

Communion Special: The Shame and Glory of the Cross 1 Cor 1:18-31; Galatians

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Theological/Doctrinal Foundations : Eschatology (21)

- Right thinking about God (theology & philosophy) is the only way to attain right thinking about life with all of its issues.
- Apart from right thinking about God (theology & philosophy), the believer retains garbage in the mind and lives a life disoriented to the marvelous matchless plan of God.
- Right thinking about God leads to right thinking about His purposes, now, in the future, and throughout eternity.

Eschatology: Heaven

1. The vast majority of Christians have Platonic views of heaven—not much different from nature worshippers and pagan religions. So many Christian hymnals are filled with “hymns” that sound more like Tennyson and Shelly than the Bible. Upsurge in cremation is a direct result of Platonic influences (i.e., the downgrading of the body and ultimate physicality).
2. Only BD can provide the believer with strong view of resurrection and heaven (instead of some eternal ethereal pagan like disembodiment), 1 Cor. 15; Rev. 21-22.

Preparation for Bible Class – Spiritual Life Foundations

#1 Salvation:

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God being justified (δικαιόω) as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus . . . 27 Where then is the boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. 28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

- ✓ It is critical to understand the meaning of “justification.” It does NOT mean to make righteous!

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#2 Fellowship

Revelation 3:20 'Behold, I stand (ἔστηκα) at the door and knock; if anyone (ἐάν τις) hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me.

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#3 Spiritual Maturity/Overcomer

Revelation 3:21 'He who overcomes (ὁ νικῶν), I will grant to him to sit down with Me (μετ' ἐμοῦ) on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Communion Special:
The Foolishness and Glory of the Cross
1 Cor. 1:18-31

The Foolishness of the Cross (kata kosmos)

- ✓ Foolishness (μωρία, the idea is μανία), 18
- ✓ Foolishness, 21
- ✓ Stumbling block, 23
- ✓ Foolishness, 23
- ✓ A foolish thing, 27
- ✓ A weak thing, 27

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The Glory of the Cross

- ✓ Power of God, 18.
- ✓ Power and wisdom, 24.
- ✓ Wisdom, absolute righteousness (δικαιοσύνη), sanctification, and redemption, 30.
- ✓ The cross/grace is only source of boasting/confidence, 31.

Isagogics on the Folly of the Cross

1. Apologist Justin Martyr (103-165)

“They say our *madness* consists in the fact that we put a *crucified man* in second place after the unchangeable and eternal God, the Creator of the world” (Apology I, 13.4)

- It was the crucifixion of the Son of God that distinguished this new message from the mythologies of all other peoples.

Isagogics on the Folly of the Cross

2. Pliny the Younger (61-112)

- ✓ A lawyer, author, and magistrate from Rome
- ✓ Calls the new sect a form of *amentia*.
- ✓ Notes, “they sang hymns to Jesus as to a god.”
- ✓ He questioned 2 Christian slave girls under torture and later said, “I discovered nothing but a perverse and extravagant superstition.”
- ✓ It was particularly offensive for a Roman to accept the idea that one who was nailed to the cross as a state criminal was “a god.”

Isagogics on the Folly of the Cross

3. Tacitus (56-117)

- ✓ Calls Christianity a “pernicious superstition.”
 - “Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of the procurator P. Pilate.”
 - This evil (*malum*) which Christ instigated spread all too quickly to Rome, “where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world meet and become popular.”
- ✓ Tacitus’ precise knowledge of Christians and his contempt for them are derived from the trials of Christians which he carried out when he was governor in the province of Asia.

Isagogics on the Folly of the Cross

4. *Octavius* (125)

- ✓ This is a dialogue where a certain Felix puts on the lips of his pagan interlocutor Caecilius a piece of anti-Christian polemic against the Christian Octavius.
 - According to Caecilius, Christians put forward “sick delusions” (*figmenta male*), a senseless and crazy superstition (*vana et demens superstitio*), which leads to an “old womanly superstition, to the destruction of all true religion (*omni religio destruat*) not the least of which they worship one who has been crucified.

Octavius (cont.)

