



# The Power of the Cross

## 1 Corinthians 1:17-18

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Expositors' Class

Prepared by: Cedric Deon Andrews

Sunday, April 24, 2016, 4pm at Living Hope Church of Roselle, Illinois

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“All heaven is interested in the cross of Christ, all hell is terribly afraid of it, while men are the only beings who more or less ignore its meaning.”

– **Oswald Chambers**

Open your Bible to **1 Corinthians 1**. The title of our message this afternoon is “The Power of the Cross.”

### **Propositional Statement**

The cross, or the death of Jesus Christ, is the most significant event that this world has ever witnessed. It is the central theme of the Bible, yet to some people, the cross means very little.

(Let Us Pray)

### **Introduction**

This afternoon I declare to you that the Power of the Cross brings about division. It is because of Christ and Him crucified that we find Paul so often dividing the human race in two; not because of race, or age, or skill or earthly power. No that's not it at all. The division is on the basis of a person's reaction to the Cross. The Power of the cross is the Magna Charta of Christianity, and the Oscar of the religious world.

Open your bibles to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 1 and I want to call to your attention two verses and they are number 17 and 18. When you have it just say Amen.

And it reads, “<sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.”

<sup>18</sup>For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Power and its irresistible influence were thick in the air in the church at Corinth. Power plays, if you will, were being instigated in Corinth by divisive parties. We find that we had a party following Paul, a party following Peter, a party following Apollos, and a party who sought to trump them all, the “Christ party.” Party politics always brings pride, but the Cross brings humility. We need the Cross!

### **Vance Havner Quote**

Vance Havner said “We need men of the cross, with the message of the cross, bearing the marks of the cross”.

### **Caught up with the Preacher instead of the Cross**

Sadly we are living in a day in time where many of us are caught up with the preacher instead of the message of the cross. This is what we find Paul addressing here in the first three chapters of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians. This morning we are going to focus on two verses of Paul’s correction to these believers.

Let’s walk through the text together. Verse 17; Paul states that *Christ did not send him to baptize but to preach the gospel*. First off let me say that Paul is not condemning baptism; baptism is important. It is something that naturally follows conversion. What we as believers must understand is that it is of a secondary nature in importance. It is an outward sign of an inward change that has taken place within us. It has its place so please don’t leave here saying brother Cedric said we don’t have to be baptized.

Paul reminds us in Romans the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter verses 3 and 4 he says, “<sup>3</sup>Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

### **The Cross is More Important than Everything!**

But understand the Cross is more than baptism. The Cross is more than what church we are a part of. The Cross is more than everything. It is what unites all Christians. We may need to instruct on secondary issues, but please above all things, preach the Cross of Jesus.

As Paul said in **Galatians 4:13**, “But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

- I. **Lift high the cross by keeping the message Simple**, We preach “not with words of eloquent wisdom;” Acts 4:13.

What Paul is doing is getting a very important point across and that point is: he came to preach the gospel. It doesn’t need improvement. It’s very simple. He came to preach it plainly and not by wisdom of words.

### **Explanation**

Well what do you mean? Paul says lift high the cross *by keeping the message simple*, he wants us to give the simple but powerful message of the cross. He says there ain’t no need for him or for us to try and make everything sound good. The Gospel doesn’t need improvement.

We don't have to dress up our words up to make it seem as if we are skilled and highly educated. You know what I'm talking about. You got some that brings the message of the cross in such a way that you have to have a dictionary with you to even know what they're talking about.

### **Illustration**

Remember what happened with Peter and John in **Acts 4:13**, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were **uneducated**, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus."

The Pharisee – the highly educated and wise men according to man's standard – was shocked, and amazed by the power of the cross. They knew that these men had been with Jesus.

Could I ask you a question? Can the world tell if you've been with Jesus can people see the power of God moving in you and through you?

**Transition:** Now why would Paul make this statement why did Paul operate in this manner? Well he tells us in the second part of this verse: *less the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*

## **II. Lift high the cross by pointing to the Power in the Cross,** Gal. 2:20-21.

1 Cor. 1:18, "<sup>18</sup>For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

### **Explanation**

Brothers we must not empty the cross of its power, Paul understood and calls us to understand that it's not by our power, or our eloquent speaking, or our education, or any of these things that saves a man or leads him to the power of the cross. It is only the good news of the cross of Christ and its power. **Zechariah 4:6** says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts." God must do what man cannot do.

