

Show... 'The Crowd or the Cross' DVD Clip 2:50 Turn in your Bible to 1 Corinthians 1
The CROSS says DONE! The Crowd says DO—do anything you can to earn or merit God's favor...
Jesus says, "Come to Me..." for I have DONE all that is necessary for you to be forgiven and experience new life.

Last week we saw the Scandal of the Cross of Christ. Today we are looking at the Power of the Cross of Christ.
The Power of the Cross of Christ is one of the themes in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians in chapters 1-2.

Paul greets them (1:1-3), thanks God for His great work in them (1:4-9), & exhorts them to get along (1:10-17).
Paul passion is seen in 1:17: '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.'

Paul saw the Cross of Jesus Christ as being the focal point of God's power displayed on earth...

God's greatest power is NOT seen in mountain ranges, vast oceans, or endless space in the heavens.

God's greatest power is NOT seen in hurricanes, tornadoes, tsunamis, or sun's energy,...or even nuclear bombs.

God's power is seen primarily and perfectly and gloriously in the Cross of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Paul explains in 1:18-30 how the Cross of Christ is THE revelation of God's power.

He contrasts: 1) God's perspective Vs. Man's perspective, 2) Wisdom Vs. Foolishness, 3) Power Vs. Weakness

Paul's reveals his goal in verse 31: ALL boasting is to be in Christ: "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."

My Purpose: Cooperate with the Spirit's desire to transform you from being a proud, self-reliant person
to one who only exults in the Cross of Christ.

The Cross of Christ has the POWER to...

1. Divide
2. Prove God is God & You're NOT
3. Silence Man's Boasting
4. Completely Save Sinners
5. Create Christ-Boasters

1. The Cross of Christ Divides... Only two ways to respond to the Cross: Accept it or Reject it.

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.

What is the Word of the Cross? 1:23, 2:2 Christ Crucified...Jesus dying on the cross paying for sins!

Jesus Person: God-Man Work: died for sinners & rose again Accomplishment: save sinners

Only two possible responses: 1) Cross is mere foolishness OR 2) Cross is God's power to save sinners!

Currently perishing: Cross=foolishness. Currently being saved: Cross=display of God's power to save sinners!

2. The Cross of Christ Proves God is God & You are NOT--God's wisdom & power is greater than yours

A. God determined to destroy man's wisdom.

1:19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

1:20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age?

Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

In vs. 19, Paul quotes Is. 29:14, which speaks of God's sovereign act of destroying man's wisdom—it is folly.

Ever since Adam chose to rebel against God's command by eating of the forbidden fruit, man's wisdom and discernment has been independent from God: 'I will decide what is true, what is right, what is good for me...'

In vs. 20, Paul asks 3 questions: Where are the wise? Where are the scribes? Where are the debaters?

In other words... 'Why are the wisest of people NOT able to stand up before or stand against God?'

Answer: God made their wisdom seem like foolishness...HOW? Verses 21-25 tell us how!!!

B. God destroyed man's wisdom by...

1. Blockading our self-reliant quest to know God on their own terms.

1:21a For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom,

God determined that in our own wisdom none of us would ever truly know God (incapable because of sin).

It is impossible to merely 'reason' yourself to truly know God—you can know about God but not know of God.

2. Determining that only through the proclaiming of Christ crucified can sinners be saved by God.

1:21b it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

God determined that mankind can only know Him by believing in what is preached—Cross of Christ. This destroys the wisdom of the wise & frustrates the cleverness of the clever—trust a bloody redeemer. You can easily see why the cross is the end of the line for human pride.

Picture a well-respected businessman, a stay home mother or a teacher being taken out to the garbage dump and standing in front of a post with a naked man hanging by nails driven through his wrists, covered with blood, gasping for his last breaths, and being told, "This is God's wisdom and righteousness and holiness and redemption. Will you kneel down and cast yourself on him for mercy?"

God chose a way of salvation that devastates human pride. 'That--You want me to bow down before that!' God cuts off the way of pride and frustrates man's reliance on human power and human wisdom. And then he opens a way to glory and to God that proud man cannot stand, namely, the way of the cross.

Why? Is it because he hates man? No. It is because he hates pride.

When God blockades the road of pride, he blockades the road to destruction.

When He routes you to the Calvary Road of brokenness, humility & faith, He routes you to Himself.

