

THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS

by

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SERMON ONE

“WHY I PREACH THE CROSS”

Text: I Corinthians 1:18. **“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”**

I give three reasons why I preach the cross. First: The cross is an absolute necessity to meet the needs of the human race. Second: The cross is the wisdom of God. Third: I have experienced the power of the cross.

I. The Absolute Necessity of The Cross

The cross is necessary because of the power of sin.

- Sin is the blackest page in human history.
- Sin is the most tragic fact in human experience.
- Sin is a deadly disease that is eating the heart out of the human race.
- Sin is the incurable cancer of the human soul.
- Sin is much more than a mistake.
- Sin is a loathsome deadly disease.
- Sin is in the very nature of humanity.

We are all sinners by nature, and we are sinners by choice. Sin is blighting and damning, ruining and cursing the whole human race. Sin is the ugliest thing in human life. O the trail of suffering that is left in the world where the slimy serpent of sin has made its way through human life.

If you are disposed to think lightly of sin all you have to do to realize the awful tragedy of sin is to look around you. All the human suffering in the world today is the result of sin. All the human misery that is experienced by the race is the result of sin. Go to the jails, go to the penitentiaries, go to the poor houses, go to the bread lines and the battle fields of the world. Go to the divorce courts where the divorce mill is grinding out its awful carnage of human misery, where little children become the innocent victims of that awful tragedy of sin that has brought wreck and ruin to the home life of America and the world. Go to the health resorts and see the diseased and broken human bodies. Go to the insane asylums and see the diseased human minds. Go anywhere – go out on the streets of your city tonight, go to the road houses and beer joints and when you have seen it all, write over it one word – SIN.

Sin is the most dangerous thing on earth anybody ever tampered with. Sin will wreck everything in any human life that is worthwhile. O! God told the truth when He said, “**The wages of sin is death.**”

- It is death to all the hopes that well up in the human heart.
- It is death to ambitions, death to all that is fine, noble, good, pure and true.
- It is death to happiness.
- It is physical death.
- It is spiritual death and eternal death.

Yet some people think it is smart to dabble in sin. Some people think that you are a sissy if you refuse to take part in it.

O! Listen friend, you had better tamper with anything on earth than sin. You had had better play with the forked lightning; you had better take hold of the end of a high powered line charged with forty thousand volts of electricity, or dare to play with a diamond-backed rattlesnake than with sin.

II. The Cross Meets Human Needs.

Because of the tragedy of sin the cross of Jesus Christ is the one absolute necessity for a lost world. You can search wherever you will, there is not another remedy offered for sin that will work.

There is no other cure for sin that will cure. There is no other balm offered for poor, broken, bleeding, sin-cursed humanity but the “**Balm of Gilead**”, which is the cross of Jesus Christ.

- What the human race needs is not a social gospel – a gospel of social uplift.
- What the world needs is not education, primarily, not more culture, more refinement, nor better environment. O! We hear that preached so much on every hand today.
- What the world needs is a new heart.

The thing that is wrong with the world is not the social conditions. It's the hearts of human beings that have made social conditions what they are.

You can take an unregenerated man and put him in the Garden of Eden and with the disease of sin in his soul he would turn it into a hell. But you can take a new creature in Christ Jesus and put him anywhere you will on the face of the earth and he will change conditions around him.

What the world needs is Jesus.

The reason I preach the cross is because it is the only thing humanity has ever tried that can reach down into the depths of man's needs and lift him out of the “**horrible pit and miry clay and set his feet on a rock and put a new song in his mouth, establish his goings**”, and help him go straight and stand up and be a man again in the sight of God.

Man doesn't need arnica salve spread on the bruises made by sin. When you do that you are only treating the symptoms of sin and you will never do the human race any good until you get something that will go down into the heart and change it – regenerate it. And the cross of Jesus Christ is the power of God that will do that very thing for poor, broken, sin-cursed humanity.

Buddhism's main teaching according to the National Encyclopedia is this: Man has no soul. There is only consciousness in the human being. The world is evil and life means suffering. The desired end of man is "cessation" and he himself is the agent to bring it about. The best he can ever hope for is "Nirvana" or complete annihilation. Somewhere after awhile he can get away from it all and cease to be.

