

"CHRIST CRUCIFIED"  
1 Corinthians 1:22-24

Intro: How many of you have noticed the Scripture verse that we are using in the Tableau this year? You will find it at the bottom of the first page, and at the top of the back page. It is found in 1 Cor. 1:23--the verse that I have chosen for my text for this service: "But we preach Christ crucified."

There is probably no verse in the Pauline Epistles, or in the book of Acts, which is more descriptive of the ministry of the Apostle Paul--and of those who labored with him in the Gospel ministry. "We preach Christ crucified"! That was his mission in the world, and, at the same time, that was His message: "We preach Christ crucified."

I want us to look at this verse in detail today, and I trust that the truth of it will make such an impression on our hearts that we will never depart from this in our ministry here, and that we will never want to have anything to do with a ministry that does not fall into this pattern set for us by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul. Times may change, but God does not change. The Word of God does not change. The hearts of men are still like they were 2,000 years ago. And so there is no reason for the ministry of the Church to change. Paul and the early Apostles set the course for us. And they were following in the steps of the OT prophets. To depart from what they did is apostacy. The only way that we can expect to have the blessing of the Lord is by doing what they did and by preaching what they preached.

But let us look at the verse, and draw from the context of the verse to help us understand what Paul was writing.

First of all, not that Paul said,

I. "WE PREACH."

This word preach is a very interesting word. It means to proclaim something publicly. It speaks of proclaiming a message. It indicates that the preacher, the herald, has been charged with the responsibility of conveying a certain message.

An illustration out of American history which shows us what a herald (h-e-r-a-l-d) is, is Paul Revere. He was sent to warn the people during the days of the American Revolution (c. 1775) of the approach of the British, and that they should move their ammunition which the British wanted to destroy. He had a message to give, and that was his responsibility. He did not go to debate the people.

He hoped to make them do something, but mainly his job was the proclamation of a message: "The British are coming!" It was not a long message, but it was a special message. And it was his job to give it, to warn the people of the approach of the enemy.

Paul was sent to preach! He was not called to entertain. He was not called to debate different ideas about God. He was not sent to discuss the truth, hoping to arrive at a point of agreement with the people. He had a message. It was his to proclaim. He was TO PREACH!

Now think of this statement in the light of what is taking place in the Church today. Preaching has been relegated to a minor place. We are told that 20th century people will not come to hear preaching, that preaching is old fashioned and out-of-date. Often preachers are more concerned about how they speak than there are about what they have to say. They are more concerned about illustrations than they are about the revelation of God. They do not take their commission seriously, and feel more concerned about being contemporary than they are about the conviction of sin. If we are ever again to see the blessing of God upon the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, preachers must get back to preaching, and they must preach as men who are called and convinced that they have a message to proclaim--to proclaim to the ends of the earth!

And so Paul said, "We preach . . ." Cf. 1 Cor. 1:17. As important as the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are, they are not to replace the preaching of the Word of God.

Secondly, he said,

## II. "WE PREACH CHRIST."

It is not only important to see that Paul preached, but it is equally important to see what he preached. He preached CHRIST!

That was his message: CHRIST! He had been called to proclaim the message of Christ. He was to tell people about Christ. It was just as simple as that, and just as exclusive as that. He was not to preach politics. He was not to preach social reform. He was to preach Christ, and only Christ.

When Paul wrote his last Epistle, 2 Timothy, he made this charge to Timothy: "Preach the Word." By that he meant that Timothy was to preach the message contained in the Scriptures. This meant that he would find his message in

the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments. That is what he was to proclaim publicly and truthfully. Any deviation from that would mean that he was not true to his calling.

"But," you might say, "had Paul changed his mind in the intervening years from the time that he wrote 1 Corinthians?" The answer is, "No!" He still believed that he was to preach Christ, and that Timothy was to preach Christ, and that every preacher who was true to his calling would preach Christ. YOU CANNOT TRULY PREACH THE WORD OF GOD WITHOUT PREACHING CHRIST. And that has to do with the OT as well as with the NT. Cf. Luke 24:27, 44. Note also what our Lord said in John 5:39.

And so the true preacher will preach Christ. His mission is that he is to proclaim Christ--nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else! It is Christ, CHRIST. CHRIST Who must be preached! People need to learn about Christ.

But look at the subtle temptation that faced Paul as a preacher.

