
The Preeminence and Power of the Gospel

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I must start this section off with a personal note. During my time writing this book (over a year) the last few weeks writing about the tangible scenes and effect of my Lord's bloodshed have deeply wounded, healed, and taken hold of my soul in a profound way. As I have taken the time to research, mediated and write about my Lord's slaughtering I am more than ever convinced that the lack of the gospel rigging in the church is the source of literally most of its problems! My soul burns stronger to preach the gospel untainted in its purity. I have also come to know that I have not spent nearly enough time in personal communion while looking at the terrifying scenes of my Lord being crucified in my place?

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It seems odd when I see parts of the church preaching about all types of biblical topics but so little of the Lord of Love being brutally murdered merely because He had our sins transferred to Him. It is the horrific killing of the Son of God that is the fountain of the churches entire forgiveness and of its every blessed hope.

Likewise, the main maturity in a preacher is how (1) well, (2) deeply, and (3) consistently he preaches Christ and Him crucified. Fifty years from now a mature Christian will still be repeating over and over that old message of the cross. They will be doing this both to themselves and the people who hear them. A Christian can easily measure their maturity and the depth of relationship with the Almighty God. All they need to do is self examine themselves to see how content and

satisfied they are with the message of Christ crucified. Furthermore, you must be content to preach, daily if not hourly, that message over and over again to yourself or others for the next 70 years, if the Lord permits. How much of your contentment rests here, this then is the measure of how mature your love and relationship with the Lord is!

Most of us, in accordance to our sinful pride, lust and laziness, try to move on to more "spiritual things" or heights. But the fact still remains that loving your Lord and Savior in the deepest relationship does not get any higher the following: placing your trust, love and worship in the Son of God Who died for your sins! To move on from here is to move from God Himself!

1 Corinthians 1:18, "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

The power to reveal sin and grace:

What I have come to understand in reading the scriptures is that developing personal relationships, loving your neighbor, going to church and the like has NO power to save! But it is ONLY "the message of the cross" that has that power! Many who live in my narcissist postmodern age find this hard to come to grasp with. "Why cant I, with my love, save and bring back a person", they say in their arrogant hearts. To be frank, this question is nothing but pure pride rising itself against the love and wisdom of God Almighty. And whoever has a heart like that should repent to God of their pride and pray He would have mercy on them through Jesus, who was crucified for them.

Many statistics have shown that the American Church has hardly grown in almost 40 years! It is directly owing to the fact that the church has stopped preaching Christ crucified on the cross.[1]

About our verse I would highlight the fact that it does not say the message of the gospel. Instead it reads that it is the messages of the "cross", which has the "power" to save and keep on saving! The Greek word for "saved" in this verse has both a past and present tense meaning. Therefore, this saving to which verse speaks of is one that saves and also has the power to keep on saving you every day.

Why then does the verse say the messages of the cross and not gospel? The reason is that a sinner can preach a message of free mercy and grace. A sinner loves to hear about God's free love. I mean, what sinner ever born does not want free forgiveness and mercy? Any pagan will accept this and be glad to herald its message. But a message of a cross where the human King Jesus was horrifically slaughtered, all because my sins were on Him, this they will not accept or preach. Why?

When looking at the bloody scene of the cross a sinner has to face the reality of who he really is. This reality is an enslaved, helpless, nasty, guilty, worthless sinner and failure! Ironically, this is the real power of sin over its victim: pride so strong that it blinds the mind to reality! Sin will not allow its victim to admit they are that bad off. No way will they ever admit they are addicted like helpless drunkards, powerless to save themselves! If they do then they must accept they are in real trouble. But in admitting this, then they must turn to God for help, whom they already hate. It is much like in a movie where the villain (sinner) in desperation asks the hero (God) for help, because he has no other choice. The villain hates the hero and cannot lower himself to ask for help.

I recall a close relative telling me that the most amount of truth he ever heard was not in a church but in A. A. drunk rehab center. This person was lost in drunkenness and the military sent him to rehab to get over his addiction or less be fired. I was always intrigued to hear this family member talk about the deeply painful experience of facing the reality that they were addicted drunks. Furthermore, that their horrible problem has serious consequences deeply hurting the loved ones around them!