- ✓ Caecilius, “To say that their ceremonies center on a man put to death for his crime and on the fatal wood of the cross is to assign to these abandoned wretches sanctuaries which are appropriate to them and the kind of worship they deserve.
- ✓ The Christian Octavius does not find it easy to shake off this last charge. His answer makes it clear that the death of Jesus on the cross was inevitably a folly and a scandal even for the early Christians. He tries to defend Christ and agrees that no criminal deserves to be regarded as a god.

Octavius (cont.)

- ✓ Octavius, “Moreover, we do not reverence the cross, nor do we worship it. But you, who hold your wooden gods (*ligneos deos*) to be holy, also worship wooden crosses, as parts of your divine images. For what are the military emblems, the banners and standards in your camps, if not gilded and decorated crosses? Not only is the form of your signs of victory like the structure of the cross; it even recalls a man fastened to it.”
- ✓ Octavius’ defense sidesteps the shameful of the cross; he is deliberately silent about the death of Jesus. He avoids the real problem—scanda—namely, that the Son of God died a criminal’s death on a tree of shame.

Isagogics on the Folly of the Cross

5. Oracle of Apollo

- ✓ On what a man can do to dissuade his wife from Christian belief. The god (Apollo) holds out little hope:
 - “Let her continue as she pleases, persisting in her vain delusions, and lamenting in song a god who died in delusions, who was condemned by judges whose verdict was just, and executed in the prime of life by the worst of deaths.”

Isagogics on the Folly of the Cross

Oracle of Apollo (cont)

- ✓ The oracle confirms the verdicts of Pliny, Tacitus, and Caecilius that Jesus was viewed as a “dead God”—a contradiction in itself. The Second Member of the Trinity did not die. Death is separation of the soul from the body. However, we must avoid attributing two self-consciousnesses to the God-man (i.e. Nestorianism). Accuracy demands precision with terms (e.g., univocal, equivocal, and analogous).

Isagogics on the Folly of the Cross

6. All of the evidence shows us the constantly varying forms of abhorrence of Christianity. No wonder that Paul called the word of the cross foolishness to the world. It ran counter not only to political thinking, but to the whole ethos of religion in ancient times and in particular to the ideas of God.

7. True, that the Hellenistic world was familiar with death and apotheosis of gods, demigods, and heroes. However, people understood these to be myths and allegories.

Isagogics on the Folly of the Cross

8. By contrast (the apotheosis of the gods), to believe that the one pre-existent Son of the one true God, the mediator at creation and the redeemer of the world, had appeared in very recent times in out-of-the-way Galilee, as a member of the obscure people of the Jews, and even worse, had died the death of a common criminal on the cross, could only be a sign of madness.

9. The real gods of Greece and Rome could be distinguished from moral men by the very fact that they were immortal—they had absolutely nothing in common with the cross—that sign of shame.

Isagogics on the Folly of the Cross

10. Cross was for murderers, robbers, and other criminals, “Punished with limbs outstretched, they see the stake as their fate; they are fastened [and] nailed to it in the most bitter torment, evil food for birds of prey and grim pickings for dogs” (Pseudo-Manetho. A.D. 200’s).

11. A crucified messiah, son of God or God Himself must have seemed a contradiction in terms to anyone. For a Jew, Greek, Roman, or barbarian to be asked to believe such a claim would certainly been thought of as offensive and foolish.

Isagogics on the Folly of the Cross

12. The only possibility of something like a “crucified god” in the ancient world was in the form of malicious parody, We see this in the dialogue called *Prometheus*, written by Lucian, the Voltaire of antiquity.

- ✓ Prometheus is nailed to two rocks above a ravine in the sight of all as to produce the effect of a most serviceable cross (stauros).
- ✓ It was a way to mock the gods.

Isagogics on the Folly of the Cross

13. With its paradoxical contrast between the divine nature of the preexistent Son of God and his shameful death on the cross, the first Christian proclamation shattered all analogies and parallels to Christology which could be produced in the world of time, whether from polytheism or from monotheistic philosophy.
14. We also have a depiction of Christians worshipping Jesus with the head of Jesus as an ass (Alexamenos).
15. Docetism was an attempt in Christian circles of removing the folly and stumbling block of the cross. “It only seemed that God suffered.”

