

THE FOOLISHNESS OF THE CROSS

By Pastor Mike Taylor

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.

19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”

25 "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.” (1st Corinthians 1:18-21, 25-29)



I am sometimes amazed at how people of this world cannot grasp the simple language of the Bible. Jesus said that we must become as little children. But the world uses logic and the finite mind to try and understand the wisdom of God who is infinite in knowledge, and love of mankind.

15 “Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” (Mark 10:15)

You look at a small child and they are so trusting of those who they know loves them. They believe what is told them, even though they may not understand it and follow the commands of their parents...(in most things, as children can be rebellious), but in simple day to day living, when given an explanation of something they may have asked in a one word question “WHY?” they are given the explanation and they believe.

Many people just cannot wrap their finite minds around something so simple, but must be accepted in child like faith. You may not understand it, but you accept it because God has said it, and you believe...but some just can't see the forest for the trees.

For example, we've examined the nuts-and-bolts answers to hard questions like, "Why did Jesus have to die?" and "would a loving God send people to hell?" etc. But it is good from time to time to revisit the basic gift of salvation.

The people I speak of that can't grasp the concept of mercy and grace, think they must do something to warrant God's mercy and grace...like good works, or following rules, or following their denomination's traditions. In other words, they must earn this gift from God. But can you earn a gift? They just can't understand that salvation is for sinners. Maybe you know some people like this. They get hung up in rules and regulations, traditions that speak of works and doing what their “church” says.

Then another set of people get hung up on keeping the Law of God, but can't seem to understand that you can't keep the law in its entire application of what God expects from each of us. From law keeping, the law is our school master, but it condemns each one of us, as we can't keep the whole of the law.

When Jesus was asked what is the greatest and most important commandment of God, Jesus replied:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

Love God and love your neighbor as yourself...simple. But when was the last time you loved everyone you meet and love them as yourself?. The world is full of those who in simple language, “are hard to love”. They can get you fired up and thinking inappropriate thoughts about those who offend you, or thoughts of “getting even”. Admit it...we can't love our neighbor (not all of them) as ourselves, it is humanly impossible...some will try, but each of us fail, because “we're human”. We are prone to failure to live up to even this commandment that encompasses the whole of the law.

It leads directly to the truth that we can't keep God's Law, and thereby cannot have a personal relationship with God the Father, because of our sin. There is a huge gap between a Holy God and sinful mankind that cannot be bridged on our own. That's where Jesus comes into focus, as the bridge to God the Father.

“ I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, No man cometh to the Father but by Me.” (John 14:6)

You see, God the Father, being perfectly Holy in all His ways, cannot allow sin into His presence. No matter what we do, we will never qualify as perfect enough, sinless enough to enter into His presence...So that leaves you, that leaves me as sinners on the other side of this huge gap between us and a Holy God. We are ALL selfish sinners, that is why God had to become ONE of us.

To do that, God emptied Himself of all His glory, entered into this quarantined sin-soaked world, into our atmosphere and took on human form, conquer sin in this world, and thereby defeating sins stranglehold on all of humanity. And then, having qualified as an acceptable Sacrifice, He paid the eternal penalty for sin on our behalf.

12 “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

13 “(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

16 And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.

17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” (Romans 5:13-19)

The message from the preceding passage points to that all of mankind was cursed because of Adam's sin...thus scripture said God cursed him because he had allowed sin in his life. :

““In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” (Genesis 3:19)

As a symbol of the coming One who would cover his sin, God made a covering for Adam and Eve out of the skins of an animal.....

22 “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

23 It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” (Hebrews 9:22-26)

Jesus paid the penalty for the sin that Adam allowed to enter into the world, and to every man since Adam, but Jesus was WITHOUT sin. Having been born of the Father in this sin sick world, Jesus lived the life that God expects from each of us, but was unable to do what He demanded, that in Jesus He defeated the penalty of sin that we deserve. This was mercy and grace. Mercy is defined of being forgiven of something we earned, which was death, and grace receiving what we could not earn, but given as a gift. He defeated sin by His death, but because of His resurrection He justified all who believe in Him and what He accomplished.

“For by grace are ye saved, not of works. It is a gift of God, lest any man should boast”. (Ephesians 2:8)

All of mankind has sinned. It is part of our spiritual DNA, from our original parents that no one can escape. Nobody who ever sinned, even once, has defeated sin personally, and all mankind remains under sin's penalty of death.

