

The Power of the Cross

Priorities of Life

These verses are riddled with God's activity in our lives.

We see a pretty good list of that activity in v. 30.

And at the centre of all God's activity is the Cross.

The Power of the Cross begins with God's personal presence.

That is what distinguishes the Cross of Jesus from all other crosses.

God was on the cross where Jesus was crucified.

Jesus was God in flesh.

He was God who came into this world to be the Messiah, the Redeemer.

The Cross is all about God's presence being with us.

It opens the way to enter the presence of God.

But not everyone shared Paul's passion for the cross of Jesus.

Paul knew that anything good coming from a cross sounded ludicrous.

Paul tells us from the world's perspective the cross is silliness. (18)

From the world's perspective the cross is shameful. (26)

From the world's perspective the cross is a place for society's scum. (28).

From the world's perspective the cross was a stumbling block. (23)

The world says that preaching Jesus crucified is for the weak minded.

The word for folly used by Paul is translated from the Greek word **moros**.

From that Greek word we have an English word - moron.

It is not a particularly nice thing to call a person a moron.

But that is the perception the world has of Christians.

People who believe in the power of the cross are sluggish.

They are dull or simple-minded.

The world is not interested in the centrality of the Cross.

The world does have a natural interest in God.

People hope that when they are in a tight spot that God is with them.

People definitely want to know that God is on their side.

From time to time they bring Jesus into their life.

We see athletes cross themselves before competition.

Governments appoint chaplains who will pray over conventions.

Most public dinners still begin with grace.

The world has a mild curiosity about God.

After disasters people have plenty of questions for God.

Paul's own perspective of the cross changed from garbage to good news.

The Cross was the only message Paul preached.

Paul saw the Cross much differently than the world did.

Paul preached the Cross as the strength of God. (18)

He saw the Cross as salvation. (21)

He saw the Cross as the source of life. (30)

He saw the Cross as the place of sanctification. (30)

Paul realized there was no other message that spoke the Gospel.

The Good News pointed in only one direction.

The Gospel, the Good News always points to the cross of Jesus.

Only the Cross of Jesus makes salvation available.

Simple trust in Jesus results in receiving the gift of eternal life.

By faith Jesus' forgiveness is received.

By faith Jesus is embraced as our Saviour.

By faith the wonderful gift of eternal life is received.

The Cross is the power to pardon all debts.

That is where the power of the cross begins.
Paul says that **"Christ in me is the hope of glory"** (Colossians 1:27).
That is the Power of the Cross.
But what good does it do when the world is not interested in that good news?
How do the spiritually lost become interested in the cross?
How do those bound in sin recognize they need someone to save them?
It begins with the person of faith.
It requires disciples of Jesus who live immersed in the power of the cross.
And the power of the cross is not confined to salvation.
That is where too many believers stop.
The Cross is not just about Jesus being in us.
The Cross offers so much more than the gift of eternal life.
The Cross is equally about us being in Jesus.
That is when life really starts to pop.
When I start to live my life in Christ this life becomes abundant.
The cross has the power to transform this life.
God takes what is low and foolish and weak and nothing in this world.
And He not only redeems it, He also sanctifies it.
God not only wants us to have Jesus.
God also wants Jesus to have us.
The cross calls me to give me to Jesus.
The Power of the Cross makes Jesus my priority.
Paul said in Colossians 2:6-7, **"As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving."**
Through the Cross we receive the work of Jesus' forgiveness in us.
But also by the Cross we are called to live in Him.
Jesus prayed for His disciples, just hours before His arrest and crucifixion.
And this was His prayer.
"I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me." (John 17:20-21)
The cross is good news when the world sees the difference it makes in our life.
When my life is radically different because Jesus is in me and I am in Him, the cross is no longer foolishness, it is amazing.
The saving work of the cross is Jesus in me.
The sanctifying work of the cross is me in Jesus.
I have the same fellowship with Jesus as He has with the Father.
That is when life becomes abundant - when I stop living for myself.
Life becomes different and unexpected when I start living for God.
The world sees the power of the cross through a life totally transformed.
It requires more than the forgiveness of sins.
It requires the cleansing of all unrighteousness.
God never expected us to stop at the point of forgiveness.
He expected the disciple to surrender to Jesus' Lordship.
But that is where too many believers settle.
They are offered the gift of the Promised Land.
But like Israel, they never totally immerse themselves into that promise.
And they wander through life in a wilderness instead of experiencing victory.
They don't surrender everything to God because it seems too risky.
And they squander the abundance that God is offering.
The world sees that and asks, "Who wants to live in the wilderness?"
If that is what trusting and following God does, who wants that?
They need to see the difference the cross makes in this life.
This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.
What does the world see happening in the church today?

