

Quarter Three: *1 and 2 Corinthians*

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Lesson 2—The Message of the Cross

Sunday: The Gospel of the Cross

July 5, 2026

- **Last Week:** “Paul’s Ministry in Corinth”
 - Paul planting the Christian church in Corinth on 2nd missionary journey
- **This week:** “The Message of the Cross”
 - The Cross
 - For the **Roman**, the contempt
 - Cicero, pagan Roman writer & orator, before Christ – told the Roman people to keep the idea of the cross far from their minds
 - Shows the contempt with which the Romans held the cross
 - For the **Jew**, the curse
 - Gal 3:13 – cursed is everyone who was hanged on a tree
 - Cursed of God
 - For the **Christian**, the gospel
 - The power of God
 - 1 Cor 1:18 – “the message of the cross ... is the power of God”
 - The essence of the gospel
- **Corinthian Church History:**
 - Paul planted church on 2nd missionary journey
 - Spent 18 months there (Acts 18 – last week’s lesson)
 - Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in Spring of AD 55 from Ephesus
 - On 3rd missionary journey toward end of 3-year stay in Ephesus
 - Most likely sent with Timothy
 - (Paul wrote the lost epistle to the Corinthian church
 - 1 Cor 5:9 – Wrote about need for separation from sexually immoral people
 - Either lost epistle or partially preserved in 2 Cor 6:14 – 7:1)
 - Paul concerned with issues in Corinthian church
 - If you think your church has problems, get ready for the avalanche of quarrels & strife & issues Paul had to confront.
- **Themes in 1 Corinthians** (just mention two)
 - Lesson: “The cross is Paul’s answer to the problems in Corinth.”
 - 1. The power of God
 - Paul asserts that God’s power as manifest in the Cross demonstrates the inability of the wisdom of the world to provide salvation – much like Paul rejects the law as a means of salvation in Romans
 - 2. Correct disorder & immaturity in the church: many of the issues arose over a faulty understanding of baptism & resurrection. Paul taught that believers experienced the

power of Christ's resurrection at baptism, while others at Corinth taught a different experience after baptism.

- Issues in Corinthian Church:
 - Schisms in the church
 - Incest
 - Lawsuits between members
 - Sexual immorality
 - Marriage & divorce & singleness
 - Idolatry
 - Spiritual gifts & order in worship
 - Resurrection

- **This week:** message of the Cross is given as the answer to the issues in Corinth

Memory Text: “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18, NIV).

The week in brief:

- 1. **Sunday:** The Gospel of the Cross (Jill)
 - 1 Cor 1:17 – 31 – the power of the Cross in contrast to the wisdom of the world; importance of the gospel as central to our preaching
- 2. **Monday:** Foolishness to Those Who Are Perishing (Ryan)
 - 1 Cor 1:18 – 27 – the cross in contrast to immoral behavior, thought, and rebellion against God
- 3. **Tuesday:** Power to Those Who Are Being Saved (James)
 - 1 Cor 1:18 – 20 – the Cross & salvation in contrast to those who reject the gospel
- 4. **Wednesday:** A Messiah Crucified (SQ)
 - Acts 13; 1 Cor 1 & 2:1 – 5– difficulty of Jews & Gentiles / Romans to accept a crucified Savior; importance of the Cross in our faith
- 5. **Thursday:** Christ, the Power and Wisdom of God (John L)
 - 1 Cor 1:19 – 31 – Christ as the power & wisdom of God vs human wisdom or power

Sunday: The Gospel of the Cross

1 Cor 1:17 – 31; 2:2

- 1 Cor 1
 - Vs 1 – 3 – introduction
 - Vs 4 – 9 – thanks for them
 - Vs 10 – begins divisions in the church
 - Vs 10 – let there be no divisions among you
 - Preference for, or loyalty to, various preachers
 - Vs 11 – Chloe brought news of “contentions among you”
 - Vs 12 – “Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’”
 - Apollos = eloquent preacher from Alexandria
 - Aquilla & Priscilla instructed him (Acts 18)
 - Cephas = Peter
 - Today: I follow Amazing Facts or 3ABN or It Is Written... We follow Christ