All mankind is under a curse and without ridding ourselves of the sin we have committed will stand before a righteous judge and be condemned. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" (Hebrews 9:27)

TWO PARTS TO THIS COMING DEATH

Death is in two parts. The physical death, and what the Bible calls the 'second death' eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire. And so is the judgment of a person's life. Those who have accepted Jesus Christ as a little child in that child-like faith have already been judged at the cross of Christ. Their penalty has already been paid.

14 “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances (penalty) that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” (Colossians 2:14-15)

But for those who trust in their own good works to save themselves, there will be a second death before the Great White Throne of God Almighty, where they will be judged for ALL their works, either good or bad.

Contrary to some who believe that if they live a good life, and their good works which outweigh their bad, will somehow earn them a ticket to heaven will be horrified to learn that they were wrong. But beware if you think such foolishness, as there is no balancing scale with good deeds on one side and bad deeds on the other. Even ONE sin of those standing before God at this judgment will earn them eternal separation from God.

All who have died in this physical life, will taste physical death, should the Lord tarry, but those who stand before God without some form of payment for their sinful nature, will taste spiritual death. This is the second death

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

THOSE THAT FOUND FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.

When a sinner accepts Jesus Christ as personal Savior, our sin is transferred to our Lord, as the propitiation (substitute) for what we deserve. Jesus blood sacrifice on a Roman cross paid our eternal debt from that moment forward on into eternity. There is NOTHING left to judge us on, except what rewards that we will receive at the

Bema Judgment Seat of Christ. It is something that we could never earn no matter what we do, because it is a free gift, freely offered to all men.

By accepting Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf and committing to follow Him we are declared righteous by God on the basis of our faith.

Therefore as new creatures, recreated by the Blood of Christ, wearing His righteousness instead of our own, we are able to come before the throne of God blameless and cleansed, reestablishing our relationship with God. When God the Father looks upon us standing before His throne, He will see nothing but the righteousness of His Son... we are clothed with that righteousness when we confessed our sins, and accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior and the substitute payment for what we did deserve....death, eternal death. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2nd Corinthians 5:17)

No matter what men do, this has nothing to do with religion. Those who promote one religion supreme over another fool themselves that they can somehow do enough righteous acts through their church to qualify somehow to enter into God's Kingdom. Men believe that they have to belong to a certain religion and call it "God's Church" founded by the Lord Jesus Christ. Proper teaching of truth by one's denomination can lead you into the truth found solely in Jesus Christ, but it can do nothing in of itself to justify you, just because you belong to its religion and follow their traditions, no matter how righteous they may seem, it will do nothing for your eternal salvation. But it CAN lead you astray from Jesus as the only payment for that sin.

The apostle Paul made that abundantly clear when he was preaching to the church in Galatia, where a false teaching had crept into their midst that said that Christians had to be circumcised like Jews, in order to prove they belonged to God. Paul corrected those in error that they were neither Jew or Gentile, but a new creature in Christ.

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." (Galatians 6:15)

A NEW CREATURE IN CHRIST

For a lot of people, this is a difficult concept to understand exactly what a "new ?creature" is according to scripture and what it is not. The Bible teaches there are four separate spiritual creations of God.

First God created the angels, which became ministering spirits and flames of fire: 7 "And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire."14 "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Hebrews 1:7, 14) Angels were created to serve Almighty God and humanity who would become heirs of salvation, even before man was even created. Some call them guardian angels, and they do watch out for us according to the will of God.

Then God created Adam in His image and His likeness. Adam was sinless and designed to live forever as long as he followed the commandments of God..and there was only one...not to eat of one particular tree...sounds simple, doesn't it? At Adams fall, his spiritual state changed as he became separated from God because of his sin and became the father of unregenerate Gentiles. Adam willfully rebelled against God's command. Some say it was out of love for Eve, who was deceived, but Adam was not.

Then there is Abraham, through faith, fathered the first of another new spiritual creation. Isaac was the first spiritual Jew, the father of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel.

Since then, every person is born either a Jew or a Gentile, from the perspective of their spiritual state of existence. For simplicity, we speak of them as Jews, but it is more correct that God separated out a member of the Hebrew race. The first three sentient, spiritual creations of God, then, are angels, Jews and Gentile, descended from Adam, but in God's Image, with an eternal spirit. From that point, God dealt with Jew and Gentiles separately. A Jew would always be a Jew in God's eyes, and a Gentile could be a practicing Jew. A Jew could never be a Gentile, but they both were estranged from God apart from Jesus Christ. They were both still in their sins that separated them from their Maker.

