

Things the Cross Declares

I Corinthians 1:18-25

I. INTRODUCTION: I

- I. **2** When Paul talked about the preaching of the cross he meant preaching all the crucifixion of Christ stands for:
 - A. To preach the cross is to preach the gospel (**I Cor. 1:17**: “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.”).
 - B. To preach the cross is to preach Christ crucified (**I Cor. 1:23**: “but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,”).
 - C. To preach the cross is to preach that Christ paid the penalty for man’s sins (**I Cor. 15:3**: “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,”; **I Pet. 2:24**: “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed.”).
 - D. To preach the cross is to preach that Christ destroyed the power of the devil (**Heb. 2:4**: “God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?”; **I Jn. 3:8**: “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”; **2 Tim. 1:10**: “but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,”).
 - E. To preach the cross is to preach that Christ purchased the church (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25).
 - F. To preach the cross is to preach man can be reconciled to God in one body (Eph. 2:13, 16; Rom. 5:10).
2. The cross is God’s supreme declaration to man.
3. **3** Let us study some of the supreme declarations of the cross:

II. DISCUSSION: One thing the cross declares is that...

- I. **4** The Law of Moses done away:
 - A. **Col. 2:14-17**; **Eph. 2:13-16**
 - B. Why?

Gal. 3:19: “What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.”

Gal. 3:16: “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.”
 - C. A failure to regard this declaration is one of the main sources of religious error.
 - (1) Incense
 - (2) Instrumental music
 - (3) Sabbath keeping
 - D. To go back to the law is to fall from grace (**Gal. 5:4**: “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”).
 - E. No flesh was ever justified by the law (**Gal. 2:16**: “knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith

in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”; Heb. 10:1-4).

Another thing the cross declares is...

2. **5** The fulfillment of prophecy:

- A. One reason Jesus came was to fulfill prophecy (**Matt. 5:17**: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”; **Lk. 24:44–47**: “Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. 46 Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”).
- B. Fulfillment of prophecy was a main feature of the very first gospel sermon (Acts 2:22-36).
- C. Some say Jesus fulfilled 353 specific Old Testament prophecies (Edersheim: 456).
- D. Anyone can make predictions (e.g., Jeane Dixon: nebulous predictions about Kennedy assassination; WWII to start in 1958; Russians would be the first to the moon), but God’s prophets made detailed predictions about the Christ and every one came true exactly as stated!
 - (1) For example, Micah 5:2, where it states the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah:
Mic. 5:2: “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”
 - (2) One Bible professor determined after examining only eight different prophecies concerning Christ that the chance of one man fulfilling all eight prophecies was one in 10^{17} (1 in 100 quadrillion).
 - (3) To illustrate how large the number 10^{17} one expert gave this illustration:
 - (a) If you mark one of ten silver dollars, paint one red and place all of them in a hat, and thoroughly stir them, and then ask a blindfolded man to draw one, his chance of getting the red one is one in ten.
 - (b) Suppose that we take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the ground of the entire state of Texas. They’ll cover all of the state two feet deep.
 - (c) Now paint one of the silver dollars red, stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state.
 - (d) Next, blindfold a man and tell him he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and it must be the red one.
 - (e) What chance would he have of getting the right one? 1 in 100 quadrillion; 10^{17}
 - (f) This is the same chance the prophets would’ve had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, providing they wrote them in their own wisdom.
 - (g) Another estimated the probability of fulfilling 48 prophecies at 10^{157} ; there are estimated to only be 10^{80} electrons in the entire Universe! According to Emile Borel (father of modern probability theory), once one goes past one chance in 10^{50} , the probabilities are so small it’s impossible to think they will ever occur!
- E. Thus the cross declares God is able to fulfill His plan of salvation regardless of the opposition of either Satan or man (**Psa. 2:4**: “He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the LORD shall hold them in derision.”).

Another thing the cross declares is...

3. **6** The heinousness of sin:

- A. The Bible defines sin in **1 Jn. 3:4**: “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”
 - (1) The word “sin” comes from the Greek word *hamartia*.
 - (2) Vine on *hamartia*: “is, lit., ‘a missing of the mark.’”
 - (3) Thayer adds that it is “a sinning, whether it occurs by omission or commission” (**Jas. 4:17**: “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”).
- B. All that seems rather “clinical” in nature (i.e., extremely objective, unemotionally analytic).
- C. But, the cross gives us a much clearer picture of sin; sin is heinous (i.e., hateful, odious, abominable, totally reprehensible; *Dictionary.com*).
 - (1) They crucified Jesus at Calvary (**Lk. 23:33**: “And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.”).
 - (2) The word “calvary” is from the Greek *kranion* (i.e., cranium, skull)
 - (3) Mark and Matthew use the Aramaic word: **Mk. 15:22**: “And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull.”
 - (4) Seems appropriate that the place of Christ’s death is the “Place of a Skull.”
- D. Let us take a good look at Jesus:
 - (1) He was the only begotten Son of God (Jn. 3: 16).
 - (2) He did only good (**Acts 10:38**: “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.”).
 - (3) He never sinned (**1 Pet. 2:22-23**: “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;”).
 - (4) He came from heaven to do the will of God (Jn. 6:38).
 - (5) Even His enemies admitted He taught the truth! Matt. 22:16
 - (6) He came to save the lost (Lk. 19:10).
 - (7) But His own people rejected Him and demanded His death: **Mk. 15:14**: “...Crucify Him!”
- E. We can better appreciate the heinousness of sin by considering Jesus’ suffering: **
 - (1) Scourging: Matt. 27:26; Jn. 19:1
 - (2) Mocking and crown of thorns: Mk. 15:16-20
 - (3) Carries His own cross: Jn. 19:17
 - (4) **7** Crucifixion: Matt. 27:32-56; Mk. 15:21-41; Lk. 23:26-49; Jn. 19:17-37
 - (a) Imagine how the Roman soldiers must have “man-handled” Him onto the cross.
 - (b) Imagine the soldiers driving the nails into His hands and feet.
 - (c) Imagine the soldiers hauling the cross to its upright position with Jesus attached...thunk!
 - (d) Imagine Him hanging there in absolute agony; in hemorrhagic shock; sweat running down His brow into His eyes.
 - (e) Here is Dr. C. Truman Davis’ description of His agony:

“The left foot is now pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed. The Victim is now crucified. As He slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain — the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves.