Confucianism recognized heaven and the spirits, but in its general attitude it is agnostic. Their worship is nature and ancestor-worship. Duty, to them refers mainly to human relationships and the present life. The whole system is a system of works.

Mohammedanism has one God, Allah. They believe in spirits, in heaven and in hell. But theirs is strictly a religion of legalism and observance of times, periods of prayer, giving legal alms and observing seasons of fasting.

Heaven or hell is destination, and whether you go to heaven or hell depends solely upon the basis of your relationship with Jesus Christ. Truly, **"The world by wisdom knew not God."** If you study all the ancient religions of the world, even that of the Greeks who reached the highest in culture, art, literature, philosophy and education ever attained by man, you are astounded at the childishness of it all. How true that **"the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."** Yes, **"the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."**

III. It Effects Complete Reconciliation.

The cross is the power of God and the wisdom of God, because in it is the expiation which restores God to man and through it is regeneration which restores man to God and thereby, a sinning world and a holy God are reconciled and once again can walk in fellowship together.

In the expiation accomplished on the cross it is made possible for man to come into fellowship with a holy God by reason of the fact that sin has been atoned for and has been put out of the way, in that the justice of God has been satisfied. The chasm caused by sin has been bridged, God has been reconciled to a sinning world and the way to God has been opened by which a sinner can come back again into the presence of God and fellowship with God.

This is symbolized in the rending of the veil of the temple at the death of Christ. When the veil is rent in twain from top to bottom it means that sin has been fully atoned for and that now nothing stands between God and man except man's own will and choice. The whole world has access to God.

That is what Paul meant in Romans 5: 1-2:

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom we also have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

That is what he meant when he said,

“Having therefore brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.”

The cross is the wisdom of God.

- The cross provides expiation for sin.
- The cross provides reconciliation with God.
- The cross provides an open way for a sinning race to come back into fellowship with a holy God.
- The cross provides cleansing from sin and power over sin.

IV. I Have Experienced The Power Of The Cross.

O how I thank God that every promise that God makes in relation to the cross, every promise that God makes in Jesus Christ centers around the cross and can be tested in the crucible of human experience.

We don't have a religion of more theory, of theological dogmas, dead forms, rituals and ceremonies.

I preach the cross because I have experienced its power in my own life. There was a time when God turned the searchlight into my soul and revealed to me that I was ruined, undone, hopeless and helpless and on the way to hell in my sin. That was the darkest hour I think I ever faced in my life when I came to see myself in the light of God's search light as He turned it on my soul.

When I came to face the fact of sin in my life and nature, I called to my bedside my mother and said “Mother, I am lost. I must be saved or I can't stand it any longer.”

She sat down by my bed and opened the Book and the first verse she read to me was John 3:16. **“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”**

- There the peace of God that passeth all understanding possessed my soul.
- There I was made a new creature in Christ Jesus.
- There the love of God was shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost.

“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.”

1. *Foolishness to the Greeks.*

“We preach Christ crucified, unto the Greeks foolishness.”

Yes it is foolishness to a lost world, for the Greeks in this instance represent that crowd of the world that is seeking after God through worldly wisdom, trying to find God by human reasoning. They preach that what the world needs is more culture, more education, more refinement, a better environment, etc. The cross to that crowd is foolishness.

2. *To The Jew A Stumbling Block.*

The Jew represents another crowd—those who think they are good enough without regeneration, who think that because they have been reared in the environment of the church, because they have lived a clean life, and believe in God; believe in religion and the Bible, and treat their fellowman right and live by the golden rule they are saved. To this crowd the cross is a stumblingblock.

But thank God never a sinner comes to Jesus Christ who doesn't find the burden lifted from a sin-sick soul; who doesn't find the peace that **“passeth all understanding,”** together with a new life, and new hope.

I preach the cross because one day by the grace of God, I made my way to the “fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins,” and plunged myself beneath its flood and into the greatest experience of my life. I found it to be the **“power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.”**

3. *A Divinely Revealed Plan of Salvation.*

I preach the cross because it is the last word of a divinely revealed plan of salvation. I know that the plan of salvation in the Bible is a divinely revealed, divinely wrought plan, for man never would have made such a plan. The wisdom of man wants to help himself—wants to work out a plan where man can be his own saviour.

