

The Message of the Cross

I Corinthians 1:18

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. The Text in Context—

1. The church at Corinth was divided into factions each with its own heresy and false prophet.
 - a. Paul is referring to the Judaizers and not to any party that had formed around Paul, Peter, Apollos or Christ (2 Corinthians 11:4–22).
 - b. He transfers these things to himself in a “figure” (1 Corinthians 4:6).
2. This condition betrayed their carnality (3:1) revealing their esteem for the wisdom of men above the Gospel of Christ (1 Corinthians 4:6).
 - a. Paul contrasts the “wisdom of words” with “the preaching” (KJV), “the word” (ASV) or “the message” of the cross (cf. 1:17).
 - b. Men in general have long held that the message about Jesus’ death is one of folly, too incredible and ridiculous to believe.
 - c. Thus, men have rejected or been turned away from the simple Gospel of Jesus.

B. What Is the Message of the Cross?

1. Paul affirms that the Gospel is a revelation, a message, from God which centers in the cross of Calvary.
 - a. The crucifixion of Jesus is an historical event with spiritual implications and eternal consequences.
 - b. The “message of the cross,” the Gospel, relates the significance of the event to the men and women unto whom it is preached.
2. The message involves more than the mere facts of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - a. The Gospel is something that is preached, received, relied upon, and believed (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
 - b. The Gospel presents facts to be believed, commands to be obeyed and promises to be received.
3. The “message of the cross” answers more than the questions who, what, when, where and how. It answers the all important question—WHY?

II. DISCUSSION:

A. The Message of the Cross Reveals Man Is a Guilty Sinner—

1. The Scriptures teach that the Father sent His Son, Jesus, to the cross for the sins of the whole world (John 3:16; Matthew 26:28; 1 John 2:1,2).

2. The problem of sin is a universal one (Romans 3:23; Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 Kings 8:46; Psalms 14:3).
3. Why are men guilty of sin?
 1. Not by the transmission of depravity through generation (Romans 7:9; Ezekiel 18:4, 20; Deuteronomy 24:16; 2 Kings 14:6).
 2. Not by inability due to an inherent imperfection in man when compared to the perfect standard of God's righteousness (Ephesians 5:17; 3:1-4; 1 John 2:1; 1 Corinthians 15:34).
 3. Rather, man is a sinner by the choice of his will (Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:9-18; Genesis 3:1-7; 1 Corinthians 10:13).

B. The Message of the Cross Declares that God Is Just—

1. It is the righteous character of God that required the death of Jesus as the penalty for humanity's sins (Romans 3:24-26).
 - a. The dilemma caused by our sin: "How can a just God be merciful and pass over our sins?"
 - b. The death of Jesus was the solution (1 John 1:7; 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31; Romans 5:18-19).
2. The death of Jesus is an atonement or propitiation for sin (1 John 2:2; 4:10; Romans 3:25).
 - a. That which is a *propitiation* appeases God's just wrath against sinners and renders the objects of His anger acceptable to him (Colossians 1:20-21; Romans 5:10; Ephesians 2:13-16; 1 Timothy 2:4-6; Hebrews 9:28; Matthew 20:28; Titus 2:14).
 - b. The death of Jesus on our behalf satisfies the just requirement of the law of God against each one of us (Isaiah 53:1ff; 1 Peter 2:23-24; 3:18; Romans 4:25; 5:9-10).

C. The Message of the Cross Reveals that Man Is Helpless in Saving Himself—

1. If man could do it himself there would have been no need for Jesus to die.
 - a. The Law made no provision for the forgiveness of sins (Galatians 3:20-22; Romans 8:3; Galatians 3:12-13)
 - b. Man, once he violates the law of God, is without hope on his own.
 - c. This does not mean, as we have already noted earlier, that man could not keep God's law--it just proves that he did not keep it.
2. Men cannot earn salvation.
 - a. Salvation is a matter of grace not of works (Romans 11:6). There is nothing that we can do and nothing we can bring to remit sin (Galatians 3:21; Hebrews 10:1-4).
 - b. In order for salvation to be a matter of works, it would be necessary to put God under debt or obligation (Romans 4:2-5; Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:10-12).
 - c. Absolute sinlessness is the only way to accomplish this. Only Jesus has succeeded in doing it (Hebrews 7:26; 4:15; 9:24; 1 Peter 1:19; 2:22; 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

D. The Message of the Cross Invites Men to Come to Jesus—

1. In the cross we see the means by which all of us may be saved.

- a. The death of Jesus is universally offered to mankind (Titus 2:11; 1 Timothy 2:4–6; John 3:16; Revelation 22:17).
 - b. Election is not limited to a few, but to all who believe in Jesus (Ephesians 1:3–10; John 3:16; Acts 17:30–31; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:2).
2. This universal offer of salvation is made in the Gospel (Matthew 28:18–20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:47; Romans 1:16,17).

E. The Message of the Cross Displays the Love of God—

- 1. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16).
 - a. God loved us before we ever existed (Ephesians 1:4; 1 John 4:19).
 - b. There was nothing lovely about us (Romans 5:8–10).
 - c. I know God loves me because He let Jesus die for me (1 John 4:9,16).
- 2. Greater love has no man than this, than a man lay down His life for His friends (John 15:13–14; 1 John 3:16).
 - a. This love of Christ is what draws us to the cross (John 12:32).
 - b. It is not martyrdom, pity, sympathy!
 - c. Only love can melt the heart of stone in repentance (Romans 2:4; cf. Matthew 27:44; Luke 23:39–43).

F. The Message of the Cross Adjures Men to Trust and Obey Christ—

- 1. Not being able to save ourselves we must look to another (Ephesians 1:12–13; 1 Timothy 4:10; 6:17; Hebrews 2:13; 1 Peter 3:5).
 - a. What does it mean to trust someone or something else? (cf. Matthew 27:43; Luke 11:22; 18:9; Mark 10:24; Philippians 3:4; 1 Timothy 6:17).
 - b. Trusting in someone or something else does not exclude obedience, or doing, or use, or cooperation. As a matter of fact, it requires it.
 - (1) How can one trust in riches without using them?
 - (2) How can one trust in armor without using it?
 - (3) How does one trust in the flesh without using it?
 - (4) Illustrate by jumping from a burning building into a net?
- 2. We trust in Christ when we do what He commands.
 - a. He is the author of eternal salvation to all that obey (Hebrews 5:8,9).
 - b. He saves the penitent believer when he is baptized (Mark 16:16; Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21)
 - c. The believer is trusting in Christ, not the water, not his own obedience, not the preacher (Colossians 2:11,12; Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 10:19–22; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Romans 6:3, 11; John 3:3, 5).

G. The Message of the Cross Gives Hope of Life Eternal—

1. The believer in Christ has the hope of eternal life (1 John 5:11–13; 2:25; Titus 1:2; Acts 23:6; 24:15; 26:6–7).
2. Without the cross of Christ there is no hope (1 Timothy 1:1; Titus 2:11–13; 3:4–7; Hebrews 6:13–20; 1 Peter 1:3, 21).
3. Because Christ has died for sin, I am dead to sin. Because Christ is raised from the dead, I live for Christ to be raised from the dead (Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:22–23; 2 Corinthians 4:14; Ephesians 1:17–20).

III. CONCLUSION:

A. The Message of the Cross—

1. Reveals man is a guilty sinner
2. Declares that God is just
3. Reveals that man is helpless in saving himself
4. Invites men to come to Christ
5. Displays the love of God
6. Adjures men to trust and obey
7. Gives hope of eternal life

B. He That Has Ears to Hear Let Him Hear!