He was very popular among some of the believers in Corinth--perhaps among most of them, we do not know how the people were divided. There were people in Corinth who were saying, "I am of Paul." See 1 Cor. 1:12. Some were boasting that they had been baptized by Paul. And, to make matters worse, others were claiming that Peter was better, or that Apollos was better. And so the subtle temptation facing Paul was that he would be thrown into competition with Peter and Apollos, and he might start preaching HIMSELF!

That is easy for a preacher to do. He begins to think about his popularity, the compliments that he receives, and he can resent it when some people seem to be getting more from some other preachers, and so they begin to place emphasis on their ability, their success (even how many they have won to Christ), their church--and the first thing you know he is preaching himself, not Christ. That is one of the sins of the ministry, and it always grieves the Holy Spirit when that takes place.

But now let me go on to a third point which is related to my second point. Paul said,

### III. "WE PREACH CHRIST."

Who did he mean by "we"?

Well, we might say, "That is just an editorial 'we.'"

Writers often use the plural when they actually mean "I" just because they do not want to refer so strongly to themselves.

However, I do not believe that was the case in this instance.

The context of this twenty-third verse tells us that he was talking about Peter and Apollos. They had been thrown into a competitive position by the church at Corinth, but they did not look upon themselves as competitors! Paul, therefore, was saying here, "WE," Peter, Apollos, and I, "preach CHRIST"! It was as though he were saying, "We are not competitors. We are on the same team. We are workers-together. We have the same message. 'We preach Christ.'"

Do you see how this helps preachers and churches? It is only when we get concerned about our popularity, and about our success, and about what people are saying about us, that we become competitors. As long as we preach Christ, we can rejoice in another preacher's blessing just as much as we do when the blessing of God is upon us.

Note what Paul wrote in Phil. 1:12-20. Oh, that the Lord would give us, pastor and people, such a passion for the preaching of Christ, that it would make no difference who the preacher is, we would rejoice if Christ is being proclaimed, and His holy Name exalted. This is our mission and this is our message.

One more point--and with this we finish out the theme:

#### IV. "WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED."

Now there are many wonderful things to proclaim about Christ.

The very title, "Christ," suggests that He is Deity. It tells us that He was and is the promised Messiah--the One about Whom the prophets of the Old Testament spoke. Thus, we can talk about the wonders of His Person. There never has been, and there never will be, another person like the Lord Jesus Christ! And we never tire of talking about Who He is.

We can talk, and should talk, about His amazing relationship with the Father. And His relationship with the Holy Spirit. The mystery of the Godhead. What Christian ever tires of delving more deeply into what the Word tells us about Christ in these relationships.

Or we could talk about His incarnation--that miracle and mystery which none of us can fully understand. How could One Who is God ever become man? How did His Deity affect His humanity, and how did His humanity affect His Deity? The Word gives us much light on that subject.

Or we can talk about His words, the messages He gave while He was here on earth. Think of the Sermon on the Mount. Think of His parables. Think of His words to His disciples in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24, 25) and the Upper Room Discourse (John 14-16). Think of the word of our Lord's prayer in John 17. Think of His words on the Cross. The more you study the words of Christ, the more you will be inclined to say what the officers of the Jews once said about the Lord: "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46). Or, as it is reported of the people who heard the Sermon on the Mount: "The people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:28b, 29). There was no teacher who ever lived, or who ever shall live, as great as Christ!

Or we can talk about His works. Moses performed miracles. Elijah performed miracles. The disciples performed miracles. Paul was able to perform miracles. But no one performed the miracles that our Lord did. They gave us some of the greatest evidence we have that He was the Son of God.

But we are still faced with these words of the Apostle Paul in our text: "But we preach Christ crucified."

Did he mean that it was wrong to preach about Who Christ is? Or about His relationship to the Father, or to the Holy Spirit? Or about His incarnation? Or about His messages? Or about His works?

No, we must preach all of that, and preach it more than we do, because it is all a part of the Word of God.

But this is what Paul did mean: He meant that whatever we preach about Christ must always be related to His death.

The liberal theologian likes to talk about the moral character of Jesus, or about His marvelous teaching (from which they pick and choose what they want to teach). They honor Him as being an Example for all of us to follow. They may even speak of Him as One Who became a martyr for what He believed. But they do not preach "CHRIST CRUCIFIED." Because, when Paul spoke of preaching "Christ crucified," He had in mind what he wrote in the 15th chapter of this Epistle. Read 1 Cor. 15:3, 4.