At the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God introduced a new Spiritual Creation. All through the Old Testament there are scriptures that prove that man was made in the image of God, but beginning with the New Testament, the image of God makes a very decided shift. Jesus the second Adam, the man from Heaven, (as the Bible calls Him) or as John said "the eternal Word, is in the image of God in the flesh. Not mankind in general.

Now get this, for lack of a better word, Jesus was a prototype. He was a full, functioning form of a NEW type. This is what I mean by a shift in emphasis of what man is to become. Jesus was the first, the example of becoming the image of God. Jesus was the prototype, the goal of our redemption, our salvation and our glorification. This is the final goal of born again man

"And have put on the new man, who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (meaning us, man). (Colossians 3:10)

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1st John 3:2)

Jesus introduced a new creation with His resurrection. Those who trust Jesus are transformed into a totally new spiritual creation, personally indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, and restored to the fellowship lost by Adam.

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12)

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Romans 5:19)

Each of us, meaning forgiven sinners have received an earnest deposit of God's Holy Spirit (earnest meaning deposit) guaranteeing our future glorification.

13 "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Having been MADE righteous and restored to fellowship, Christians are neither Gentile nor Jew. Nor are they angels, either literally or figuratively. The Bible calls them 'saints' -- something entirely unique in the history of the universe.

Either Jew or Gentile, they remain who they are, but a Christian who accepts Jesus Christ is REBORN into a new birth, a new spiritual creation of God.

This points to that the NEW man is not just in the image of God, or just a general picture of God, as man was formed to look like, but specifically to be formed into the image of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He, Jesus, becomes the goal of the redeemed man, unto salvation. Jesus proclaimed this truth to Nicodemus when he came to him by night, seeking truth from Jesus:

3"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

4Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

5Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

8The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:3-8)

Salvation is a permanent transformation from one kind of spiritual creation to a different kind of spiritual

creation. It is the misunderstanding of the new creature that is a stumbling-block to grasping the simple assurances of the Gospel.

The Bible says to repent (literally, change your mind), realizing your sin will take you to hell, and that there is nothing you can do about it except to trust Jesus' promise that by trusting Him for your salvation as the Lord of your life, you are now a new creation of God.

It's so simple. So simple, but in fact, that there are millions upon millions who just can't get it. Paul spoke of being "wise in your own conceits" (**Romans 12:16**) not the least of which is the belief that our works contribute to our salvation.

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." (**1st Corinthians 1:27**)

If Jesus didn't do it all, then He didn't have to do it at all and He died in vain.

"I do not frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." (**Galatians 2:21**)

THE SIMPLE ALTERNATIVE TO SALVATION THROUGH JESUS

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.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:16-19)

That is the simplicity of the Gospel. Jesus is the gift, (God gave His only Begotten Son). It is free for the asking and accepting if by faith the free gift. But notice the verses after 16-17? That is a simple explanation of what the result will be if you choose in your own freewill choice to either accept or reject this free gift. It is a penalty imposed because of that freewill.....it is condemnation. It is a simple explanation of what man can expect if they reject God's provision for their salvation from being separated from God for all eternity. No one can say that they rejected God's free gift out of ignorance. The Salvation message has been preached to nearly the entire world. It would have to be a backward civilization so removed from modern life, that they never heard the name JESUS, YESHUA..THE SON OF GOD who came into the world to save sinners, like me, like you...

9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2nd Peter 3:9-10)

There is coming a day when Jesus will come and those not found in Him will be thrown headlong into the coming Tribulation. But that is not what this message is about. Prophecy is usually my main focus, but without Jesus, prophecy means nothing. Prophecy covers what Jesus has done, what He will do, and that He calls each of us by His Holy Spirit. If you have heard that call, don't put it off one day longer, as the window of your salvation could close abruptly, for we are not promised even tomorrow.

2 "(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)" (2nd Corinthians 6:2)

I am reminded of a song I love that speaks of what Jesus did:

"Living He loved me,

Dying He saved me,

Buried He carriedmy sins far away,

Rising He justified,freely forever,

One day He's coming, Oh, Glorious day. Oh, Glorious day."

Embrace the simplicity of the Gospel and you could be singing that song the next few minutes...

This is Pastor Mike Taylor, praying the simplicity of the Gospel finds it's way into your heart and mind. If you need prayer, counseling, or just a friendly, listening ear, email me at realteam1999@sbcglobal.net. God bless you all,

TILL WE MEET AT JESUS FEET