THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS

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**DATE: 11/28/2018 Wed.**

**TEXT: I Corinthians 1:18-25**

**INTRODUCTION**

Every state in the U.S. has a flower and a tree, as symbols

Some also have a state fish, a stone, even a state insect

New York has seventeen such symbols

Christianity has only One, the Cross

A Cross that was a symbol of Suffering and Shame, has become the symbol of Glory and Grace

As the songwriter put it …

*On a hill far away, stood an old rugged cross,  
The emblem of suffering and shame,  
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best  
For a world of lost sinners was slain.*

As believers we cherish the old rugged Cross / Why?

Because it was there, the Lord Jesus gave His life, that we might be saved

The Cross in Jesus’ day was the same as the gallows, electric chair, or gas chamber, today

One would think it strange that someone would cherish a gas chamber, (Don’t you think)

Yet we cherish the Cross … because of the Christ of the Cross

The story is told of a castle in Austria that overlooked the village of Durnstein. It’s officially known as the Kuenringer Castle, destroyed in 1645. But no one calls the castle by that name. Everyone calls it “The Richard the Lion-Hearted castle” because he was held a prisoner there in 1192. The castle is not remembered for its Owner but for its Prisoner!

So, it is with the Cross

What makes the Cross so special, is Christ died on it

Take Christ off the Cross and you have nothing but a Gory place

Put Christ on the Cross and you have a Glory place

In **v. 18**, Paul speaks of ***“the Preaching of the Cross”***

The word ***“preaching”*** actually means *word*

**John 1:1 – *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”***

Paul is talking about …

*The Word of the Cross* or *The Message of the Cross*

As we look into this Text, this Evening …

We are going to learn several things about the Cross

So, let’s stand to read **vs. 18-25** and then pray

Then we’ll begin to think on this thought

**“THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS”**

**~~~Prayer~~~**

First, we find that the Preaching of the Cross is …

**I. A “SAVING” MESSAGE – v. 18**

We read **– *“For the Preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the Power of God”***

The story is told of a young boy whose little sister needed a blood transfusion. The doctor diagnosed that she had the same disease the boy had recovered from two years earlier. Her only chance for survival was a transfusion from someone who had previously conquered the disease. Since the two children had the same blood type, the boy was the ideal donor. *“Would you give your blood to Mary?”* the doctor asked. Johnny hesitated. His lower lip started to quiver. Then he smiled and said, *“Sure, for my sister.”* Soon the two children were wheeled into a room together. Mary, pale and thin; Johnny, robust and healthy. Neither spoke, but when they met, Johnny grinned. As the nurse inserted the needle into his arm, Johnny's smile faded. He watched the blood flow through the tube. With the ordeal almost over, his voice slightly shaky, broke the silence. He asked – *“Doctor, when do I die?”* Only then did the doctor realize Why Johnny had hesitated, Why his lip had quivered when he'd agreed to donate his blood. He thought giving his blood to his sister meant giving up his life.

Jesus Gave His blood for us, knowing full well that He would die

But in so doing, we Live

Paul speaks of those that ***“are saved”***

The Message of the Cross is a Saving Message

In **v. 18**, Paul speaks of 2 different Attitudes toward the Saving Message of the Cross

First, he speaks of How Some view the Preaching of the Cross with …

**A. ‘Absurdity’ – v. 18 a**

***“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness;”***

Paul says that the Lost Person thinks the Preaching of the Cross is Foolish

The word ***“foolishness”*** gives us our English word *moron*

Strictly speaking, the word means *absurdity*

To those that are Perishing, the Message of the Cross is a Silly Message, not a Saving Message

To some, the idea of salvation being found only in the Cross is Absurd and Outlandish

That's why the death of Christ is often Maligned, Mistreated, and Misjudged

A woman wrote J. Vernon McGee once and said -“*Our preacher said that on Easter Jesus just swooned on the cross and that the disciples nursed him back to health. What do you think?”* McGee replied, *“Dear Sister, beat your pastor with a leather whip thirty-nine times. Nail him to a cross. Hang him in the sun for six hours, Run a spear through his heart. Wrap him in linen. Put him in an airless tomb for three days. Then tell me what happens.”*

Some people think that the Preaching of the Cross is Foolishness!