As He pushes Himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there is the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet. At this point, as the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward. Hanging by his arms, the pectoral muscles are paralyzed and the intercostal muscles are unable to act. Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, he is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen.

... Jesus experienced hours of limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain where tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down against the rough timber. Then another agony begins -- a terrible crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart. One remembers again the 22nd Psalm, the 14th verse: *“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.”*

It is now almost over. The loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level; the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissue; the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues send their flood of stimuli to the brain. Jesus gasps His fifth cry, *“I thirst.”* One remembers another verse from the prophetic 22nd Psalm: *“My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou has brought me into the dust of death.”*

... The body of Jesus is now in extremes, and He can feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues. This realization brings out His sixth words, possibly little more than a tortured whisper, *“It is finished.”* His mission of atonement has completed. Finally He can allow his body to die.

With one last surge of strength, he once again presses His torn feet against the nail, straightens His legs, takes a deeper breath, and utters His seventh and last cry, *“Father! Into thy hands I commit my spirit.”*“ (excerpted from “A Physician’s View of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, Dr. C. Truman Davis)

- F. In a very real sense your sins and my sins put Him on the cross: **1 Jn. 2:2:** *“And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”*

Another thing the cross declares is...

4. 8 Man’s guilt:

- A. Christ died on the cross because of our sins: **Isa. 53:6, 12:** *“All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” 12 Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.”*

1 Pet. 2:24: *“who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed.”*

- B. We all are guilty! **Rom. 3:23:** “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”; **Rom. 3:10:** “As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one;’”
- C. Thankfully God doesn’t give us what we deserve, but in His mercy He forgives (Rom. 6:23; Psalms 59:10, 17: “My God of mercy...”).

Another thing the cross declares is...

5. **9** Man’s helplessness:

- A. It declares something must be done about man’s sins if he is to be saved:
 - (1) A *propitiation* (i.e., an appeasement, a covering) for sins was necessary; because man cannot atone for his own sins.
 - (2) Only God could provide it!
 - (a) God’s justice required it: **Rom. 3:24-25:** “Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness...”
 - (b) God’s love provided it: **1 Jn. 4:10:** “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”).
- B. Man could not bring about a plan to save himself (**Jer. 10:23:** “O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”).
- C. By God’s grace He sent His only begotten Son to die for our sins (**1 Cor. 15:3:** “...Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,”; **1 Pet. 1:18-19:** “knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct... 19 but with the precious blood of Christ...”).
- D. The cross says to every person, “You cannot be saved without the grace of God” (**Eph. 1:7:** “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”; **Eph. 2:8:** “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,”; **Lk. 17:10:** “So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’”).

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6. **10** God’s power to save:

- A. The cross says to every person, “God alone has the power to do something about your guilt of sin.”
- B. God has placed the “power” to save in “the gospel”: **Rom. 1:16:** “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.”
- C. Why? **Rom. 1:17:** “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”
- D. The cross and resurrection allowed Jesus to validate His claims: 1 Cor. 15:1-3; Rom. 1:4
- E. What does it say when we tinker with the gospel? e.g., social gospel Gal. 1:6-9

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7. **11** God’s love for man:

- A. Just think of the irony: the painful and shameful death of Christ on the cross demonstrates the great love God has for us!

Jn. 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

B. Would you die for an ungodly person?

- (1) When someone dies for another they give out medals!
- (2) Battle of Iwo Jima lasted ~6 weeks and saw some of the fiercest fighting of all of WWII.
- (3) Casualties: Japan: of the 21,000 soldiers only 216 survived; U.S.: 19,217 wounded, 6,821 killed.
- (4) 27 CMH’s were awarded; 14 posthumously
- (5) God deserves the Medal of Honor! **Rom. 5:6-8:** “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

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8. **12** Necessity of man’s obedience:

- A. Christ had to learn obedience...how? **Heb. 5:8:** “though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.”
- B. What are the ramifications for us? **Heb. 5:9:** “And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,”
- C. Man doesn’t consider obedience to be a priority:
 - (1) Faith only folks: **Eph. 2:8-9:** “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.”
 - (2) Contrast that with what God says: **Eph. 2:10:** “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”
- D. Salvation unattainable without obedience: **2 Thess. 1:8-9:** “in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,”
Matt. 7:21: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”

III. CONCLUSION: **13**

1. The cross of Christ declares that obedient believers have hope – (**I Jn. 2:25:** “And this is the promise that He has promised us — eternal life.”; **Tit. 1:2:** “in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.”; **I Pet. 1:4-5:** “to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”).
2. Without Christ’s death on the cross, man would have no hope.
3. The cross of Christ is the very heart of our hope (**I Pet. 3: 18:** “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”).
4. Paul said he gloried in the cross (**Gal. 6:14:** “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”).
5. Do you “glory” in the cross?

Adapted from a sermon (“Declarations of the Cross”) by Donald Townsley.