. The hub of a wagon wheel is the foundation for each individual spoke and the unifying strength of the entire wheel. It is the point around which everything else revolves. In the same way, the message of the Cross of Christ is the central hub around which every other topic or message revolves. If we ignore or remove the Cross, the entire Gospel wheel collapses.

Any Gospel that drifts from the centrality of the Cross of Christ is a false Gospel. Paul said in Galatians 1:6–9 (NKJV): *“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”*

Any genuine Biblical truth separated from the message of the Cross is unbalanced. A message of love without the Cross is limited and loose. A message of law without the Cross breeds legalism. A message of grace without the Cross is a license to sin. Music without the Cross is entertainment. Prosperity without the Cross fosters greed. Signs and wonders without the Cross generate counterfeits. Spiritual gifts without the Cross open the door to mystical deception. Preaching without the Cross is just public speaking. Counseling without the Cross is psychology. Edification without the Cross is self-esteem. Positive confession without the Cross becomes name it claim it. Faith without the Cross is presumption. Methods without the Cross are spiritual fads. Emotionalism without the Cross is hype. Social justice without the Cross is class warfare. Serving others without the Cross is social work. Benevolence without the Cross is welfare. Christianity without the Cross is religion. It is no wonder that a church that strays from the Cross is a church gone astray!

The true minister of the Gospel is not free to preach his own message. He is not free to generate and pursue a dream or vision of his own. He is not free to reinvent the Gospel to fit the culture. Rather, the true minister of God is regarded as a steward of the Gospel of God. Paul said about his own ministry: *“Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.”* (1 Corinthians 4:1 NKJV)

The Christian minister is like a banker. A banker does not own the money in the bank. He is simply a steward of the depositors. In the same way, the Christian minister is one who has been entrusted with a great deposit from God—the message of the Cross. To the Lord he will give account.

The Christian minister is also like a postman. Why does the postal service exist? Why do we pay mailmen to do what they do? We do not pay them to write letters and put them in our mailboxes. We

pay them to faithfully deliver the messages entrusted to them. Christian ministers are to faithfully deliver the message of the Cross.

Why is the message of the Cross so important? It is because the message of the Cross is our only means of salvation: “*For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.*” (1 Corinthians 1:21 NKJV) Do you want to be saved today? You must believe the message of the Cross.

The message of the Cross is important because it is the *wisdom of God*. Paul said, “*For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*” (1 Corinthians 1:22-24 NKJV). The world rejects the message of the Cross because it seems so foolish and so weak. Men are inclined to trust in human wisdom, power and might. Because of man’s pride, God chose the Gospel of the Cross to save those who will believe. God chose the foolish things of this world in order to put to shame the wise, and the weak things of this world to put to shame the things that are mighty. God chose the base (insignificant, lowly) things and the despised things of this world to bring to nothing the things that are. The foolishness of God is wiser than the greatest wisdom of men!

Why did God choose that men would be saved through the preaching of the message of the Cross? It is so that no flesh will glory in His sight! If we desire to be saved, then we must lay aside our proud wisdom and works and simply trust in God’s wisdom in redemption—the Cross of Christ.

The message of the Cross is important because it is the *power of God*. Paul said, “*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.*” (Romans 1:16 NKJV) If we fail to preach the Cross, then we substitute another message and forfeit the power of God to save and transform lives. It is no wonder that so many who profess Christ with their lips deny Him with their lives. The false gospel they heard and believed had no power to transform them. It had no Cross!

The message of the Cross is important because it is the *basis of our victory*. Through the Cross we have victory 1) over sin because Christ has paid debt, 2) over separation from God because Christ reconciled us to God, 3) over death because He has made us alive with Him, 4) over hell because He redeemed us from destruction, 5) over the grave for He will raise us in glory, 6) over guilt and shame because He has wiped out the handwriting that was against us, 7) over Satan and his demons because He has disarmed them of their weapons, and 8) over the flesh because sin no longer has dominion over us.

Why have our churches become so foolish and weak today? It is because we have substituted the message of the Cross for another gospel. It is time for the church to return to the centrality of the Cross. It is time for ministers to regain and preach Paul’s message of Christ and Him crucified. When the message of the Cross is preached with power from the pulpit then the power of God will be seen in the pews. We will see God move to save, heal, deliver, revive, and transform. Consider again the Cross of Christ. That old rugged Cross is still God’s answer to man’s every need.

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