But the cross reduces the human race to utter helplessness and presents salvation as a free gift to all who will receive it; to the rich and the poor, the educated and ignorant, the high and the low.

- If man had devised a plan of salvation only a few could ever attain unto it.
- If salvation were by education or refinement, very few could qualify.
- If salvation had been on the basis of human resources or upon the basis of good works none of us could be saved.

For, boast as we may about our righteousness and the dignity of man, all of us, when you analyze the whole of our lives, have some mighty black pages. All that anybody can say, even the greatest saints among us, is “Just a sinner saved by grace.”

- If you would understand the depth of human guilt, you must look at the cross.
- If you would see the awful sinfulness of sin, you must look at the cross.
- If you would understand the need of your own heart, you will see it at the cross.
- If you ever understand God you must see Him in the cross.
- If you would understand Jesus and his compassion for the human race you must look at the cross.

With all the human suffering in the world, if I should say to a suffering, sin-sick world, “God loves you,” it would sound like mockery. But if I can point suffering humanity to the cross and I can say to those who suffer, “God died there to save you from your sin,” then in that and that alone can a suffering, sinning world understand and believe that God loves it.

Someone has said,

- “The history of human guilt culminates in the cross.
- The purposes of divine love are made intelligible at the cross.
- The rays of glory emanating from Christ are focused in the cross.
- The fingers of prophecy point to the cross.
- The mysteries of prophecy are unraveled at the cross.
- The great problem of human redemption is solved in the cross.
- The serpents head is bruised at the cross.
- The door of heaven is opened at the cross.
- The fountain of Salvation is unsealed at the cross.
- All the great events of the gospel yield in importance to the cross.
- The incarnation was preparatory to the cross.
- The transfiguration foreshadowed the cross.
- The resurrection was a complement to the cross.
- Pentecost was the firstfruits of the cross.
- All the great doctrines of grace revolve around the cross.
- Our new life is born at the cross.
- The world is stripped of its charm at the cross.
- Earthly glory fades at the cross.
- Our condemnation is lifted at the cross.
- The bitters of life are sweetened by the cross.
- The shadows of death are dispelled at the cross.
- The heart of God is revealed at the cross.

“I am saved by the cross. Hallelujah for the cross of Jesus Christ! It is the power of God and the wisdom of God. To those who perish it is foolishness, but I invite you to put it to the test. **‘We preach Christ crucified, unto the Greeks foolishness, unto the Jews a stumbling block, but to them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.’**”

I visited one day in Jerry McCauley's mission in the Bowery, New York, Mr. Hadley was superintendent of the mission at that time. After the services he took me over the mission. We came across the picture of a distinguished looking man hanging on the wall. He had a long mustache and straight shoulders with soldierly bearing.

Mr. Hadley stopped in front of that picture and said, "I want to tell you about that man. That is the Major." And he told me a story like this.

"There used to come into this mission one of the most loathsome figures I have ever seen in my life. He had been a Major during the Civil War. The Major was a sot drunkard. His body was diseased and broken by sin. He was the most repulsive human being ever I have known."

He said, "Night after night he came staggering into the mission drunk—came to the altar and pretended that he was coming for prayer, but his purpose was to get in out of the cold and get some soup and hot coffee. I became so disgusted with him one night that I led him to the door and all but kicked him out and told him not to come back any more."

Then he said, "After the services I went home, but couldn't sleep. I lay there and tossed on my bed, and there kept coming into my mind one verse of Scripture—'**Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.**' In the wee small hours of the night God said to my heart, 'Hadley, that means the Major, and you kicked him out tonight.'"

He said, "I got up and dressed and told my wife that I was going out to look for the major. I went in the direction I saw him disappear when I put him out. I found him, brought him back to the mission and gave him a cup of hot coffee, stayed with him till I got him sober and we got on our knees together. If I ever prayed in my life, I prayed for the Major, and before daylight the next morning he found his way to the cross. He lived only two years after that, for sin had wrecked his body, but I never saw a man with more power for God. He went all over this Bowery in New York bringing men to the altar and praying them into the kingdom of God.

"The day he lay a corpse here in this altar I counted over eleven hundred men who walked by the casket and said, "God bless him. He showed me the way to the cross."

I said, "Praise God for the cross of Jesus Christ. It is the power of God and the wisdom of God."

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