But on the Other Hand, some Folks view the Preaching of the Cross with …

**B. ‘Affection’ – v. 18 b**

Whereas, the Preaching of the Cross is Foolish to those that are unsaved

Paul also says … ***“but unto us which are saved it is the power of God”***

To those that are saved, the Message of the Cross is not a Silly Message but a Saving Message

Those that are Saved view the Message of the Cross with Affection because it is in the Cross we see the Power of God to save us

A certain man, was planning on touring Italy. A friend said to him, *“There is a blessing you will receive if you will go to thus and such place and see a painting of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ”* The man asked, *“What is it like?”* The friend said, *“Never mind what it is like. I want you to see it. You need to see it, and promise me that you will.”* The man made the promise. He went to the village where this painting was kept in a chapel. The caretaker said, *“You have come to see the painting, haven't you?”* The man said, *“Why, yes I have.”* The caretaker led him to the painting. He was not prepared for what he saw. He was looking for a beautiful masterpiece of art. Yet, there was Jesus on the cross, but it seemed all out of proportion. It didn't make sense. It seemed somehow to be top heavy. The man said, *“I don't understand this painting?”* The caretaker replied, *“Come closer.”* He did. The caretaker said, *“Get lower.”* He did. He said, *“Come closer.”* *“Get lower.” “Come closer.” “Get lower.”* Finally, the man found himself kneeling at the very foot of the painting of the cross. When he looked up, he saw the perspective from which the painting had been made, and realized that it didn't make sense until you kneeled at the cross.

Someone will never appreciate the Message of the Cross until they Kneel by Faith at the Foot of the Cross

Only then will someone understand the saving power of the Cross

As the songwriter said …

*At the cross, at the cross,  
Where I first saw the light,  
And the burden of my heart rolled away,  
It was there by faith  
I received my sight,  
And now I am happy all the day.*

To those that are Saved, the Cross is not an Absurd Message

It is the Power of God unto Salvation

It was there we first saw the light and the heavy burden of our sin rolled away

Those who are Perishing may view the Cross with **Absurdity,**

But those that are Saved, view the Message of the Cross with **Affection**

**A “SAVING” MESSAGE**

Secondly, we find that the Preaching of the Cross is …

**II. A “SIMPLE” MESSAGE – vs. 19-21**

Even though there is great Profundity in the Message of the Cross, there is also great Simplicity

The Message of the Cross is the Simple Message that Jesus died, that men might Live

*And It’s the Simplicity of the Message that Most have trouble with*

Notice what it says …

***“For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent” “Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”***

The first thing we see in Paul’s statement is that …

**A. The Wisdom of Man ‘Denies’ the Simplicity of the Message**

**1.** Notice again **v. 19**

***“For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent”***

The words ***“for it is written”*** indicate that Paul is quoting from an Old Testament passage

That passage happens to be **Isaiah 29:14**

***“Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid”***

**Isaiah 29** is talking about how the Assyrians were threatening Judah

The counselors of the Jewish king advised an alliance with Egypt

Isaiah appealed to Judah to trust in God alone

Isaiah's counsel was mocked by the scribes

Instead of trusting God, they Devised their own programs of Personal and Social redemption

The Simple Message of the Cross has often been Rejected by men

And have come up with their own way of salvation

Instead of simply accepting the Message of the Cross,

-- They say that someone must achieve a certain level of works and maintain that level to be saved

-- Some have advocated extensive Rituals and Rites as the way of salvation

Instead of accepting the Simple Message of the Cross,

The Wisdom of Men devises other ways of being saved

They say, *Something that important can’t be that Simple!*

*We know God better than that*

**2.** Look at **v. 20**

In this verse Paul refers to certain groups that Represent the Wisdom of Men

-- He speaks of the Wise

(At least, those who thought themselves to be)

