

THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS

Part I

Messages for Both the Saved and the Unsaved

By Arlen L. Chirwood

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish [*lit.*, ‘that are perishing’] foolishness; but unto us which are saved [*lit.*, ‘which are being saved’] it is the power of God...

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified...

That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

Which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (I Cor. 1:18; 2:1, 2, 5-8).

In Scripture, there is a preaching of the cross to the *saved*, and there is a preaching of the cross to the *unsaved*. And the former is dealt with *far more extensively* in Scripture than the latter.

Salvation by grace through faith, having to do with the preaching of the cross to the *unsaved*, as seen for example in Eph. 2:8, 9, is *NOT the main message of Scripture*:

“For by grace are ye saved [*lit.*, ‘you have been saved’] through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Not of works, lest any man should boast” (vv. 8, 9).

Rather, the main message of Scripture is seen in *what salvation by grace through faith allows and where it takes an individual*. Salvation by grace through faith, as seen in Eph. 2:8, 9 — a passing “from death unto life” (John 5:24; Eph. 2:1, 5) — takes an individual to that seen in Eph. 2:10, which is another way of expressing the preaching of the cross to the *saved*:

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (v. 10).

Twofold Nature of the Preaching of the Cross

No single book in Scripture deals principally with salvation by grace through faith, *NOT* John’s gospel (as thought by many), *NOT* any of the Pauline epistles, Hebrews, the general epistles, or any other book in Scripture, both Old and New Testaments.

Again, salvation by grace through faith, though usually dealt with extensively by man, is simply *NOT* the main message of Scripture.

ALL Scripture, after one fashion or another, deals *principally with the preaching of the cross to the saved*, not to the *unsaved*. *ALL* Scripture is in line with the manner in which the matter was originally set forth in the opening thirty-four verses of Genesis (1:1-2:3) — *showing the manner and time which God uses to restore a ruined creation (six days time, with a view to a subsequent seventh day rest, foreshadowing 6,000 years of restorative work, followed by 1,000 years of rest)*.

The first day’s restorative activity can only foreshadow God’s beginning restorative activity for ruined man (salvation by grace through faith). And God’s continued restorative work during the subsequent five days can only foreshadow a continued restorative activity for man (things beyond salvation by grace through faith). And ALL is with a view to a seventh-day rest.

The preceding is not to undermine, in any way, the importance of the preaching of the cross to the *unsaved*, for a person can’t get to the preaching of the cross to the *saved* apart from beginning with the preaching of the cross to the *unsaved*. Rather, attention is simply being called to the manner in which God has structured His Word relative to these two aspects of the preaching of the cross.

To illustrate from Genesis chapters one and two, it is to say that a person *CAN’T* begin with activity foreshadowed by day two in Genesis chapter one. He has to *FIRST* go through that foreshadowed by activity on day one. This is where he *MUST* begin, but he is *NOT* to remain in that foreshadowed by activity on day one. Rather, he is to *MOVE ON to that foreshadowed by activity on the subsequent five days, with a view to that foreshadowed by activity on the seventh day*.

Note relative to the preceding that Jude sought to write an epistle dealing with salvation by grace through faith — “the common salvation” (v. 3a). But the Spirit of God would not allow him to write an epistle of this nature. Rather Jude was moved to write *on things beyond salvation by grace through faith*. Jude was moved to write an epistle exhorting believers to “earnestly contend for the faith” (v. 3b). And “the faith” is *an expression peculiarly related to the Word of the Kingdom, part and parcel with the preaching of the cross to the saved* (I Tim. 5:11-16; II Tim. 4:7, 8).

And this same thing can be seen in any other New Testament epistle, or any book throughout both Testaments. The message of salvation by grace through faith can be found in practically any epistle or book, but it is *NEVER seen as the main message*.

The Preaching in View in I Cor. 1:18; 2:1-8

I Corinthians 1:18 refers to the preaching of the cross in relation to two classes of individuals — *those who are perishing, and those who are being saved* (see textual translation changes in brackets at the beginning of this article).

The writer, Paul, places himself among those presently being saved. He, and those referenced with him, had been saved (past [Gen. 1:2b-5; Eph.

2:8, 9]), they were being saved (present [Gen. 1:6ff; Eph. 2:10]), and this was with a view to salvation, a seventh day rest (future [Gen. 2:1-3; Heb. 4:4-9]).

They had been saved through the simple preaching of the gospel of grace; *they were now being saved* through the preaching of the gospel of glory. And both have to do with the preaching of the cross, with a view to *salvation being realized* on the seventh day, in the Messianic Era.