He remembers one man, who only being there a short time, suddenly blurted out that he did not need to be there with all those other drunks. Quickly a counselor spoke up loudly, for all to hear, that today this man's wife was telling the counselors how he pees on his wife at night because he's so drunk! At this the room busted out with others in therapy yelling at this man. They shouted what a drunken, worthless husband he was and that they were surprised his wife had not already left his sorry carcass. My relative recalls how this man like many others could not and would not face the fact of who they really were: drunken failures, addicts enslaved to a silly bottle who had seriously hurt the people around them. It was in rehab that many for the very first time were being told who they really were. Before they would not listen, but now they had to.

This is why the message of the cross is the "power" of God unto salvation! It forces sinners to acknowledge that they are, in reality, guilty sin-enslaved failures, who had seriously ruined themselves. Every piece of flesh ripped from Jesus' side, every nail that pricked his human flesh was owing to their sin. But if that's true then sin must be a huge and serious problem! But wait, I'm a sinner who has committed so much sin in the sight of God Almighty. This means I am a serious failure, a world-class fool, and a guilty criminal who is stupidly addicted to sin, the very thing that has ruined my life!

This must be true for why else would Jesus Christ, the chief object of God the Father's love be lead to a brutal excruciating death? If my sins were not that bad then God would not have caused His Son to go through a bloody and embarrassing slaughtering for the whole world to mock! The same is true if Jesus only symbolically took my sin!

The only conclusion to be made is the one that scripture makes. My sin and my failures were so wicked, horrible and guilty that in order for God to fulfill His kingly role of Judge had to slaughter His only beloved Son; for Jesus had my sins transferred to Him as a human being. But what sinner wants to admit this? The fact is that they will not! [NIV] Romans 8:7, "The sinful mind does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so."

But there is hope! Corinthians 1:18, "The message of the cross is the power of God." Much like a drunkard who will not acknowledge they have a problem, a sinner will act the same when viewing himself in light of God. Moreover, just like an addict you must confront them about their problem. But unlike rehab the messages of the cross offers everlasting hope as we see the crucified Jesus making an end of sin. Jesus made an end of my failure, as He was my success for me in my place. He made an end of the punishment that I would have received as He received it for me from God's judgment hand. Jesus made an end of my worthlessness as He imputes and translates His righteousness that He accomplished to me, as if I perfectly obeyed and loved God. Christ made an end of my enslaved addiction to sin by causing me to be crucified with Him and so raised with Him in new life, being ruled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Christ on the cross made an end of my losing fight to find happiness as His bloodshed reconciles me to the Father in ever-increasing and never-ending fellowship with Him!

It is only in the message of the blood slaughtering of Jesus Christ that the sinner is confronted (1) with who he is and (2) with who God is and what Jesus His Son actually accomplished on the cross! Herein is the power of God to save the sinner and keep saving the Christian by keeping them connected to real relationship with their wonderful Lord and God.

Yes, even today, I have a hard time surveying the wonderful cross. It seems that I would rather do a study on book of Revelation or a bible reading on Jesus healing a leaper etc or reading verses talking about Calvinism. But to look long and hard at my precious God, Jesus Christ, in soft human flesh, slowly killed is hard for me. It exposes my sin too much; it shines upon my failures to brightly and washes away my excuses to thoroughly. I might look upon a woman immorally at work or on the computer, but does it deserve the King of Glory to be slaughter like a silly lamb! I must accept that it does because Jesus Christ my Lord as a human at a definite place, at a definite time was slaughtered only because He had those sins of mine and others credited to Him!

The cross ushers in true fellowship with God:

I said this at the front of the book, but I feel it needs repeating. "A point that most Christians do not recognize to its depths is that God's love comes only to us through mercy. This is because our good God has made it and set it up this way! It means we know God's love through the practical means of daily and sincerely repenting of all our sins along with admitting all our weaknesses at the cross of Jesus Christ. We come to Him as little children in this way. Therefore, by this we experience the loving arms of God our Father holding us. This is our relationship with our good God, to stray from this in continuance or degree is to lose the core way we have relationship with our blessed God. God's desire, therefore, is that we meet Him hourly in His arms of love through finding forgiveness by our sincere repentance and brokenness over our weakness!"