Let me illustrate with the telephone.

When I was a kid my Uncle Ross had an amazing rec room.

We call them family rooms now.

In his rec room was an antique phone.

I was a neat old phone mounted to the wall.

An ear piece sat in a hook and the mouth piece was attached to a wooden box.

Originally, if you wanted to make a call, you turned a crank.

That rang the operator.

You told the operator who you wanted to talk to.

And the operator would connect you to your party.

If you used that phone you were stuck there talking to the wall.

You had your back to everyone else in the room.

We had a much better phone at home when we were growing up.

It had a hand piece attached to the phone.

It was called the receiver and you could both hear and talk into it.

You could stand up or sit down.

You could turn to face the room.

It was usually positioned where you could write with one hand.

But you couldn't do much else when you were on the phone.

When Dorothy and I went to Seminary we got the technology of mobility.

We got a long cord installed on our wall phone.

It was the coil cord that could stretch 20 feet.

We were now free to roam wherever we wanted in the kitchen.

And there were no roaming charges.

We could never go back to the box on the wall or even the short cord.

In Summerside we thought we had become totally liberated.

We bought cordless phones.

Well now we could go up and down the stairs.

We could move from one room to another.

We could even go outside or be in the garage and answer the phone.

And we could put it on speaker.

So then we had two hands free.

We could eat a steak and talk on the phone at the same time.

We had experienced the ultimate freedom.

But then came the cell phone.

Wow! Now you didn't even have to be home.

You could be almost anywhere, except maybe Saskatchewan, and talk on the phone.

No confining cords or wires.

You could be at work, or shopping, or driving, or visiting a neighbour.

You see where I am going.

At one point you had to be where your phone was to talk.

Now the phone is where you are and you can talk anywhere.

What would you think if I traded in my cell phone for a wall phone?

You would think crazy, fool, moron.

That is the difference between Jesus in me and me in Jesus.

Too often the world sees the church with their nose to the wall talking to Jesus.

And with our nose to the wall they see us with our backs to them.

We are so excited talking to Jesus.

And we never get around to talking to people.

We are experiencing the redeeming presence of Jesus while excluding them.

If they want to experience the presence of Jesus they have to come to us.

With that attitude we are old fashioned and look crazy and out of touch.

We talk to the wall when we could be free by "cellular technology".

The impact of the Day of Pentecost changed the church.

The disciples had been praying in the Upper Room.

But when the Holy Spirit poured out on them they poured out on people.

The people in Jerusalem saw the full impact of the cross.

And thousands repented and sought Jesus' forgiveness that day.
The world still needs to see people living in the power of the cross.

People living in the power of the cross make the Good News good news!

People who aren't living for themselves and their comforts.

People who aren't satisfied with just getting by spiritually.

People who care as much about the eternity of others as their own eternity.

That is when the cross loses its foolishness.

That is what rescues the perishing.

And so we come to the Communion Table.

We celebrate the bread and cup that point us to the cross.

We look crazy to the world taking these elements.

What is the point in this tiny little meal?

It is ludicrous.

And it will stay that way if all we do is thank Jesus for dying to me.

It will stay that way if I'm happy for me.

But what if, in receiving these elements, we say to Jesus, "I'm in You"?

As You gave Your all for me now I'm all Yours.

That is exactly what Paul was saying in verse 30.

"[God] is the source of your life in Christ Jesus ..."

Dr. Bill Bright the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ said "Your view of God determines everything about you. Everything is influenced by your view of God. You are not your own. You have been bought with a price."

Do you recognize that God is the source of your life?

When the world sees your heart immersed in God's love the cross makes sense.

What if, in receiving these elements, you see others for whom Jesus died?

What if you said, "Whatever it takes Jesus, use me to love them"?

"You gave Your all for me, now I am all for you."

What impact would that have on the people in your life?

What impact would that have on your values?

What impact would that have on your attitudes?

What impact would that have on how you use your resources?

What impact would that have on your use of time?

What impact would that have on how your life and light shine?

The Lord's Supper is not just about us receiving Jesus.

It is also about Jesus receiving us.

Communion needs to mean the same thing for us that it did for Jesus.

Communion is about putting God's will ahead of our own.

It is about proclaiming God's amazing love until He comes.

Jesus puts it this way, **"If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."** (Mt. 16:24)

Communion