Contextually, *those perishing* in the first part of the verse *CANNOT* possibly be a reference to unsaved individuals. The subject at hand is *the preaching of the cross to the saved, NOT to the unsaved*. Those perishing can only refer to Christians who are not moving beyond that foreshadowed by activity on day one in Genesis chapter one into that foreshadowed by activity on days two through six, or beyond that seen in Eph. 2:8, 9 into that seen in Eph. 2:10.

Then, that seen in I Cor. 2:1ff simply continues from chapter one, though from the wording and a statement in I Cor. 15:3, 4, a broader coverage of the preaching of the gospel is evidently now seen.

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (I Cor. 15:3, 4).

When Paul first went to Corinth, he could only have found a city filled with *unsaved Gentiles*. And a preaching of the cross to *the unsaved* had to occur first, which is seen in I Cor. 15:3 — “Christ died for our sins.” Salvation through this initial aspect of the preaching of the cross is via death and shed blood. *It has existed this way since man’s sin in Eden in Genesis chapter three, and no change can ever occur.*

Then I Cor. 15:4 carries matters beyond that seen in verse three, moving into a continued preaching of the cross, a preaching of the cross to the saved, to those having “passed from death unto life” through the previous preaching of the cross to the unsaved.

Note the basic, overall type beginning in Exodus chapter twelve and ending at the conclusion of the book, in chapter forty, or, in another respect, continuing to and ending in the Book of Joshua.

Death and shed blood occurred while the Israelites were still in Egypt, a type of the world (death and shed blood of paschal lambs, and the proper application of this blood [on the door posts and lintel]).

This foreshadows Christ’s death and shed blood at Calvary, with a view to an unsaved individual still in the world (death and shed blood of the Paschal Lamb, and the proper application of His blood [by faith]).

This would be one aspect of that seen in I Cor. 2:3, the initial part of the preaching of the cross. But, as seen from verse eighteen in the previous chapter, or from the initial framework set forth at the beginning of Scripture, or in numerous places in Scripture which could be referenced, an individual is *NOT* to remain at this initial point. And this is succinctly stated in the continuing verse in I Cor. 15:4, pointing *to burial, then resurrection*.

Note the type once again in Exodus, moving beyond the thought of death, shed blood, and a proper application of the blood while still in Egypt. This is followed by the march toward the Red Sea and the Red Sea passage (with all involved therein), the march to Sinai (with all involved therein), and the march to the land (with all involved therein).

All of this is fraught with typical significance and meaning.

In one respect it has to do with the unsaved during present time, and with Christians during both present and future time, taking Christians into the Messianic Era.

In another respect, it has to do with Israel’s future, beginning with their national conversion, and moving from there into events taking the nation into the Messianic Era.

Whether for the saved or the unsaved, matters begin at the cross, with crucifixion and death.

For the unsaved, activity surrounding the cross

is *the only thing in view*. There is a vicarious death, allowing the unsaved person, once saved, to be seen in two respects — *as both “dead” and as having “passed from death unto life”* (Eph. 2:5-7; Col. 2:20; 3:1-10).

And from the preceding point, with the person now a Christian and seen as *dead* (vicariously), *a burial is to occur*. And this burial is with a view to *resurrection*, both during the present time and on the third day, the third 1,000-year period, yet future.

Note the type in Exodus. A vicarious death occurred while in Egypt through the death and shed blood of paschal lambs. Then the dead were buried in the Red Sea passage and raised as they came up out of the Sea on the eastern banks.

At this point they were out of Egypt and separated from the things of Egypt. The old man, connected with death, was to be left in the tomb, beneath the waters of the Sea; and the new man was now to walk in newness of life, with a view to a theocracy in a new land out ahead.

The theocracy can be seen brought into existence at the end of the Book of Exodus; and the Israelites’ entrance into the land, in possession of the theocracy, can be seen realized in the Book of Joshua.

ALL of this, typical of Israel yet future, is also typical of unsaved and saved man today. *Death* occurs at the cross, the *dead* are to be buried (the waters of baptism), and the person is to be raised from the waters, with that associated with *death* left beneath the waters, in the tomb.

And *ALL* of this, exactly as in the type, is with a view to a removal from the world, walking in newness of life, and a kingdom out ahead to be realized in another land (a heavenly land rather than an earthly land, as with Israel).

ALL of this has to do with the preaching of the cross. And one can easily see that *matters DON’T move very far in Scripture if this preaching DOESN’T move beyond a preaching of the cross to the unsaved*.

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