Take the Cross out of the Bible, and we no longer have a Bible. On the Cross the Lord was doing the will of His Father. On the Cross the Lord accomplished our salvation. On the Cross He became our Substitute. On the Cross Christ fully satisfied the righteousness of the Father. There could never have been salvation from sin and from hell without the Cross. It is no wonder that Paul said, "But we preach Christ crucified." To preach Christ without the Cross is not to preach Christ.

Concl: But notice this in conclusion--and this brings a message loud and clear to our generation.

It is this: Paul preached a message which neither the Jews nor the Gentiles wanted to hear! Look at vv. 22 and 23b in our text.

Why, then, would Paul preach it, if people did not want to hear it--and to see what the message of the Cross really meant as far as they were concerned?

V. 24 gives us our answer.

You see, we do not preach "Christ crucified" because we want to please men. We preach "Christ crucified" because we want to please God. And this is the message which displays "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." It manifests the wisdom of God in Christ because there we see the marvelous redemption ordained by God from before the foundation of the world, and we see that Christ, by His death and resurrection, is "the power of God" to accomplish what He had planned from eternity past.

So when a person is saved, it does not show his wisdom in trusting Christ, or his power over his own will to receive Christ, but it shows just the opposite. God calls through the preaching of the Gospel. And those whom He calls do submit to His constraining power--and they come! And then we see the wisdom of God displayed in the work of Christ apart from which no man would come or could come to God.

Peter said (and remember that Paul said that Peter preached "Christ crucified"--Peter said,

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins,  
the just for the unjust,  
**that he might bring us to God,**  
being put to death in the flesh,  
but quickened by the Spirit (1 Pet. 3:18).

This is our message. This is our mission. We are not going to be influenced by what other churches may do. We get our orders from the Lord. And it is clear that our message is of

a "Christ crucified." And that is what we intend to proclaim.

In many of our Christian magazines an ad is appearing which advertizes a "Christian" movie entitled, Caught. In the ad it says this:

Everywhere people are struggling for answers--desperately searching for a shred of hope. And going to movies for escape. Never thinking that the answer they long for may reach into their hearts as they watch the screen . . . as they see the story of CAUGHT unfold before them. CAUGHT is what today's film audiences want. Heart-pounding action! Compelling music. Real emotion. Thoughts and feelings that matter. And something more! CAUGHT shares the reality of who Jesus Christ is--how He empowers His followers with a love that defies esplantation . . . and meets the deepest needs of the honest seeker. Through the involvement of caring Christians throughout your area, CAUGHT will serve as a tool of outreach and evangelism, and will strengthen the local church. Plan to attend, and invite your friends. Be sure to watch your church bulletin board and local newspapers for more information on the uncoming theatre showings. Get caught up with CAUGHT!

First, evangelistic organizations started showing films in local theatres, renting them for separate showings. Now they appear on the regular program along with completely secular movies.

But then listen to this. The movie CAUGHT has been rated as any other film would be--and this is the rating: PG-13. And in small print it says, "Parents strongly cautioned." And then in even smaller print it print it says, "Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13."

Let me ask you some questions: Do you suppose the day will come when Christian organizations will be producing movies that the world will rate as X? And will we do this saying that it is a great tool for evangelism, and that it will be greatly stren-thening to the local church?

What would you think of a church that had after the pastor's sermon, printed in the church bulletin: "Parents strongly cautioned. Some material in this sermon may be inappropriate for children under 13." Can you imagine the Apostle Paul doing anything like this.

Perhaps we need to put a little note in such ads, and it could read like this: "Caution: The Holy Spirit has declared in the Word that entering this theatre and looking at this film will be hazardous to your spiritual health."

This is the kind of thing that millions of American Christians are buying today. This is the way to go and the thing to do. We have to reach the people with things they like. Is this what Paul was saying in our text? Is this what he preached?

— May the Lord enable us to say what Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church in 1 Thess. 2:4,

But as we were allowed of God  
to be put in truth with the gospel, even so we speak;  
not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

And may we say, too, with Paul,  
For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ:  
for it is the power of God unto salvation  
to every one that believeth;  
to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16).

And so why do "we preach Christ crucified"? Because we want to please God, and because this is the only message that is going to be used to save sinners from their sins.

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