Remember the instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ: "My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me." [2] Jesus is making a clear and profound point. Food and drink is our daily, even hourly, pursuit for both satisfaction and need. This is what our Lord Jesus Christ is saying about how we come to Him. We are to come to Him every hour, as it is, both out of need and satisfaction. But the point is more specific.

It is at the Lord's supper we learn the deepest meaning of what Christ's body and blood refer to: His crucifixion on the cross where His body was broken for us and His blood spilt for our sins! Therefore, our daily and hourly relationship with our good God is one that constantly involves us meeting Him at the foot of His blood-stained cross! We confess our sins knowing in faith they are all paid for there. We confess our burdens and weakness knowing Christ has proved His love by mercy and sent us His Spirit to comfort us till He returns. The thought goes like this: if Christ would die for my sins, then surely He has more than enough love to hear my prayers for daily need and help. It is there we worship the Lamb that was slain because: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"[3]

Accordingly, I find when I do live in daily faith, surveying my Savior killed for my sins, that I find the deepest and most satisfying kind of life. I find my faith finds its best confidence there. I discover my longing for peace rest there more soundly; and I find my happiness for future hope springs to life more vigorously there than any other scene in the scriptures. Oh God grant me grace to live there every day if not every hour.

Many in my day foolishly think they have a relationship with Jesus but sadly do not. Jesus spoke of this reality Himself several times. Matthew 7:23, "I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" Matthew 7:14, "Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." With all these false pretenders saying they have a real relationship with Jesus Christ what does our Lord instruct us to do? John 4:23, "The hour is now when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him."

The question is how can we enter into true worship or relationship with God? The answer is what has just been discussed. Meet your King Jesus Christ at the foot of the cross. Furthermore, with faith see your sins on Him as He is killed for it. See your sins as that serious. Then see your sins as competently satisfied and taken away from you. Remember that God's wrath has already been poured out for all your sin on King Jesus. Enter into worship and praises of God's only Son who as eternally made you free and translated you into the Kingdom of His love. A false pretender may talk of the cross, but will not enter into personal meditation and sincere weeping over their sins, while surveying the cross. A true believer will. They do this daily because it is their delight! A true believer finds, the Lamb that was slain, as

most beautiful. They enjoy looking at the bloodshed of their wonderful God because it was there His greatest display of Love was given as a free gift!

The cross has the power to keep its own:

It is when surveying the wonderful cross that every practical aspect of Christianity finds its life and energy; and without there is no authentic form of its service before God's eyes. It is the "message of the cross" that is the main power that strengthens every practical aspect of the Christian life. This is the main reason Christianity, in various places of the church and with individual people, suffers in the practical aspect of loving God. They simply do not make the "message of the cross" the main place in finding power for serving God. It is, therefore, the gospel of Jesus Christ that has to power to keep the church where it should be. It has the power to keep each of its members growing in the right manner and in the right balance. It is the lack of preaching, the Lord Jesus Christ crucified, that has lead parts of church to be in its feeble state today.

Example, where in the bible does a Christian grow in humbleness the best? The answer is at the cross. God, speaking in the book of Isaiah makes the definition of humility to be like this: humility is really at its heart a broken heart![4] A heart broken over the fact, (as we see how Beautiful and Wonderful our God is), that we are sinners against His Holy and Lovely Name. We are broken and filled with a poorness of heart, because we see the most glorious precious, Son of God, had to be slaughtered in order to have our sin against His Wonderful Name removed.

