

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:18 - *For the word of the cross is folly (foolishness) to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it the power of God.*

The message of the cross is the power of God for those who are being saved from the wrath to come, and it is the message of the cross that is the gospel. 1 Corinthians 15 tells us what the gospel is: *"I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you - unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared."* The message of the gospel is the message of the cross. If you track the preaching of the apostles through the book of Acts you will notice one theme: Jesus was crucified and rose again.

Today, I want us to make much of the cross of Christ. We are going to look at our text and to summarize it in one sentence I would say this:

EITHER THE CROSS OF CHRIST IS FOOLISHNESS, OR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD.

I guess the natural question that follows is: What is the cross to you?

I want to make 4 observations from our text that are ultimately going to lead to a conclusion as to why I stand where I do regarding the cross.

Observation #1 - The Cross of Christ was heavily emphasized in Old Testament prophecy.

Jesus upon the cross was the fulfillment of so many Old Testament predictions. What that tells us is that God's written Word was pointing over and over again to the God/Savior/Messiah hanging on a cross to bear the sins of the world. Now in our text today alone, we can note 8 fulfillments of prophecy.

(Prophetic Fulfillment #1) - Jesus carried His own cross to the place where He was crucified. **19:17**

Genesis 22:6 - *Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac.*

(Prophetic Fulfillment #2) - Jesus was crucified with criminals at His side. **19:18**

Isaiah 53:12 - *he.. was numbered with the transgressors.*

(Prophetic Fulfillment #3) - Jesus was killed for being the King of the Jews. **19:19-22**

Daniel 9:26 - *after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off.*

(Prophetic Fulfillment #4) - Jesus' garments were divided and lots were cast for His tunic. **19:23-24**

Psalms 22:18 - *They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.*

(Prophetic Fulfillment #5) - Jesus cried out "I thirst" and was given sour wine to drink. **19:28-29**

Psalms 22:15 - *my tongue sticks to my jaws.*

Psalms 69:21 - *..and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.*

(Prophetic Fulfillment #6) - Jesus finished the work He came to do. **19:30**

Genesis 3:15 - *he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*

(Prophetic Fulfillment #7) - Jesus had no bones broken. **19:31-33**

Psalm 34:20 - *he keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken.*

Exodus 12:46 - *you shall not break any of its bones.*

(Prophetic Fulfillment #8) - Jesus' side was pierced. **19:34-37**

Zechariah 12:10 - *when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.*

Observation #2 - When Jesus was hanging upon that cross, His focus remained on ministering to others. **19:25-27**

Mary, Salome, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene were the women standing there in support of Jesus. I can't imagine the pain in Jesus' mother's heart on that day. She had to watch her baby boy go through all that as an innocent and guiltless man. I'd love to say more, but I want to turn your attention to Jesus.

I want you to notice what was on his mind - His mother. He wanted to make sure His mother was well cared for. Jesus was and is always thinking about what's best for others. He came not to be served but to serve and give His life a ransom. In His final moments, He never lost His focus on ministering to others. He gave His friend John a great ministry task - to care for Mary. He gave Mary someone who could look after her as she grew older.

In the midst of the suffering, He's looking out for others. Did you know the entire reason why He went to the cross was for our benefit? He did it for you and for me. He did not die because He was guilty. He died because we are guilty. He didn't die for sin He committed. He died for sin we committed.

Observation #3 - The majority vote saw the cross as foolishness.

The majority included 4 parties:

- #1 The bystanders (Matthew 27:39-43)
- #2 The Jews (19:20-21)
- #3 The soldiers (19:23-24)
- #4 Pilate (19:19, 22)

Observation #4 - Only a small number saw the cross in honor, seeing the power of God displayed.

The minority included 4 parties:

- #1 The faithful women (19:25)
- #2 The disciple John (19:26-27)
- #3 Joseph of Arimathea (**19:38-42**)
- #4 Nicodemus (19:39-42).

Make no mistake about it, the cross of Christ was predicted and highly anticipated in the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures long before Rome took Jesus to that cross. It's the great theme of the Bible. The message of the cross is the message of the gospel.

What is the cross to you? What does the cross mean to you? How do you see it?