3. Showing that our desire to be in control through power and/or wisdom is a dead end street.

1:22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,

Signs: 'I'm stronger...I can do what I want' Need for Power: be in control through strength

Wisdom: 'I understand... I can manipulate' Need for Intelligence: be in control through understanding

1:23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,

God's answer for mankind's need for signs and wisdom: Cross of Christ! Christ crucified!

Power: God overcome the power of sin, death, Satan's place, God's just condemnation,

Wisdom: God's justice was fully met as well as the display of His

God manifested His justice by punishing sin that was placed on His Son;

God demonstrated His love by dying for sinners & reconciling those who were once enemies.

Mankind rejects the Cross of Christ...Christ crucified because to our minds, the Cross seems...

Weak: How can a crucified man have the power/authority to forgive my sins, make me acceptable?

Foolish: How can believing in/trusting a poor, rejected & crucified man cleanse my heart?

1:24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

***Called people rejoice in the Cross of Christ...Christ crucified:**

Is God's power: Jesus is the sinless Substitute who overcame sin, death, Satan by dying & rising again.

Is God's wisdom: Jesus' death/resurrection is the display of God's perfections

1:25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

***The reason God's 'foolishness' is wiser than mankind's best wisdom and**

God's 'weakness' is stronger than mankind's best strength IS simply because it IS!

3. The Cross of Christ Silences Mankind's Boasting; God saves to get all the praise!

A. God chooses ordinary people--not the 'rich & famous' to come to Christ.

1:26 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.

B. God chooses ordinary people--to shame the wise & strong so no one will boast in themselves before Him.

1:27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise;

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;

1:28 God chose what is low & despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,

1:29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

God's purpose in choosing this way is to nullify man's pride—desire to praise self but rather praise Him!

4. The Cross of Christ Completely Saves Sinners.

Paul tells us what the Cross of Christ accomplished in verse 30.

1:30 He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom=SAVING, & our righteousness=JUSTIFICATION, and sanctification=SANCTIFICATION, and redemption=GLORIFICATION.

This verse gives us the outline for the next three messages...

Palm Sunday, next week--Jesus is our righteousness —JUSTIFICATION—declared righteous by God

Easter Sunday, in 2 weeks--Jesus is our sanctification —SANCTIFICATION—transformed to Christ-likeness.

March 30, in 3 weeks--Jesus is our redemption—GLORIFICATION—hope for eternity.

The Cross of Christ enables sinners to have life in Jesus as our wisdom...by believing in Him to save us.

An important question is HOW...How does the Cross of Christ enables sinners to have LIFE...be saved!

