

WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED

Open your Bibles to **1 Corinthians 1**, and in just a few minutes, we will read together from **verse 18 thru verse 25**.

While at the RFFE, one of the classes offered was one on the topic of sharing the gospel. The teacher was an amazing young man named Chris Swinford who has been a missionary to the Ukraine and teaches personal evangelism at the Sunset School of Preaching in Lubbock, Texas. You need to know that the results this young man is having as an evangelist are simply phenomenal! If I have my way we will get Chris here as soon as we can so all of you can be blessed by the things he shared at Red River. The elders are emphasizing evangelism this year and I am in whole hearted agreement with that, and I believe he can really help us get busy with that. And of course, we have already had some emphasis on that this year with brother Mike Mazzalongo and we have brother Willis Hood who will be with us on Wednesday nights starting in September. All of these men are helping us return evangelism to its rightful place in this church.

Let's read our text:

*For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19) For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." 20) Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21) **For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.** 22) For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23) **but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,** 24) *but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25) For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.**

Sister Ida Purdy was one of those wonderful Christian women who for many years had taught the pre-K Bible class for the congregation in Coffeerville, Mississippi. I preached for that church for four years, from the fall of 1967 to the summer of 1971. I don't know how much teacher-training Miss Ida had, probably not a lot, but she was one of those women who seemed to have been gifted for teaching and for loving kids. For the two or three years a child might be in her class, those were hers; they were her kids. She was passionate about help children grow up with a knowledge of the Bible. In her classroom there was a short, horseshoe shaped table, surrounded with little chairs. One of those chairs was designated as *Jesus' chair* because Miss Ida wanted her children to know that even though He might not be seen, every time people gathered together to study and talk about God and Jesus, he would be with them. The Bible says something to that effect, doesn't it? Look it up, Matthew 18:20. On one occasion, a new child came to class for the first time, and not knowing better, took his seat in Jesus' chair! One of the other children just couldn't stand it and cried out to Miss Ida, "Quay is setting on Jesus!"

Well, we don't want to be guilty of setting on Jesus. Instead, as Paul said, our goal is to preach Christ. To be precise, Paul said our job is to preach Christ crucified. I want us to think about that this morning and see if we cannot leave here a little more excited and equipped to do that. *"We preach Christ crucified!"*

First of all I want us to come to grips with the fact that this is our job. I'm using the word "job" but you understand what I'm saying; it is our privilege. It is our job, our privilege to proclaim the gospel of Christ, or as it is expressed in **1 Peter 2:9**, it is our job to proclaim *"...the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."*

That's the job assigned to the church, and I don't think I need to spend time this morning proving that from the Scriptures. We all know that. We may not be doing it, or at least doing it very well, or consistently, but we know that's our job. That's the job assigned to the church. It is not something God told kings and rulers to do; it is not the purpose of governments. It is not something we can expect our public schools and institutions of higher learning to do. It is not something we should expect to be done by the media. It is not the job of the army or air force or navy, or by our police authorities. This is the job assigned to the church, and scriptures like Ephesians 3:10, 11 and 1 Timothy 3:15 make that clear.

But of course, when we say preaching Christ is the church's job, then really, whose job is it? It is yours and mine, correct? After all, what is the church except people like you and me who have confessed Christ as Lord and obeyed His gospel. The church is not someone else. The church is not them; it's us. It isn't some independent, para-church organization; it is the people in thousands of congregations just like this one all over the world. So preaching Christ is not someone else's job, it is your job. It is my job! And if we who wear the name of Christ do not do it, if we are not proclaiming Christ, then the job isn't going to get done.

We don't want that to happen, do we? We don't want the job Christ gave us to go unfinished? No, I'm confident none of us want to leave our work undone, and I've got some good news for you, it isn't as hard as you think, and I bet you are going to be good at it!