He is referring to the Greek philosophers

Those, attempting to influence the thinking of the world

-- He speaks of the Scribe

The Scribes in ancient Israel were learned men whose business was to Study the Law, Transcribe it, and Write Commentaries on it

Because of their familiarity with the literature they transcribed, they were also its principal interpreters

-- He speaks of the Disputer

This word is describing a Debater

A Debater is someone who argues about a subject, especially in a formal manner

The ability to Debate was greatly admired by both the Greeks and the Romans

A man who could think well on his feet, and who could cleverly direct a discussion, was considered a man of great wisdom

Each of these groups represents the Wisdom of Men

They were considered the Wisest of Wise and the Leaders in Thought and Truth

**3.** Yet, Paul tells us in **v. 21**

***“The world by wisdom knew not God”***

Man, in his wisdom does not accept the Simple Message of the Cross

… And therefore, they don’t know God

They considered it foolish

But in reality, they are the foolish ones

I think of what Paul said in **Romans 1:22 –**

***“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools”***

Man can put someone on the moon, clone sheep, design satellites that can watch our every move,

But when it Comes to God, Understanding God, Knowing God, most men are Foolish

Most of the brilliant thinkers and intellects of this world are absolutely in the dark when it comes to God

In our world of Complexity, it is hard for someone to see and accept the Simplicity of the Message of the Cross

**The ‘Wisdom of Man Denies’ the Simplicity of the Message**

**B. The ‘Wisdom of God Displays’ the Simplicity of the Message**

We read in **v. 20** – ***“Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”***

So, How has God made foolish the world’s wisdom?

Well, we read in **v. 21 – *“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”***

 By the ***“foolishness of preaching”*** the Wisdom of Man is Denounced and the Wisdom of God is Displayed

Paul is not calling Preaching Foolish, but that the lost world considers Preaching Foolish

Paul proclaims that those who are not saved regard preaching as a waste of time

Most lost people will not listen to Gospel preaching

When Paul was teaching Timothy how to conduct himself as a pastor and how too disciple

He simple instructed him to ***“Preach the Word”***

Again, the world thinks that’s too easy

But the Bible tells us that someone isn’t saved …

**Titus 3:5 - *“… by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”***

**Ephesians 2:8, 9 – *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”   
“Not of works, lest any man should boast”***

**Romans 10:9 – *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved”***

The lost man always (thru pride) wants to save himself

Man has all his programs of Reformation, Education, and Information, but are often marked by failure

In a document called, *The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators*, former Secretary of Education, William Bennett said, *“Since 1960, population has increased 41%; the Gross Domestic Product has nearly tripled: and total social spending by all levels of government…multiplied to…a five-fold increase. But during the same 30 year period there has been a 560% increase in violent crime; more than a 400% increase in illegitimate births; a quadrupling in divorce rates; a tripling of the percentage of children living in single-parent homes; more than 200% increase in the teenage suicide rate; and a drop of almost 80 points in the SAT scores.”* He added, *“Modern-day social pathologies*, (The Ways used to identify and solve social problems) *at least a great part of them, have gotten worse. They seem impervious to government spending on their alleviation, even very large amounts of spending.”*

None of the ills of society have gotten better by just throwing more money at it

Man's wisdom says …

*“We have got to have more programs”*

*“We have got to have more education”*

*“We have got to spend more money”*

Just look around; do you think man's wisdom has affected the way men live and behave for the better?

The wisdom of man fails when it comes to making a new man

And whereas man's wisdom has its Programs of Reformation, Education, and Information, …

God has His method of Transformation and Salvation

The only Methods that can completely alter and change a person’s life

What man's wisdom does not see is that it is Not Government, But God that makes the Difference

Man's wisdom says we need to change the dwellings of the poor

Whereas, God says, we need to change the poor that live in those dwellings

In **v.18** Paul spoke of the unsaved as ***“them that perish”***

The word ***“perish”*** does not speak of Annihilation

The word better describes *something* *ruined*

So many of the unsaved are characterized by *ruined lives*

It’s through the Preaching of the Cross that God can take a ruined life and make it whole again

