

The RICHES

OF GRACE

Robert W. Reed

"hath appeared to all men." Titus 2:11

The Cross of Christ

+ The Significance of the Cross +

The Cross was the theme of the Apostle Paul's preaching (**Galatians 2:2**). According to **I Corinthians 1:17-23** and **Romans 1:16-17** the *cross of Christ* is synonymous with the *gospel of Christ*. In other words, to preach the cross of Christ is to preach that Jesus Christ died for our sins as in **I Corinthians 15:1-4**. The testimony of God that Paul preached at Corinth was Christ crucified according to **I Corinthians 2:1-2**. Also, Paul told the Galatians in **Galatians 3:1** that Jesus Christ was crucified among them by his preaching. That is, through the gospel they saw in their minds and hearts the crucifixion of Christ.

The word *cross* denotes primarily an upright pole or stake on which malefactors were nailed for execution. The cross then represents death and was for criminals. According to **Galatians 3:3** Jesus Christ became our curse by hanging on the cross which is called a tree in **I Peter 2:24; Acts 5:30, 10:39**.

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*"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Acts 16:31*

In **Hebrews 12:2** the Bible says, “*Jesus endured the cross. . .*” **Philippians 2:8** says: “*He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*” In **Mark 15:28** He was declared to be numbered with transgressors, so you must understand that Jesus Christ was bearing the cross (**John 19:17**) for us and it was our sins that nailed Him to that cross as stated in **II Corinthians 5:21**.

The cross represented capital punishment to the offender in the days of Christ’s earthly ministry. We find in **Matthew 10:38** the first time the word cross appears and it implies that unless a man is willing to consider himself as a criminal in the eye of his contemporaries he is not worthy to be a disciple. The followers of Christ are pictured here as following Him to death, each one bearing His cross. To bear the cross then is “to be willing to suffer for Christ and the Kingdom of God.”

THE OFFENSE OF THE CROSS

In **Galatians 5:11**, the Apostle Paul shows the offense that is involved in preaching the cross alone from salvation. If Paul had been preaching that it was necessary to keep the law, then the offense of the cross would have ceased and he would not have suffered any persecution. To preach the cross alone for salvation is an offense to man’s pride. Man wants to boast in religious practices and his good works, so to preach salvation by grace through faith is offensive to him.

Also, we must consider **Galatians 6:12-14**, where again, the persecution comes when the cross alone is preached for salvation. There are those who circumcised in order to avoid these persecutions, but according to **verse 14** we see that Paul gloried only in the cross of Christ. You must understand that Paul could have gloried and boasted in many religious things according to **Philippians 3:1-11**, but he counted them as dung and only considered what Jesus Christ accomplished at Calvary to be of any value in his salvation and his Christian life. The Law and all its ceremonies were nailed to the cross of Jesus Christ according to **Colossians 2:13-14**.

The next scripture to consider is **I Corinthians 1:17-24**, where **verse 17** shows clearly that there are things that make the cross of Christ of none effect and one of those things is words of man’s wisdom. According to **verse 18**, the preaching of the cross in the power of God (not water baptism or wisdom of words).

To just preach Christ crucified is a stumbling block and foolishness to the lost Jew and Gentile. But it is by the cross of Christ that make peace and reconciles all things unto God according to **Colossians 1:20**.

THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS

In **Philippians 3:18** Paul discusses the enemies of Christ. An enemy is anybody who does not preach the cross of Christ alone for salvation. These enemies pervert the Gospel of Christ by adding works to it and they are declared to be accursed in **Galatians 1:6-9**. Any preacher who adds one thing to the cross for salvation is an enemy of God. Paul said in **Romans 16:17**, “*to mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them.*”

The doctrine the Romans had learned was justification by faith in Christ without the deeds of the law. (**Romans 3:20-21, 4:5,24-25, 5:1,9,16-21, 6:1-7,18, 7:18, 7:6, 8:1, 10:4, 11:6**). Again, anyone who preaches salvation apart from the cross of Christ is an enemy of God and his end is destruction.

THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE CROSS

In closing, I want to point out some things the cross accomplished.

The cross accomplished redemption for the believer,
(**Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Galatians 3:13**).

The cross abolished death,
(**II Timothy 1:10; Hebrews 2:14**).

And it took the law out of the way,
(**Colossians 2:13-14; Ephesians 2:13-16**).

The cross also reconciled Jews and Gentiles into one body,
which is called the Church,
(**Ephesians 2:14-16**).

Have you ever trusted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior believing that He died for all your sins? Remember, it is the cross that is the power of God unto salvation! Amen!