

The Foolishness of the Cross

1. God Has Asked Men to Do/Believe the Nonsensical

- A. Example which runs counter to our senses: Bronze serpent – Num 21:4-9. **“Why have you ...”** (21:5). Their circumstances didn’t make sense; they murmured. The antidote for serpents’ venom didn’t make sense either, but it had healing power because God said so.
- B. Isaiah summarizes this stress between God’s will and man’s judgment – Is 55:8-9. God has often asked man to do things that run counter to human experience.
1. Sometimes He is intent on reflecting greater glory upon Himself. He wants us to stand in awe of His power and remind us of our own weakness.
 2. Sometimes God is doing the best thing for us; we just can’t see it. **Illus:** Kids often think parents just trying to spoil their fun. They cannot see danger.
 3. Sometimes God has plans/purposes hidden to us. He sees a bigger picture!
- C. 1500 years later, *“as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up”* (Jn 3:14). In the cross is man’s greatest challenge to trust in God.

2. The Cross: The Ultimate “Foolishness” of God

- A. The same event viewed differently (1 Cor 1:18-25):
1. Gentiles – Supposed to sacrifice **to** gods. **Illus:** Incan children recently found sacrificed in Argentina, high in the Andes; 500 years old.
 2. Jews – Stumbling block, a dead Messiah, executed on a Roman cross. No way! Suggested defeat, weakness. **Ex:** Peter – Mt 16:21-23. The death of God’s Messiah didn’t make sense to Peter. Jesus was young, powerful, wise, doing so much good. How/why could he possibly die?
 3. Saved – Power of God, wisdom of God (v 24).
- B. Message of cross today:
1. Our culture is of self-esteem, material accumulation, self-determination, esthetic beauty. *The cross stands completely at odds with our mainstream cultural texture.*
 2. Makes no appeal to pride – 1 Cor 1:26-31. Man was helpless, alienated, mired

in misery of his own making.

3. Cross a reminder that God had to do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves – *“by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight ...”* (Rom 3:20).

C. The cross is God's universal drawing power unto salvation (Jn 12:32):

1. The cross is the ultimate expression of God's love, grace and mercy toward sinners. This goodness leads to repentance (Rom 2:4).

2. The cross is the ultimate motivation to self-sacrifice. *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me ...”* (Gal 2:20).

3. The cross is the ultimate incentive to put the world aside (Gal 6:14). Thus the humble and submissive are drawn.

3. The Cross: Foundation of the Gospel

A. *“Jesus Christ and Him crucified”* (1 Cor 2:1-5). Paul went to this degraded, immoral city and preached a simple message of a crucified Savior.

B. He reflects on his work (1 Cor 3:5-11). No other foundation ...

C. Do not let your confidence be shaken in the message of the cross. Resist the urge to preach:

1. The friendliness of the church.

2. A watered down doctrine; psychobabble; self-esteem.

3. The social, recreational gospel. Continue to offer the **cross**, no matter how ineffective it may seem. **Gospel preaching may not do what we want it to do, but it will do what God wants it to do!**

Conclusion: Every man's eternal destiny rests upon his evaluation of the cross. Is it foolishness or nonsense to you? Are you ashamed of it? Or by faith in God do you see it as the ONLY way to be saved?

“Kneel at the cross, Christ will meet you there!”