

“For the Word of the Cross is Folly to those who are Perishing”

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*“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing,
but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18)*

Read 1 Cor 1:17-25

What is the word of the cross and why is it folly to those who are perishing? Phil 2:8 speaks of our Lord's obedience “to the point of death, *even death on a cross*”. Heb 12:2 says He “*endured the cross, despising the shame*”. The cross was an instrument of destruction and death. It lined the victor's path with visuals of conquest. There is nothing “pretty” about the cross. It spoke of only one thing . . . death. It extended no mercy, gave no quarter, and asked for no favors. It is impartial as to who it kills and thinks not as to why it kills. It is the cross.

At the cross all pedigree, power, prestige, personality, possessions, and popularity are of no consequence. The cross cares not who you are or what you have done, it serves only one purpose and that it to put to death those who find themselves laid upon its surface.

There is no glory in the ignominious death on the cross . . . and then came Jesus.

In the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, God became man. Without diminishing who He is as God, He willfully took upon Himself the nature of man. By so doing, He voluntarily limited the spontaneous manifestation of His glorious self. He was hidden from human eye. He cloaked Himself in created flesh. He became what He created. The created became tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sin (Heb 4:15). He who knew no sin was made to be sin (2 Cor 5:21). He bore our sins in His body on the tree (1 Pt 2:24). Rom 5:6-10 tells us that He did the inconceivable and unimaginable. He died in the place of sinners. He became their substitute. Why would one lay down their life for those who hate Him? Why would one be willing to lay down the life of the one dearest loved for those who stand in rebellion against him? Reason and logic cannot answer the question. Even our finite understanding of sacrificial love pales when we consider the enormity of the sacrifice. But this is what God did . . . and He did it for you and me.

This then is the word of the cross. God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life (Jn 3:16). For those who are perishing in their unbelief, it is folly. But for those who are being saved, it is the power of God. There is nothing more for us to do. He has done it all. The cross speaks of our spiritual ruin and His excessive resource.

Can we believe this? Can you believe this? The cross calls us to stop trying and to start resting. To the proud and self-deceived such truth is folly. To the unloved and despised it would appear too wonderful, but there it is for all to see.

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How will we view the cross? The cross is not something brought out and viewed on occasion. The cross casts its shadow over every area of life. Think with me to our Lord's words at Caesarea Philippi in Mark 8. For the first time our Lord speaks of His impending death (Mk 8:31). Our Lord's revelation is met with rejection and disgust by Peter (Mk 8:32). Our Lord rebukes Peter. He continues to explain how not only must He die, but if they are to follow Him they also must die.

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what can a man give in return for his life?” (Mk 8:34-37)

The cross work was uniquely our Lord's. Yet those who came to it are equally identified by it. It is the cross that made us what we are and it is the cross that shows us who we are. We are the fellowship of the crucified.

Let us not forget that this is the word of the cross and to those who perish it is folly.