- Vs 13 – “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”
 - Who saved you?
 - Is the one who baptized you more important than the One, Jesus, in Whose name you were baptized?
- 1 Cor 2:2 – “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”
 - The Cross is central to everything we hold as Christians
 - All 5 panelists study - 1 Cor 1:18 – 31 (or portions of it)
 - The Cross is Paul’s answer to the problems in Corinth

5 Takeaways of the Gospel of the Cross from 1 Corinthians

- 1 Cor 1:17 – “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the **cross** of Christ should be made of no effect.”
 - Cross = Gk, used twice in 1 Cor (vs 17 & 18)
 - Emphasizes the centrality of the gospel
 - Emphasizes the importance of the One (Jesus) in Whose name they baptized
 - **Takeaway #1: The Cross is more important than who preaches about the Cross**
 - Corinthian Church forgot the centrality of Jesus by exalting human leaders
 - Thought who did the baptizing was more important than the One into which they had been baptized
 - **Takeaway #2: The Cross is more important than the words used to describe the Cross**
 - Eloquent speeches are wonderful: important to clearly share the gospel
 - But the gospel itself is more important than the way that gospel is conveyed
 - Don’t let “wisdom of words” obscure the gospel
 - *Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address (227 words / 2 minutes long)
 - vs Keynote speaker, Edward Everett (2 hours long)
- 1 Cor 1:18 – “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”
 - **Takeaway #3: The Cross possesses resurrection power**
 - The focal point of the gospel is power to resurrect
 - 1 Cor 15:14, 17 – “And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.... (17) And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.”
 - Literal death & resurrection
 - Rom 6:6, 7 – “Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. (7) For he who has died has been freed from sin.”
 - Spiritual death & resurrection
 - How does the Cross possess resurrection power?
 - The Cross is atonement for sin

- Christ as my Sacrifice & Substitute (2 Cor 5:21)
- The Cross defeated sin & Satan
 - Christ defeated Satan at the Cross (Col 2:15)
 - Christ defeated Satan / death (Heb 2:14, 15)
- The Cross reconciled humanity with God
 - Christ is our peace who broke down the wall of separation – Eph 2:14
 - Christ reconciled humanity to God (2 Cor 5:18)
- The Cross gives resurrection power in the life of the believer
 - That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection (Phil 3:10)
 - Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we also should walk in newness of life (Rom 6:20)
- Love awakens love
 - He first loved us – 1 John 4:19
 - His love constrains us – 2 Cor 5:14
- 1 Cor 1:23 – “but we preach Christ **crucified**, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, (24) but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”
 - Crucified = Gk, derived from “the cross”
 - Jews – considered anyone who died on the cross to be cursed of God
 - Romans / Greeks – considered it shameful & offensive
 - **Takeaway 4: The Cross possesses wisdom**
 - The Cross possesses resurrection power (takeaway #3)
 - The threat facing the believers in Rome was Jewish legalism
 - Paul focused on righteousness & faith
 - The threat facing Corinthian believers was Hellenistic culture’s fascination with pursuit of wisdom
 - Lesson: “The cross has the power to display the worst of man and the best of God.”
- 1 Cor 2:2 – “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him **crucified**.”
 - Crucified = Gk, derived from “the cross”
 - **Takeaway #5: The Cross is central to everything we hold as Christians**
 - The Cross is everything to the believer

5 Takeaways of the Gospel of the Cross from 1 Corinthians

- 1: The Cross is more important than who preaches about the Cross
- 2: The Cross is more important than the words used to describe the Cross
- 3: The Cross possesses resurrection power
- 4: The Cross possesses wisdom
- 5: The Cross is central to everything we hold as Christians

“But to Paul the cross was the one object of supreme interest. Ever since he had been arrested in his career of persecution against the followers of the crucified Nazarene he had never ceased to glory in the cross. At that time there had been given him a revelation of the infinite love of God, as revealed in the death of Christ, and a marvelous transformation had been wrought in his life, bringing all his plans and purposes into harmony with heaven... He knew by personal experience that when a sinner once beholds the love of the Father, as seen in the sacrifice of His Son, and yields to the divine influence, a change of heart takes place, and henceforth Christ is all and in all.” (AA, pp. 245, 246)

Lesson #3: Unity in Christ