

7. THE WORD OF THE CROSS IS FOLLY AND POWER: 1 Corinthians 1:18-19

by Brett Baggett on Sunday, August 15th, 2021

BIG IDEA: What is “the word of the cross,” and why do some reject it as foolishness yet others experience it as the power of God for salvation?

I. WHAT IS THE WORD OF THE CROSS? (v. 18a)

1 Corinthians 1:18a “For the word of the cross...”

- **“The word of the cross” is essentially this:** We are so wicked that Jesus had to die, and so loved that He was willing to.
- **I)** Though God made man upright and blessed us with holiness, righteousness, and knowledge, we used our once free will to rebel against Him. In Adam, we all sinned. Not only did we sin in Adam, we have all sinned individually in our lives. And there is no small sin; because there is no small God to sin against. (**Genesis 1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Ephesians 4:24; Romans 5:12**)
- **II)** *AND* “The wages of sin is death.” (**Romans 6:23; Genesis 2:17; Ezekiel 18:20**)
- **III)** *THEREFORE* “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” (**Hebrews 9:22; Leviticus 17:11; Leviticus 16**)
- An example of this is seen **I)** in the **daily and yearly sacrifices** at the temple in Jerusalem; **II)** before that, **the Passover**; still before that, **III)** an example can be seen when, after Adam & Eve sinned, **the Lord God made for them garments of skins to cover their shame**. **IV)** Ultimately, look at **the cross!**
- **IV)** “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners” by willingly “laying down his life” for all who would come to faith in Him. (**1 Timothy 1:15; John 10:18**) **HE DID THIS ON A CROSS*
 - **CHILDREN:** All of the bloody animal sacrifices in the Old Testament of your Bible is meant to show you what sin deserves! It also shows you and I why Jesus died in our place. Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!
- **V)** *AND* “There is salvation in no one else.” (**Acts 4:12**)
- (**Peter**) **Acts 4:12** “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”
- **We are so wicked that Jesus had to die, and so loved that He was willing to**, so that all who trust in Him and Him alone would be pardoned, empowered, protected, and one day, when Jesus returns, perfected.
- **On the other hand, all who reject Christ and refuse to embrace this word of the cross are already condemned**, empty, experiencing God’s temporary wrath, and one day, when Jesus returns, will be punished forever in hell, cosmic God’s eternal wrath for sin.

This could not be more serious: Those who embrace Jesus Christ through faith will experience the everlasting splendors of Jesus’ love; those who do not embrace Christ will experience the everlasting terrors of Jesus’ wrath.

Q. Do you see the word of the cross as *FOLLY* or do you experience it as the *POWER* of God?

II. WHY IS THE WORD OF THE CROSS FOLLY TO THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING? (v. 18a)

1 Corinthians 1:18a “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing,”

I) The word of the cross is folly to some because **they are fools themselves, saying in their heart “there is no God”** (Psalm 14:1)

- **Psalm 14:1** “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” (*though, mark it down, in Romans 1 Paul explicitly says everyone knows...*)
- **We would do well to remember what C.S. LEWIS said about the lunacy of atheism:** “A man can no more diminish God’s glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word ‘darkness’ on the walls of his cell.”
- **CHILDREN:** Everyone who has ever existed knows that God exists and that they should worship Him. Some people deny that or avoid that or suppress that, but they know. God has made it clear to all of us in what He has created!

II) The word of the cross is folly to some because **they do not think God will judge them for their sin** (Psalm 10:13)

- **Psalm 10:13** “Why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart, ‘You will not call to account?’”

III) The word of the cross is folly to some because **they presume on the goodness and patience of God** (Romans 2:4-5)

- **Romans 2:4-5** “4 ...do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness (goodness) is meant to lead you to repentance? 5 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.”

IV) The word of the cross is folly to some because **they have their minds set *NOT* on the things of God, but only on the things of man** (Matthew 16:22-23)

- **Matthew 16:22-23** “22 And Peter took [Jesus] aside and began to rebuke him, saying, ‘Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.’ 23 But he turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.’”
- **There are many who want a Savior, but not a crucified Savior!** Many want a Deliverer from sin and its consequences in general, but not from their sin and its consequences in particular! **Q. What about you?**

V) The word of the cross is folly to some because **they think they are basically good, and therefore they have no need for a crucified Savior** (Mark 2:16-17)

- **Mark 2:16-17** “16 And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, ‘Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ 17 And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.’”

VI) The word of the cross is folly to some because if they cannot earn heaven by their works and receive some glory for their actions, they will not have it (Galatians 2:21)

- Galatians 2:21 “I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.”
- Like the self-righteous man in C.S. Lewis’ story *The Great Divorce*, some say: “I’m asking for nothing but my rights. I got to have my rights same as you, see? I’m not asking for anyone’s bleeding charity...,” to which the angel in the story responds, “Then do...At once! Ask for the Bleeding Charity. Everything’s here for the asking and nothing can be bought.”
- If they cannot have heaven by works, they do not want it. Friends, heaven cannot be gained by your goodness. On your own, all you have to offer is the sin that you need to be saved from. *Ask for the Bleeding Charity*. This is why Jesus lived, died, and arose—so that all who repent and believe on Him would be forgiven, counted righteous, and reconciled to God both now and forever. *Everything is here for the asking and nothing can be bought.*

VII) The word of the cross is folly to some because it beckons them to take up their own cross and follow the crucified King (Matthew 16:24)

- Matthew 16:24 “Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’”

VIII) The primary reason the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing is because they love their sin and do not want to give it up (John 3:19-20)

- John 3:19-20 “19 And this is the judgment (*verdict*): the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.”

Q. Do you see the word of the cross as *FOLLY*? Then you are perishing and desperately to be rescued! Pray to God!

III. WHY IS THE WORD OF THE CROSS THE POWER OF GOD TO US WHO ARE BEING SAVED? (v. 18b)

1 Corinthians 1:18b “but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

- *The word of the cross is the power of God to us who are being saved because God, in His great mercy, by His Spirit, transformed our dark hearts so that we now see Jesus as He is—worthy and sufficient!*
- *God abolished all of the foolish reasons that led us to see the cross as folly, therefore we now see and trust in Christ and His cross as the power of God to save us!*
- **CHILDREN:** You must repent of your sin and trust in Jesus Christ, and only God can enable you to do that. No one can make themselves a Christian; only God can change your heart so that you love Jesus and His gospel. Pray, children! Pray and ask God to change you!

Q. Do you see and experience the word of the cross as *POWER*? Then you are being saved! Praise God! Worship the Lord!

I) The word of the cross is power because it announces that we who believe have been forgiven of our sins! (Ephesians 1:7)

II) The word of the cross is power because it properly motivates we saints to keep killing our sin and therefore keep growing in holiness! (Colossians 3:3-5)

III) The word of the cross is power because it reminds believers that because Christ was condemned in our place, there is now no condemnation for us! (Romans 8:1)

IV) The word of the cross is power because it assures us that Christ paid far too high a price for us to ever leave us or forsake us—therefore we can kill our worries and anxieties! (1 Peter 5:7; Romans 8:32)

V) The word of the cross is power because it declares that Christ suffered in His people’s place so that He would one day rid the entire universe of suffering, therefore comforting us in our afflictions! (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

VI) The word of the cross is power because it assures we believers in Christ Jesus of God’s love for us! (1 John 4:10)

IV. THE LORD’S SOVEREIGN PLAN IS TO DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THWART THEIR SUPPOSED CLEVERNESS, FOR HIS OWN GLORY (v. 19)

1 Corinthians 1:19 “For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.’” (Isaiah 29:14)