### **Illustration: Not the Power of Cedric**

It's not the power of Cedric or any one of us that converts a man or woman's soul. It is the power of the Cross! Point to the power of the cross. It's not our gifts and abilities. We are just instruments. We are just the mail man. The real power is in the message of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

### **Illustration: Not the Sign of the Cross**

It's not just the sign of the cross that is powerful. Paul understood that the cross of Christ is not just two sticks vertical and horizontal. He knew what was accomplished on that cross and he had experienced that power for himself. And he refused to empty it of its power, he refused to nullify the events of the cross.

**Oswald Chambers** says it this way:

*All heaven is interested in the cross of Christ, all hell is terribly afraid of it, while men are the only beings who more or less ignore its meaning.*

### **Don't Distract from the Power of the Cross**

Brothers let us not diminish or distract from the power of the cross by thinking we have any power in ourselves. Instead, let us remember the pain and the suffering that our Lord and Savior had to endure there in order to reconcile us to a Holy God, And let us receive wholeheartedly that love and that grace that he poured out for us. Let us not remove the power of the cross, by tainting its message with our own worldly wisdom.

Let us proclaim as Paul did in **Galatians 2:20-21**, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”<sup>21</sup> I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.”

This my brothers is *the Power of the Cross*

### **The Cross is Foolishness to Many People**

For some folk this doesn't make sense they just don't get it. They want to point to their own gifts. To many, the idea of a man dying on the Cross is foolishness. This is why Paul goes on to say in our text, **1 Cor. 1:18**, “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

It doesn't make sense! Why would a holy, powerful God become weak like us to save us? Who would do that? Oh, that's the good news saints. *That's the Power of the Cross.*

## **III. Lift high the cross by preaching the Word of the Cross.**

Paul says “to us who are being saved it [the Cross] is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18).

According to Paul, **it is the message of the Cross that saves.** The word of the cross; that is Christ crucified. “Christ crucified!” This is the message that world finds offensive. The world says “Talk about God all you want to, but leave this Jesus Christ out of the picture!”

I come to tell you today that Jesus Christ is the word of the cross. He is the Living Word of God. This is the truth that we must proclaim. *This is the Power of the Cross.*

### **Christ Paid it All!**

Christ paid it all he did for us what we couldn't do for ourselves and he's still doing it today. Over 2,000 years ago Christ came into this world to save souls just like you and I, and he humbly went to the cross to bear our sins and the sins of this world. Let us not forget that they hung him high, and they stretched him wide. Let us not forget the nails that were pounded into his hands and feet. Let us not forget how they pierced him in his side. Oh let us not forget the beating that he took. Let us not forget that the wrath of God was poured out on him for us all. Brothers he never said a mumbling word but instead he willing died for us. It should have been me, it should have been you but he took our place.

### **Those Who are Perishing Don't Get it**

This truth of the gospel doesn't sit well with some folk; some folk just don't get it. Those that are perishing don't get it and they are perishing because of their own sins and hardness of heart. They love their sin. The Cross has a powerful aroma. Paul says in 2 Cor. 2:16, “to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.”

Don't let the cross be an offense of death to you. Don't let that be you; I plead with you to let your prayer be to experience *The Power Of The Cross*. Pray for the event that took place on

that old cross would become real to you. Let today be the day that you ask God to come into your life and allow you to believe in your heart that Christ died on that cross for your sins and put your trust in him and him alone. And not only that; but also ask God to help you die to self-daily like Christ died for us on that cross.

### **To Those Being Saved, the Cross is Our Power!**

In the latter part of **1 Cor. 1:18** Paul says: "but to those of us who are being saved it is the power of God."

Again Paul emphasizes that God's power for salvation is in the message of the cross. Notice that he says those of us who are being saved, he didn't say those of us who have been saved. That's very important. Why would he say being saved? I thought once I accepted Christ into my life and believed through faith that he died on the cross for my sins and rose again I was saved.

### **The Power of the Cross in our Sanctification**

We understand my brothers that this speaks of the continuous work of salvation for those of us who believe. Theologians call this "progressive sanctification." There is a reason why once we believed and we're saved we don't go straight to heaven.

God has to shape and mold us into the image of his son. And this shaping and molding is called our sanctification process, and this process is hard. The moment we believe it starts and we don't have the power to persevere in this without God's power. It is this power, the same power that was displayed at the cross. This power was at work then and for us who believe it's at work now in us and through us.

### **Conclusion**

In closing; this is the message I charge all of you to preach and to testify to. It's Christ crucified plain and simple, nothing wise, nothing slick and devious, nothing fancy, only Christ crucified. This is *the Power of the Cross*.

(Let us Pray)