

“The Word of the Cross”

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Read 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:5

When we read that “the cross is foolishness to those who perish, but to those who believe it is the power of God”, we tend toward disbelief. It is hard to stay the course and to maintain the purity of the gospel. Yet this is what we who are saved are called to do. N.T. Wright is correct, “The first challenge comes from within, in the temptation to water down the message of the cross so that it becomes less offensive, more palatable to the ordinary sensible mind.”¹



What is “The Word of the Cross?” The Word of the cross is Christ-crucified. But the death of Christ also presupposes His real burial and physical resurrection. **But this Word from God about God for God is not to be held in the abstract.** It is not merely intellectual assent. It has flesh and bones. The Word of the cross calls across cultural taboos, social mores, and political parties. The Word of the cross has something to say to where we live and how we live. The Word of the cross speaks to . . .

- Racial inequality
- Religious bigotry
- Abortion
- Euthanasia
- Infanticide
- Chauvinism
- Feminism
- Greed
- Gluttony
- Immorality
- Gender inequality
- Political oppression
- Judicial injustice
- Welfare states
- Government induced poverty
- Marriage
- Parenting
- Living and Dying

The Word of the cross speaks to . . .

- Relativism
- Pragmaticism
- Materialism
- Consumerism

Continued on the other side...

The Word of the cross “proclaims release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, it sets free those who are oppressed, and proclaims the favorable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18, 19). It is the Word of the cross that brings hope to the depressed, healing to the diseased, and wholeness to the dysfunctional. It is the Word of the cross that declares sinners righteous, reconciles enemies, accepts outcasts, redeems slaves, satisfies wrath, forgives the unworthy, blesses the undeserving and adopts the orphaned. The Word of the cross declares that “the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:14, 15).

Until and only when we turn to the person and work of Jesus Christ can any of these “issues” be addressed correctly. Our text tells us that the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. It is to our shame that we allow the world to think for us in each of these areas. If we have no biblical response, then perhaps it is because we have refused to think for ourselves. Our non-thinking condition is a blight to the image of God in us. He made us to think critically and to learn eternally.

Robert Webber correctly notes how, “Social action is an essential aspect of the church’s work in the world – peace and justice and caring for the poor, widows, orphans, the disenfranchised, and the marginalized arise from true faith. But these actions are to result from the embodiment of God’s full narrative, not from a Christianity accommodating itself to Western culture’s doctrine of progress and utopia.” (Robert E. Webber, *Who Gets to Narrate the World?: Contending for the Christian Story in an Age of Rivals*, [Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2008], 85).

The cross has a word for life under the curse. “It is important to remember that a worldview is comprehensive. It affects every area of life, from money to morality, from politics to art. True Christianity is more than a set of ideas to use at church. Christianity as taught in the Bible is itself a worldview. The Bible never distinguishes between a “religious” and a “secular” life; the Christian life is the only life there is. Jesus proclaimed Himself “the way, the truth, and the life” ([John 14:6](#)) and, in doing so, became our worldview.”²

Let the world call us fools and weak; so be it. Let us settle once and for all that we are Christians and as such followers of the Lamb, a community of faith, the brotherhood and sisterhood of the cross. Let us not shirk nor shrink from this towering object. Let us embrace it; let us embrace Him. We are Christian, see us stand.

¹ “The Word of the Cross,” 1 Corinthians 1.18 [Isaiah 61.1–9; James 5.13–16a; Luke 4.16–20]. A sermon at the Sung Eucharist with the Blessing of Oils and Renewal of Ordination Vows, Durham Cathedral, Maundy Thursday, 5 April 2007 by the Bishop of Durham, Dr N. T. Wright. http://www.ntwrightpage.com/sermons/Word_Cross.htm

² <http://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-worldview.html>

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