Second, I want you to notice that Paul stressed preaching Christ and Him crucified. Not only is that good news, but that is good news about the good news! That tells us what God wants us to be telling people about. God isn't expecting us to go out here and be a walking Bible encyclopedia. We don't have to wait to begin until we are able to speak convincingly on a thousand and one different topics and issues. We don't have to be able to answer a thousand different questions.

I know of Christians, who would like to be able to share the gospel with people more effectively, but they think they do not know enough. They think someone might ask them a question they can't answer. They are afraid they might say or teach something wrong, so when an opportunity comes, they freeze up and let it pass! We make evangelism too complicated. The gospel isn't complicated! It's fairly simple, really.

Do you know the gospel? Have you heard the story; His story? I know you have! Some of you have heard it hundreds, if not thousands of times. We've heard it until we could almost repeat it in our sleep. Its good news, but many of us have heard the good news so much that it has become "old news." I think about that old Catherine Hankey hymn, written over 150 years ago—*I Love To Tell the Story* (it is number 659 if you want to look at the words).

I love to tell the story of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love.
I love to tell the story, Because I know 'tis' true;
It satisfies my longings as nothing else can do.

I love to tell the story; more wonderful it seems
Than all the golden fancies of all my golden dreams
I love to tell the story; It did so much for me;
And that is just the reason I tell it now to thee.

I love to tell the story: 'Tis pleasant to repeat
What seems, each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet;
I love to tell the story, For some have never heard
The message of salvation from God's own holy Word

I love to tell the story, For those who know it best;
Seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest;
And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song.
Twill be the old old story that I have loved so long.

I love to tell the story! T'will be my theme in glory
To tell the old old story of Jesus and His love.

Brother Chris Swinford said something at Red River that really caught me by surprise; something that I really had to think about, and I want you to think about it. He said, "*People love Jesus. They may not like you. They may not like your religion. They may not like the things that Christ demands of them, but they love Jesus.*" Now of course that may not always be the case, but for the most part, I think he is right. People love Jesus.

So, if that's true, and I think it is, think about the implication that has for evangelism? Think about that. What did Paul say was his message? Christ and him crucified, right? Paul said, "I want to tell people about Jesus." I thought about that and I wondered, "Would that work?" I mean, haven't most people, at least in our country, already heard about Christ; don't they already know His story? I am sure that is the case, but guess what, when you are talking to people about Christ, when you begin telling people His story, there is power in that.

Isn't that what Paul said about the gospel? Didn't he say in **Romans 1:16**, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to*

the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Not only does Christ’s life, death and resurrection make it possible for men to find forgiveness for their sins, the story about his life, death and resurrection has a way of opening people’s minds and hearts to that salvation. The gospel is the power of God for salvation. Do we love to tell the old, old story? Do we? How long has it been since we shared that old story...with anyone? We need to be telling people the gospel story because when we do, it has power; power to save souls and change lives, to change the world!

What is the gospel story? Many times when we think about that we think about the words of **1 Corinthians 15:1-5**, where Paul says,”

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2) and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. 3) For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4) that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5) and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

Is that the gospel? So many people say that’s the gospel. *“It’s the good news,”* they say, *“about the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.”* I know that’s what they think 1 Corinthians 15 says, but I really think we need to rethink that! The gospel doesn’t just start on a hillside called Golgotha. Jesus didn’t just show up one day and that evening he was taken out to the place of the skull and executed. No, that isn’t the gospel. The gospel goes way back. In Galatians 3:8, Paul said the gospel was preached to Abraham. Well, I don’t think that means Abraham was given a preview of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. One preacher at Red River said, you can find the gospel way back in **2 Chronicles 6:14**, where we find Solomon praying, saying: *“O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven or on earth, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart.”*

That’s the gospel, isn’t it? There’s a God! *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”* It’s a great story! It’s a big story! Well, does God expect us to go and tell everyone we meet that whole story? The whole story is important of course, but the way we get the opportunity to teach people the whole story is by beginning with that part of the story concerning the crucified Christ. There isn’t a better part of the story to tell than that, is there? There is not another part of the story that has more power to break down resistance and melt hearts than His story! So that’s where we begin. We don’t end there. I’m not saying that the rest of the story doesn’t matter. It does. It all does, but the important thing for us to do is to begin with the story of the crucified Christ.