The Jewish Scandal of the Cross

1. For the Jews the cross was a scandal (1 Cor 1:23; Gal 5:11) in no small part because of the religious significance connected to Deut. 21:22-23:

"And if a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, ²³ his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.

The Jewish Scandal of the Cross

2. The Jews employed crucifixion for enemies of Judaism. Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 B.C.) crucified 800 Pharisees. Herod broke with the tradition in part because the Romans used it so excessively.
3. The influence of Deut 21:23 made the cross a symbol of Jewish suffering impossible. There are no stories of Jewish heroes where crucifixion plays any part. So a crucified messiah could not be accepted. It was here that the preaching of the earliest Christians caused particular offence in the mother country itself.

The Glory of the Cross

1. Despite the negative reception, Paul's emphasis continued to be on the theology of Christ's cross. 1 Cor 1:17-24 can only be understood against this background.
2. Paul embraced the shame and contempt of the cross and spoke in terms of *boasting* in the cross.
3. For Paul the cross still retained the same original cruelty and abhorrence which was also obvious to the ancient world outside the Christian tradition. It was not a piece of jewelry, it was the utterly offensive instrument for the execution of wicked people.

The Glory of the Cross

4. Consider Peter's attitude in light of our background knowledge on the cross, cf. Mark 8:27-38.
5. The cross was a demonstration (ἔνδειξις) of both the righteousness and love of God, John 3:16; Rom. 3:21-28; 5:8. God went through the humility of taking on the nature of man, suffering in the human nature even to the point of "death on a cross" in His human nature, Philip. 2:5-8.
6. The Cross is a horrible and yet beautiful theatre of God's love and justice. It teaches the angels and teaches us about ourselves and the majestic nature of God.

The Glory of the Cross

7. The cross and salvation, Gal. 1:3-5: voluntary; for our sins; a rescue; brings grace and peace; results in the glorification of God.

8. The cross and the spiritual life, Gal. 2:19-21. Positional truth does what historical truth cannot do. This is Paul's answer to antinomianism in Romans 6. Paul died in Christ; in Christ all of the demands of God were met and the full payment for all sins were accomplished.

The Glory of the Cross

9. The cross and preaching, 3:1. The crucifixion (σταυρόω, perfect tense) was proclaimed visually (προγράφω) to them. The goal of the focus was to get them to trust in Christ.

10. The cross and substitution, 3:10-14. These verses constitute one of the clearest expositions of the necessity, meaning and consequence of the cross. Yet, many still have trouble with the 'curse' (κατάρα) which Christ 'became' for us. However, Paul meant every word of it. God made Christ a cursed one for our sake. Christ paid with His life for every sin of everyone who ever lived.

The Glory of the Cross

11. The scandal of the cross (τὸ σκάνδαλον τοῦ σταυροῦ), 5:11. To preach circumcision is to preach salvation or spirituality by the law, that is, by human achievement. Today there are plenty who teach salvation by works---like lordship salvation (cf. MacArthur, Jr.). To preach salvation by works is to flatter legalistic people, to preach salvation by grace is to offend legalistic people. Faithful or popular? Never possible to be both! You cannot both love God and KD, 1 John 2:15.

The Glory of the Cross

12. The cross and boasting, Gal 6:14. Boasting (**καυχάομαι**) includes the ideas of boasting in, glorying in, trusting in, rejoicing in, reveling in, living for. The object of our boasting fills our horizons, engrosses our attention, and absorbs our thoughts. Some people are absorbed with self, and details of life. Paul's obsession was Christ and BD. That which the kosmos regarded as an object of shame, disgrace, and even disgust was for Paul his pride, boasting, and glory. He boasted in the cross because in it he has gained acceptance with God, found a pattern for life, and was justified, sanctified, and glorified. Note his own crucifixion with respect to kosmos diabolicus.

Celebrating the Lord's Supper at FBC

1 Cor. 11:23-26

3 Requirements for celebrating communion:

- ❖ 1. A Christian.
- ❖ 2. A Christian in fellowship with Christ.
- ❖ 3. A Christian who understands and accepts Christ's mandate for communion.