

THE GREATEST WONDER OF ALL

Romans 5:8

Intro: The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World date back to 100 years before Christ. They were works of art which were considered the most wonderful in the world either because of their beauty or size. They were located from Greece to Babylon, and as far south as Egypt. Among these were the pyramids of Egypt, the Temple of Diana in Ephesus, the hanging gardens of Babylon, and the Statue of Jupiter (or Zeus) in Greece.

Most of the original seven no longer exist, having been destroyed by fire, earthquakes, and the like.

Since that time many lists have been made of various things which have caused amazement and surprise for people. One of these has been the natural wonders that are found in the world, many in our own United States. These have included Crater Lake, the Carlsbad Caverns, sections of the Grand Canyon.

Others have listed various achievements of modern man in the fields of transportation, medicine, energy, and the manufacture of various substances. The longer the world exists, the more numerous will be the lists, especially in the field of science. Each generation works to supersede the discoveries and improvements of the preceding generations.

As far as I know, that which would have to be considered THE GREATEST WONDER OF ALL has never made any list. I am speaking of the Gospel. It has to be the greatest because it has come from God. It is clearly the oldest because its roots go back before the foundation of the world. It involves the greatest of all Persons, the Three Members of the Godhead. It has transformed the lives of people throughout the world, permanently transformed them, delivering them from the power of their sins, and making them different within and without. It is permanently recorded in the most unique Book that has ever been written, the Bible. It is THE GREATEST WONDER OF ALL because it guarantees the eternal welfare of all who believe in it. It is indestructible, and it will never change! In fact, it is so great that no other wonder could deserve to be listed with it. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ far surpasses all of the other wonders of the world if they all could be combined in their greatness.

There are many verses in the Bible which describe the Gospel, but I want to consider one in particular tonight: Romans 5:8. This is what it says:

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

The fact that men do not marvel at the Gospel can only be explained by the fact that they are spiritual blind. They are incapable of "seeing" and appreciating the truth of God. In fact, most people are so unaware of the Gospel and of God that they are content to live as though God did not even exist. But once God enables a person to "see" the truth, they will feel like the Apostle Paul who wrote to the church at Rome and said,

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).

There are several reasons for saying that this is THE GREATEST WONDER OF ALL. The first is, as I have already mentioned,

I. IT INVOLVES GOD AND CHRIST.

And, although this particular text does not say so, it involves also the Holy Spirit. But for tonight let us just think of God and Christ.

Whatever we can learn about God is obviously important. The Bible is God's Book, and so we know that what it says about God, and about Christ, is absolutely true.

A. God loves.

This verse tells us something about God that is in itself amazing. In fact, if we want to look at the various details of the Gospel, we could come up with far more than the usual "seven great wonders." But one of the wonders of the Gospel that makes it the greatest wonder of all is the truth that God loves.

This is not the usual idea that men have about God. Even the most primitive religions have the idea that God is to be feared. When things go wrong, it is most natural for man to blame God and to curse God for what has happened. But the Bible tells us that "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16). Since it is true that God is love, then we must believe that God seeks the greatest good for those whom He loves. That is the nature of love.

And so we can see from our text, and we know from the love that we have for those who are dear to us, that love must find a way of expressing itself. This is indicated by the word, "commendeth." It means that God exhibited His love. God proved His love. God showed not only that He loved, but how much He loved.

And when once we understand how He displayed His love, His love can never be questioned.

But how did God manifest His love. This brings us to consider

B. Christ.

It is easy for us to pass over the Name of our Lord through our familiarity with this verse without stopping to realize what Paul was saying here.

"Christ" means the Messiah, and Messiah means the Anointed One. This was a part of His title after He was born. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle John wrote his Gospel to prove to us that Jesus was indeed the Christ. So we are dealing here with the incarnate Son of God, One Who willingly came, but One Who was divinely commissioned by God for the very work that He came to do. So when we speak of Jesus of Nazareth, we are not talking just about an ordinary Jew; we are talking about the Son of God Who became Man, and Who continued to be God even when He was dwelling as a human being on the earth.

Now what does this mean?

This means that out of all of the ways that God could have displayed His love, and had displayed His love from the beginning of time, no one could properly reveal the nature of His love, and the extent of His love, but His own Son!

That ought to attract our attention and hold it until we make sure that we know what the Apostle Paul had in mind.

But now we need to ask, at what point in the life of Christ on earth did He display the true nature of God's love. The answer:

II. THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

He certainly displayed God's love for man in the miracles that He performed--healing diseases, delivering from demons, quieting storms, protecting from their enemies. All of those were wonderful, and surpass anything that was ever done before, or since. But to understand the real, deep, amazing character of God's love, we have to go the Cross.

If Jesus Christ were just a man, then His death could be

placed along side of many others who died for a good cause. BUT ONCE WE RECOGNIZE THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS THE SON OF GOD, SHARING THE VERY NATURE OF GOD, THEN HIS DEATH BECOMES ABSOLUTELY UNIQUE AMONG ALL THE DEATHS THAT HAVE EVER BEEN RECORDED. GOD WAS DISPLAYING HIS LOVE. THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD ADEQUATELY DO THAT WAS HIS SON. AND IN ORDER FOR HIS SON TO DO IT, HE HAD TO SUFFER NOT ONLY THE GREAT HUMILIATION OF BECOMING A MAN, BUT HE HAD TO DIE AS A CONDEMNED CRIMINAL--A DEATH THAT WOULD BE A DISGRACE TO HIS FAMILY FOR SEVERAL GENERATIONS TO COME.

But why was that necessary? He committed no crimes. All of His accusers were liars. Pilate wanted to let Him go because he knew that Christ had done nothing worthy of death. How is the death of Christ to be explained as an expression of the love of God?

III. THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

Here it is: "...in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

On the one end of the line you have CHRIST; on the other you have "sinners."

Look at a parallel statement in verse 6. (Read.)

And then look at what Paul said in verse 7. (Read and explain.)

Christ did not die for the righteous. He did not die for the good. He died for the ungodly. He died for sinners. And He did not die for ungodly people who wanted to be righteous. Nor did He die for sinners who wanted to become saints. He did not die for sinners who wanted help. While they were sinners, unconcerned about their relationship to God, Christ died for them. Or, as Paul stated it in verse 8, "Christ died FOR US"! It was for you and for me, for us, those who are His people, and all who will yet become His people, that Christ became a man, suffered and died on the Cross, because that was God's way of showing us how much He loved "us," and this is what He had to do to save us from His own wrath.

Concl: Peter stated it this way:

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).

Most of you know this truth very well, but I hope that going through this verse in detail tonight will help us to appreciate the love of God for us even more. It truly is THE GREATEST WONDER OF ALL that such a God as God is, would send His own dear Son into this world as a Man, place our sins upon Him, that we who are sinner, ungodly, unjust, could be forgiven and delivered forever from the wrath of a holy God. It was not done because we deserved it. It was done in pure grace, just because God loved us--and always will love us.

Let me conclude with two other verses from Romans.

Please turn to Romans 8:31, 32.

The truth of the Gospel not only enables us to be saved, but it helps us after we are saved. God has shown that He is "for us" because of how He demonstrated His great love in the death of Christ. Divine logic says that if God would do that for us, then you and I do not have anything to worry about from here until we get to heaven. And there will be no worrying in heaven.

May God enable all of us to lay hold of these great truths so that we might trust Him more, and live more devotedly for His glory!