

God Has Spoken
Tract Series

Jesus Christ,
and Him Crucified

(A lesson from I Corinthians 2:1-16)

*W*hen people discuss the life of Jesus of Nazareth it is often agreed that the greatest event in history was his resurrection from the dead. There is much interest in his miracles, his parables, the principles of his teaching and, of course, in his birth. Important as all these are, not one of these facts is the emphasis of apostolic preaching. Upon none of these is man's salvation based. Celebrating the birth of Jesus is completely without Heaven's sanction, and a great many of those who preach of his miracles, parables, principles – and even his resurrection – have missed entirely the message that God put in them.

Man is not saved because Jesus was born. We are not saved by believing in the miracles that he worked. As important as are the words of Jesus, whether in maxim or in parable, no one is saved simply by conceding that his word is truth. It may be surprising to some, but it is not even by – or even because of – his resurrection that we are saved. The purpose of the miracles of Jesus, including his resurrection from death, is to show us that he is who he claims to be: the Son of God having both the will and the power to save us from sin. Knowing this we pay more attention to his word that we

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds
(Hebrews 1:1-2)

may know what God requires of us. Still, it is in none of this that we are saved.

What is it, then, that saves men's souls from the eternal punishment due us for our sin against God? The apostle Paul gives us the answer. Toward the end of the first chapter of Paul's first epistle to the church in Corinth, he stated that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men" (I Corinthians 1:25). He continued on to say that Christ is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (vv. 30-31). By inspiration of God Paul made it clear that these truths make our own boasting meaningless (v. 29). Having thus established that we have not saved ourselves – indeed, that we cannot do so – Paul continued this line of reasoning in chapter 2.

PAUL PREACHED CHRIST & HIM CRUCIFIED

In the first 9 verses of I Corinthians chapter 2 Paul wrote of the rationale of his preaching. He wrote that he did not preach with excellency of speech or wisdom (v. 1). These are precisely the terms on which many today judge a preacher's efforts. Does he express wit and wisdom? Is he an accomplished public speaker? People who think that these define "good preaching" would not have thought Paul a good preacher; he didn't have these qualities, and their exclusion was by design. It was something else that Paul, by inspiration of God, held in higher esteem.

Paul limited his preaching to the subject of Jesus Christ, and when he preached Jesus what he emphasized was the crucifixion (v. 2). We see this, not only in Paul's statement, but in Luke's record of the work of all the apostles and evangelists from the beginning of the church. On the day the church began Peter preached the crucifixion (Acts 2:23). With the other apostles he preached the same before the council (Acts 5:27-30). On trial for his life Stephen spoke of the death of Christ (Acts 7:52), and Philip made the subject the center of his teaching on the road to Gaza (Acts 8:32-35). Repeatedly we see that when they preached, they preached of a crucified savior (Hebrews 5:8-9).

Of course, when they preached Jesus they told of the resurrection and the other miracles (Acts 2:22, 32). These were the proof that their message was true (John 20:30-31). Their preaching included also facts of the kingdom of God (Acts 8:12), which is the church (Matthew 16:18-19). They preached the words of Jesus (Acts 20:35), and they preached of the new covenant (Hebrews 7-9), of the necessity of Christ's death (Acts 17:3), and of the plan by which man must take advantage of Christ's sacrifice (Acts 2:38; 8:35-38; 16:30-34; etc.). Without all these the agonizing death of Jesus on the cross was for nought because salvation is not an automatic result of Christ's death. Each of us has a specific and personal responsibility in our own salvation (Acts 2:40).

WHY DEATH?

Still, it is only by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ that anyone can be saved. This is because Jesus' death on the cross was his willing sacrifice to God for man's sins. In God's eternal wisdom, "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). Sinful man cannot shed his own blood to save himself. This is true precisely because man is in sin (Romans 7:18-24), and so is separated from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4), so God himself provided for us a perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 10:5-11; 2:10). Jesus left heaven and came to earth for this very purpose: to offer himself as a perfect sacrifice to God for man's sins (Hebrews 2:9). He had the power to escape the cross (Matthew 26:53), but his will to serve God and save man was more compelling than his desire to escape that suffering (Mark 14:36).

WHAT SHOULD WE DO ABOUT IT?

The steps in God's plan for man's salvation all point to this great sacrifice. Just as Israel's sins were put off year by year because they obeyed the law (Leviticus 16:30; Hebrews 10:3), so our sins are put off once and for all (Hebrews 10:14, 17) because we obey the gospel (Romans 10:16). The facts to be obeyed in the gospel are the death,

burial and resurrection of Jesus (I Corinthians 15:1-4). These are “obeyed from the heart” through a “form of doctrine” (Romans 6:17), which is described in Romans 6, verses 3-7. Hearing of his deeds (including his sacrificial death and his resurrection from the dead) and words should cause us to believe that Jesus is truly the Christ, the son of God (Acts 1:1; John 20:30-31). Thus believing, we are motivated immediately to repent (turn) toward (Acts 20:21; Luke 13:3) him, to profess our faith in him (I Timothy 6:12; Acts 8:36-37), and be “buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4; see also Acts 2:36-38 and Galatians 3:27).

Paul preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified. When we understand why he did so, then we can understand the tremendous debt we owe to God. Jesus died for your salvation. Did he die for nothing, or will you obey the gospel (II Thessalonians 1:8) to receive this great blessing?

If you haven't yet obeyed the gospel, it's too important to delay the matter any longer.



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