- A. Through the Cross, Jesus died to propitiate (exhaust) God's wrath against sinners.** 1 John 4:10
'In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us & sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.'
If God were not JUST, there would be no DEMAND for the CROSS: his Son to suffer and die.
And if God were not LOVING, there would be no DESIRE for the CROSS: his Son to suffer and die.
 But God is both just and loving. Therefore His love is willing to meet the demands of His justice.
God demanded, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart...soul...might" (Deut. 6:5).
 But everyone loves other things more. This is what sin is--dishonoring God--preferring other things over Him.
 We glorify what we enjoy most, & that it is NOT God but rather SELF, power, pleasures, possessions...
 Sin is not small because our sin is NOT against a small Sovereign, but against Almighty God.
 The seriousness of an insult rises with the dignity of the one insulted.
 The Creator of the universe is infinitely worthy of respect and admiration and loyalty.
 Therefore, failure to love Him is not trivial—it is treason. It defames God and destroys our happiness.
Since God is just, He does not sweep our crimes against Him 'under the rug'.
 He feels a holy wrath against us and our crimes. We deserve to be punished, and He has made this clear:
 There is a holy curse hanging over all sin. "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).
 Not to punish sin is unjust. Demeaning of God would be endorsed. A lie would be at the core of reality.
But God's love for sinners keeps Him from simply judging and condemning sinners.
 God is not content to show wrath, no matter how holy it is BECAUSE He loves people even as sinners.
 Therefore God sent His own Son to absorb his wrath and bear the curse for all who trust him.
 "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13).
 This is the meaning of the word "propitiation" in 1 John 4:10.
Propitiation: removal of God's wrath by providing a substitute—in this case-Jesus Christ, God's Son.
 The substitute, Jesus Christ, does not just cancel the wrath; he absorbs it and diverts it from us to Himself.
 God's wrath is just & it was spent on His Son as He hung on the cross. God did not withdraw His wrath.
 Don't trifle with God's holiness or trivialize His love—both are seen in the Cross of Christ!
 We will never be in awe of God's love until we see our sinfulness and the condemnation we deserve.
 But when, by grace, we waken to our unworthiness, then we may look at the suffering of Christ and say,
'In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us & sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.'
- B. Through the Cross, Jesus died so that sinners' sins can be fully forgiven.** Ephesians 1:7
'In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,'
When you forgive a debt or an offense or an injury, you don't require a payment for settlement.
 If repayment is made for what you lost, there is no need for forgiveness. We have our due.
 Forgiveness says, 'What you owe me as payment or settlement, I do not require it--I forgo that payment.
 Forgiveness assumes grace. If I am injured by you, grace lets it go. I don't sue you. I forgive you.
Grace gives what someone doesn't deserve. That's why *forgiveness* has the word *give* in it.
 Forgiveness is not "getting" even. It is giving away the right to get even.
 That is what God does to us when we trust Christ:
 "Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (Acts 10:43).
If we believe in Christ, God no longer holds our sins against us.
 God says, "I, I am He who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake" (Isaiah 43:25).
 "As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12).
But this raises a problem. We all know that forgiveness is not enough.
 We may only see it clearly when the injury is great—like murder or rape.
 Our society would fall apart if judges said to murderers, 'Are you sorry? Okay. You're forgiven, you may go.'
 In cases like these we see that while a victim may have a forgiving spirit, the state cannot forsake justice.
So it is with God's justice. All sin is serious, because it is against God.
 He is the one whose glory is injured when we ignore or disobey or blaspheme him.
 His justice does not allow him simply set us free if we are sorry for our sins. **A debt must be paid!**
 The injury done to God's glory by our sin must be repaired so in justice, His glory shines more brightly.
 For sinners to be forgiven, God's honor must be upheld even though former blasphemers are set free.
That is what redemption is all about—Jesus redeemed you from the slave market of sin—debt is paid!
Forgiveness costs us nothing. That's GRACE. **But forgiveness cost Jesus his life.** That's justice.
 How precious is the news that God does not hold your sins against you & how beautiful is Jesus who did this?

5. **The Cross of Christ alone Creates “Jesus-Boasters”.**

1:29b so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

1:31 Therefore, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.

God hard-wired you to boast in GREATNESS. He created you to naturally boast and worship someone/thing.

God is NOT against our boasting or worshipping...He is only concerned about who/what we boast in.

We are all born as SELF-WORSHIPERS—that is the heart of what it means to be a sinner: SELF-worshiper.

Yet God says no one will boast in His presence of their own greatness or of their achievements. NO ONE!

All boasting will be directed towards God—because He alone is sovereign, perfect & great...He alone is worthy.

The purpose of God in the creation of man and the salvation of sinners is that we might boast in HIM.

This is God's will for you this morning. God is speaking in these words very clearly.

The Cross of Christ is God's Power to ...

1. **Only BOAST in Christ:** WHO are you boasting in? WHO do you worship? Who do you want to look good?

John 5:44 *How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?*

Turn away from all boasting in SELF & boast only in Christ—His Cross.

Don't seek your pleasure in your own wisdom, or own strength, or own looks, or own achievements or...

Look to Christ crucified and see what becomes of it all.

Galatians 6:14 *"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."*

How do you view your salvation: something you did (I choose Christ) or something God has done for you?

Who really & actually gets the credit for your salvation?

Who is holding on to who? Are you holding on to God or do you see Him holding on to you?

2. **Not be ASHAMED of Christ:** Are you ashamed of Jesus Christ?

2 Tim 1:8-12 *Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, 9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, 10 and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 11 for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, 12 which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.*

Do you believe that God's 'worse' is far better than man's (your) best.

Don't let the shame of the world make your heart feel foolish...

Remind yourself that God's worse is much better than the world's best.

Don't be afraid to look foolish: God wasn't!

Jesus wrapped His eternal glorious Deity in a common, plain, unattractive human context...WHY? To save YOU!

Jesus looked foolish by dying on a cross—by dying on the Cross He displayed God's power over sin/death/Satan

Come to Christ and die this morning—and to live. there is no greater life, no greater joy than to boast in Christ!

3. **Be CONTROLLED by Christ:** What is controlling you? Driving you?

2 Cor. 5:14-15 *For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.*

Does Jesus' great love for you control you...dictate what you say, do, think, feel, desire, and worship???

If NOT...look to the Cross of Christ...IT IS THE FULL DISPLAY OF GOD'S LOVE FOR YOU!