Our job is to be story tellers. “His story” tellers. Catherine Hankey calls it “the story,” but think about that. What is the story? I am going to give you a challenge this week. I want you to spend some time thinking about that, and I want you to take some paper and a pen, or maybe sit down at your computer, or your tablet, and I want you to put His story into your own words.

1. What would you say to someone who wanted to know the story of Christ?
2. Where would you begin? What would you say?

Now, please don't think that I'm asking you to write out a systematic, chronological account of the life and death of Christ. I want you to think about that, but really, in a nutshell, what is His story. Where would you begin? What would you include? How would you develop it? Would you do that? I urge you to do that. I know it would do you good; it would bless you in so many ways. I'm going to ask you next week if you worked on that, and I hope you won't have to hang your head and in shame confess that you forgot, or you didn't take the time—you will have the time, it isn't going to take that long, so if you don't do it, it will be because you didn't take the time. You weren't interested in that. I want you to do that because if you are going to become one of God's best storytellers, you need to start thinking about how to tell that story.

And that's where the four gospels come in. People wonder why are there four gospels? Why not just one? Why not twelve? Why didn't each apostle write an account of Christ's life? I don't know if there is an answer to that question. I am sure the Lord knows why, but we might not ever know, for sure. I do know this: the fact that there are four accounts of the life of Christ means that we have an almost inexhaustible resource for the story we are going to be privileged to tell time and time again.

You see, if you take the life of Christ as found in the four gospels, you have hundreds and thousands of places with which to begin. John even begins His gospel with some information about Christ's existence prior to coming to earth. You have all of these "threads" as bloggers call them, with which to begin a conversation in any and every situation.

For example, you have a friend whose children are giving them fits. Didn't Jesus tell a parable about a prodigal son?. Your neighbor's cancer just returned and he or she is on the verge of hopelessness. What about that story of the woman who had a hemorrhage problem, and dealt with it for twelve years? That's in Luke the 8th chapter. Or maybe you have this friend at work who is always boasting about some new measure of his success. Maybe it is his new car, or his new house, or his new girlfriend. Jesus talked about that, didn't he? Maybe not in those exact words, but in Luke 12, didn't Jesus talk about a person whose successes were coming so fast and furious that he lost sight of God? Maybe it isn't something Jesus said or did, but instead, it is what He is doing in you. You go that second mile, you let your light shine in such a way that as people see your good works, they can't help but compliment you in some way. What an excellent opportunity to tell them about the Lord that has led you into being that kind of person.

Chris Swinford told about going to a restaurant and as he was ordering, he simply said out loud, and purposefully, "I wonder what Jesus would order?" Well, the waitress responded, "If it was Jesus ordering, he would probably want fish!" Chris told her, "fish it is." And with that he found some common ground to speak with her further about the Lord.

Do you get my point? What I'm trying to say is that our job is to preach Christ and him crucified, and with the help of the four gospels, we only have about 50,000 different ways to begin that conversation with someone. And once you get the conversation going, you simply ask the person, "I would love the opportunity to tell you more about Jesus!"

So, will you do that? Will you spend some time this week thinking about Christ's story. Think about what in that story has made a difference in your life. Think about what in that story appeals to you, amazes you. Think about all of the things, the stories, the miracles, the conversations, the teachings, the unfolding of His life, what He did, what happened to him, who He is. Think about those things and then start looking for opportunities to begin telling his story.

Christ came to seek and save the lost. That's a very important part of His story, and it is what I really want you to think about right now. Are you lost? Are you ready to be found? Are you ready to go from being lost to being saved? Are you ready to become a Christian, a disciple of Christ, and let Him be both your Savior and your Lord.

If you need or desire to respond to God in any kind of public way this morning, will you let that be known by coming to the front as we stand and sing.