

"WHY I PREACH THE CROSS"

I Cor. 1:23

INTRODUCTION

There are so called experts today in the field of religious authority who believe that the day of preaching is gone. And the sermon is looked upon as an uninterrupted monologue, and that today is the day of dialogue we are told. Even one religious journal bore the title "The Pulpit" for many years - changed its name to "Church Ministry". Now this tells us the thinking of some people. We live in a prosperous day and the church is told that the emphasis is swinging away from preaching.

I say today we must have both. They are two arms and hands of the same body. Jesus was insistent that he came to minister and he went about doing good. The Bible also says, Jesus came preaching. Now these are two sides of a coin.

I think there is a renewed interest in preaching. That there never has been a greater response to the preaching of the cross.

Paul could have centered his preaching in philosophy. He could have taught about the Old Testament law. He could have magnified the prophets. He could have exalted Jewish tradition, or the social gospel, or the social problems of society.

He was a learned man - a scholar.

But he chose to preach Christ crucified - and God blessed his preaching.

We know that there are those today who just say - preach Jesus. But that is not enough. Satan is content with the preacher who proclaims Jesus as a good man. Even the best man whoever lived. If the preacher leaves out the cross, the blood - the message would be incomplete.

As we look forward to the Easter Season, we must remember again the death and the resurrection of our Lord. And I would like for this sermon today to be sort of a personal testimony to my own ministry, of preaching the cross.

## I. I PREACH THE CROSS OUT OF GRATITUDE

Now I have in my experience witnessed many people who have been helped in various stages in life - some spiritually, and I have witnessed people who have been helped by physicians, who have been able to remove cancer. I have seen people who have been so grateful that they would tell everyone who would listen how this surgeon or that surgeon removed that malignant growth and he or she had been set free from that terror.

Now, just for illustration - suppose that you should approach a person and they would say "I have cancer". Do you know anyone who has had it - or do you know of a physician or surgeon who can make them well? Now what would you think if I would say to that person - no, I have never heard of any surgeon or doctor who has cured anyone. And I should withhold the information and hope from another who was gripped with such a dread disease.

Now to me, Christ, through his death on the cross has provided a remedy for a disease far worse than cancer. No surgeon can remove it, no human being can touch it - it is called the disease of sin.

The outcome of this disease if not cured is death.

Every person here sits in death's row today.

But out of my gratitude to Jesus, I want everyone I meet to know about this great physician. When I think of so many still enslaved in the disease of sin, I must not rest until I have warned all that I can possibly of sin's consequences - and a cure and a remedy.

I heard a man the other day say that since he had been saved - even driving down the street sometimes, he would think of this person or that person. I wonder, if they are Christians. I wonder if they know Christ. That's the reason why - out of gratitude, I preach the cross.

## II. I PREACH THE CROSS BECAUSE IT NEVER GROWS OLD

I always try to preach something fresh - something that is new, and something that stirs my own heart. This has been my practice through the years. The story of the cross is always fresh and new.

You can read the account of the cross in the Gospels - in just a few minutes you can memorize parts of the Scriptures. You may be familiar with the contents of it.

Yet everytime you read it with your heart open, to the alumination of the Holy Spirit, there is new truth that will come and will inspire you to make a new application to your own life. Now, in order to preach a Gospel that is new, then I must preach the story of Christ crucified - it never grows old.

### III. I PREACH THE CROSS BECAUSE IT IS ADEQUATE COMFORT TO THE HUMAN HEART

In our day, as in Paul's day, there were people that felt the cross was just foolishness - that it couldn't offer anything. That it lacked something. A cross to a Roman was just something to crucify a man on. And they thought it was empty talk - the most awful thing they ever heard of. But God chose, you remember, the foolish things of the world - wisdom, righteousness. In other words he took the weak things and he has made them strong - and brought about the redemption of mankind.

Let me illustrate now - the days of World War II - a chaplain was called to a home where the grief stricken parents had just received a telegram, telling them that their oldest son had died in combat. As the man of God sat with those parents, seeking to bring comfort, he did not say "we will get even with the enemy that killed your boy". This would not have brought comfort. He said I told them that God understood. For he, too, had experienced the loss of his son in the war against evil. I assured them that someday the war would be over and we could carry the message of the prince of peace, with the hope that wars could cease.

On April 28, 1958, a young Korean - exchange student at the University of Pa., a leader in Christian affairs, left his room to stroll down to the corner

to mail a letter to his parents. Eleven leather jacketed teen-agers came upon him - without a word they attack him with black-jacks and lead pipes, they fled and left him dead in the street.

The city where this crime took place was shocked. An international incident seemed eminent, as the story of the senseless murder was announced throughout the world. Then a letter was sent from Korea signed by the parents and 20 other relatives of the student. It was addressed to the law enforcement authorities where the crime had taken place. It read as follows: "Our family has met together and decided to petition that the most generous treatment possible within the laws of your government be given those guilty of this crime. In order to give evidence of our sincere hope, contained in this petition, we have decided to save money to start a fund to be used for the religious, educational, vocational, and social guidance of the boys when they are released. We have dared to express our hope with a spirit received from the Gospel of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who died for our sins."

I repeat, I preach the cross because of an adequate comfort to the human heart.

Dr. R. C. Campbell tells of preaching to 300 state prisoners. One of the men came up to him and said, "I am the happiest man in the state today." The governor had pardoned me - he has already signed my pardon papers. At sunrise tomorrow, I will go out through that gate a free man.

I thought many times that I, just like that man, was a prisoner of sin. But then I received my pardon papers - Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe. Sin had left its crimson stain. He washed it white as snow.

Yes, the cross, and Christ crucified conquered every foe. Death, Hell, the grave. He won the right of the individual to approach the throne of God.

And the cross meets the deepest needs of the soul - for without the shedding of blood - there is no remission of sin.

All that we have to do is to ask Mary Magdalene - did the cross bless your life. Or ask the thief on the cross - did the cross have anything to do with your being in paradise. Yes, Jesus saves - Jesus saves.

IV. I PREACH THE CROSS BECAUSE IT IS THE ONLY MEANS OF SALVATION FROM SIN

The night before Jesus died on the cross, he prayed, Oh Father - My Father, it is impossible that this cup pass from me. In other words he said, if there be any other possible means by which men may be saved from their sins - then let this bitter cup - the crucifixion pass from me. God answered that prayer the next day when he allowed Jesus to die on the cross.

Furthermore it was declared that there is none other name under Heaven. Whereby, we must be saved. The way is Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

Dr. Levell tells of a college boy once. A revival was on in the college town and yet that young man instead of going to the revival went out to have a big night of sin. About 2 o'clock in the morning - he arrived back to his apartment. He walked out on the porch with a heavy heart. He began to ask God