It is God's pure love reaching out to you, a sinner, deserving God's wrath in yourself...reach out to Him!

Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die

By John Piper

http://www.desiringgod.org/media/pdf/books_pojc/bpojc_all.pdf

Pages 32-33 To Cancel the Legal Demands of the Law Against Us Col. 2:13

Being justified before God and being forgiven by God are not identical. To be justified in a courtroom is not the same as being forgiven. Being forgiven implies that I am guilty and my crime is not counted. Being justified implies that I have been tried and found innocent. My claim is just. I am vindicated. The *judge* says, “Not guilty.” Justifying is a legal act. It means declaring someone to be just. It is a verdict. The verdict of justification does not *make* a person just. It *declares* a person just. It is based on someone actually being just. We can see this most clearly when the Bible tells us that, in response to Jesus’ teaching, the people “justified” *God* (Luke 7:29). This does not mean they *made* God just (since he already was). It means they declared God to be just. The moral change we undergo when we trust Christ is not justification. The Bible usually calls that sanctification—the process of becoming good. Justification is not that process. It is not a process at all. It is a declaration that happens in a moment. A verdict: Just! Righteous!

The ordinary way to be justified in a human court is to keep the law. In that case the jury and the judge simply declare what is true of you: You kept the law. They justify you. But in the courtroom of God, we have *not* kept the law. Therefore, justification, on ordinary terms, is hopeless. The Bible even says, “He who justifies the wicked [is] an abomination to the LORD” (Proverbs 17:15). And yet, amazingly, because of Christ, it also says God “justifies the ungodly” who trust in his grace (Romans 4:5). God does what looks abominable. Why is it not abominable? Or, as the Bible puts it, how can God “be just *and* the justifier of the one who [simply!] has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26)? It is not abominable for God to justify the ungodly who trust him, for two reasons. One is that *Christ shed his blood to cancel the guilt of our crime*. So it says, “We have now been justified *by his blood*” (Romans 5:9). But that is only the removal of guilt. That does not declare us righteous. Canceling our failures to keep the law is not the same as declaring us to be a law-keeper. When a teacher cancels from the record an exam that got an F, it’s not the same as declaring it an A. If the bank were to forgive me the debts on my account, that would not be the same as declaring me rich. So also, canceling our sins is not the same as declaring us righteous. The cancellation must happen. That is essential to justification. But there is more. There is another reason why it is not abominable for God to justify the ungodly by faith. For that we turn to the next chapter.

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http://www.desiringgod.org/media/pdf/books_pojc/bpojc_all.pdf

Pages 60-61 To Reconcile Us To God

Romans 5:10

The reconciliation that needs to happen between sinful man and God goes both ways. Our attitude toward God must be changed from defiance to faith. And God’s attitude to us must be changed from wrath to mercy. But the two are not the same. I need God’s help to change; but God does not need mine. My change will have to come from outside of me, but God’s change originates in his own nature. Which means that overall, it is not a change in God at all. It is God’s own planned action to stop being against me and start being for me. The all-important words are “while we were enemies.” This is when “we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Romans 5:10). While we were *enemies*. In other words, the first “change” was God’s, not ours. We were still enemies. Not that we were consciously on the warpath. Most people don’t feel conscious hostility to God. The hostility is manifest more subtly with a quiet insubordination and indifference. The Bible describes it like this: “The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot” (Romans 8:7).

While we were still like that, God put Christ forward to bear our wrath-kindling sins and make it possible for him to treat us with mercy alone. God’s first act in reconciling us to himself was to remove the obstacle that made him irreconcilable, namely, the God-belittling guilt of our sin. “In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19). When the ambassadors of Christ take this message to the world, they say, “We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20). Do they only mean: Change your attitude to God? No, they also mean: Receive the prior work of God in Christ to reconcile himself to you. Consider this analogy of reconciliation among men. Jesus said, “If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23-24). When he says, “Be reconciled to your brother,” notice that it is the brother who must remove his judgment. The brother is the one who “has something against you,” just as God has something against us. “Be reconciled to your brother” means do what you must so that your brother’s judgment against you will be removed. But when we hear the gospel of Christ, we find that God has already done that: He took the steps we could not take to remove his own judgment. He sent Christ to suffer in our place. The decisive reconciliation happened “while we were enemies.” Reconciliation from our side is simply to receive what God has already done, the way we receive an infinitely valuable gift.