-- God can take a Bottle out of a man's Hand and put a Bible in it

-- He can take a Mouth of Profanity and fill it with Praises

-- He can take a Nobody and make them a Somebody

-- He can take the Vile and make them Virtuous

-- He can take the Unholy and make them Holy

Here’s the amazing thing about all this

God can do all this with the Simple Message of the Cross

Whereas, man in all his wisdom fails,

God’s Wisdom Prospers

God takes a church service much like this one,

We sing a few songs about the blood drawn from Immanuel's veins,

The pastor gets up and preaches the Cross

And People’s lives are changed

All that man cannot do with all his wisdom, …

God does with the Simple Message of the Cross

Christ died, was buried and rose again

*In this way … God hath made foolish the wisdom of this world*

What man could not do in all his wisdom,

God can do through the (so-called) Foolishness of Preaching a Simple Message

**A “SAVING” MESSAGE**

**A “SIMPLE” MESSAGE**

Then, Lastly, we find the Preaching of the Cross to be …

**III. A SEPERATING” MESSAGE – vs. 22-25**

Notice **vs. 22-24 –** ***“For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:” “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;” “But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God”***

Paul speaks of those that are Saved and those that are Perishing

The difference between the two, is the Cross

There are those who Reject the Message of the Cross,

And those who Receive the Message of the Cross

Now Paul carries that division a step farther and classifies all men in one of two classes

First, we see …

**A. The ‘Different’ Classes of Humanity – vs. 22, 23**

In **v. 22**, Paul speaks of the Jews and the Greeks or the Jews and Gentiles

Paul organizes Humanity into two Classifications

Regardless of one's nationality or race, they fall into one of these categories

Paul also describes in **vs. 22, 23**, the Different Reactions of these classes to the Message of the Cross

**1.** The Reaction of the Jews

The Jews sought for a ***“Sign”*** and thus considered the Message of the Cross to be a ***“stumblingblock”***

The Jews were looking for a Messiah that would bring them political deliverance

They were looking for someone to restore their Nation to the glory of the days of David and Solomon

Purely Secular, not Spiritual

The thoughts of the Messiah dying on a cross was beyond their imagination

The word ***“stumblingblock”*** speaks of *a scandal*

It was a scandal to speak of the Messiah dying as a common thief on a cross

Unfortunately, they missed the whole point

**2.** The Reaction of the Gentile

The Greeks ***“sought after wisdom”*** and considered the Message of the Cross ***“foolishness”***

The Message of the Cross was a *stumblingblock* to the Jews and a *laughingstock* to the Gentiles

The Greek wanted Rational Proof

If they couldn’t understand it, they did not accept it

Finally, let’s look at …

**B. The ‘Divine’ Class of Humanity – vs. 24, 25**

In **v. 24**, Paul speaks of ***“them that are called”***

Here he speaks of an altogether difference class of people;

A class made up of both people, people we have already described

He speaks of a ‘**Divine’ Class**

Paul mentioned this new class in **I Corinthians 10:32**

***“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God”***

He adds the ***“Church of God”***

Who is this class that he is referring to?

It’s those who have received the Message of the Cross

It’s the class of people that have been Saved, the Church of God

They are the ones, as stated in **v. 24**,

Which have testimonies of ***“the Power of God and the Wisdom of God”***

I’m glad that I’m in this class

The Message of the Cross is a Separating Message

It separates those who are Saved …

From the other classes of the human race that have Rejected the Message of the Cross

*The Cross Saves Some, but it Separates All*

The Cross is the Great Divide, if you would

Paul sums it all up in **v. 25,** …

***“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men”***

What unsaved men viewed as foolish, is really wise

What unsaved men deprecate as weak, is actually strong

What do you think of the **Saving**, **Simple**, and **Separating** Message of the Cross?

It’s In the Message of the Cross of Christ that we Glory

**Galatians 6:14 – *“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world”***

**CONCLUSION**

**THE “SAVING” MESSAGE**

**THE “SIMPLE” MESSAGE**

**THE “SEPERATING” MESSAGE**