We all know this feeling on the human level when we hurt a dear friend or loved one. We feel low and broken for hurting that person. Yet, a Christian who spiritually sees that their sin nailed, the King of Love, to the cross becomes broken in ways that are hard to express. This brokenness is so profoundly created in our hearts, by the Holy Spirit, that it distinctly translates in how we relate to others: humility. I ask, how can anyone who honestly surveys the wonderful cross, where the royal blood of God's Son pooled on the earth, be prideful? The point is that humbleness finds more power to grow in the messages of the cross than any other scene in scripture. It does not matter how well you find humility in all other aspects of the scriptures, if you do not glean from the cross as the chief example, then you have totally missed the point! One reason, why parts of the church in America, is not filled with humility is primarily because it does not preach the message of Christ crucified! America, with its intoxicating culture is powerful, but the message of the cross is more and its message has the power to humble hearts if it were preached!

Accordingly, where does the base motivation for giving comes from? 2 Corinthians 8:9, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." Paul urges the Corinthian church to give financial support to the suffering Jerusalem church. Yet, there is something odd here. In the preceding verses Paul refers to how the Macedonia church gave beyond their own means.

Wow, what an amazing church and example. Yet, Paul does not linger here nor does he give any specifics of how this church gave beyond their ability. One would think Paul would take advantage of their example by telling of it more, but he does not. There must be a reason for this? The answer lies in what Paul knew would have more power to stir up more godliness in the Corinthian church's hearts. The answer is the gospel?

The greater and more frequently a heart sees the depth of poverty that our God went through for us, as a free gift, then greater is the power that only can transform a human heart. This is why Paul's main motivation was 2 Corinthians 8:9, concerning Jesus Christ's gospel, and not the example of the Macedonian church. Although, the example of the Macedonian church was part of Paul's way of encouraging, yet, it was not the main motivation. Jesus made Himself poor by taking on a human form. Moreover, although He was a Godly king He was born in a manger, subjecting Himself under the law. Lastly, He took our sins on Himself leading Him to die friendless and in mockery. The more we connect ourselves in faith, mediation and love to the "message of the cross", to Him who is the true Vine, we the branches will flow with His life giving Spirit. When this happens then our lives will produce the type of good fruit, the type is of the everlasting kind.

Corinthians 3:18, "We, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory." And this glory is the "light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." [5] 2 Corinthians 3:11, "If [the Law] is passing away was glorious, what [Christ crucified] remains is much more glorious." The apostle shows that as we behold the glory of God we are mystically transformed into His same glorious image. But he goes further in describing what specific glory of God has this effect on us: it is the Glory of Jesus Christ crucified as displayed in the gospel.

The cross is where we see the greatest display of Christ's zeal for His Father. Accordingly, if we behold the scenes of the cross we would be transformed into the same glory. We would have a heart shaped with the same zeal for God. If the church wishes to grow in the Second Commandment [6] then all it needs to do is daily listen to the message of cross. When a heart beholds the immeasurable mercies of Christ's bloodshed, then they will be transformed into the same kind of person who shows costly mercy. It is on the cross that we best see the tough love of Jesus given for His beloved church. Furthermore, those who view that scene enough will have the greatest transformation to love their spouse, in Christ's mirage [7], as well.

Therefore, why would parts of the American church preach everything in the scripture except the one and most glorious scene in its sacred pages? Why would individual Christians preach to themselves everything from its pages minus the best part? Is it not because we have been so infiltrated with this culture's poison of materialism that we have grown to mutated by it and our eyes made so dim by it to appreciate its message any more? It seems we have for too long flirted with this godless culture. I'm afraid if we were to look under the dress of this culture, whom we flirt with, we would see a hideous sight of paganism and harlotries, swollen with a most deadly infection ever beheld. Many who have gotten too close to her will find that instead of being indwelt with the Holy Spirit that they are actually infected with her same poisonous disease, which leads to death and hell!

Therefore, I pray you do not play games with this world, for if you do you might find that it has become your friend and so have made God your enemy! [8] The real test to see if you have flirted too closely with this world is how well your interpersonal thoughts and worship still dwell on the crucified Jesus Christ and how much you desire to listen to that message. If you find yourself lacking therein, then be forewarned to sever every tie you have to this harlot and turn with true repentance to your crucified and risen Lord. Know that He is ready to forgive all sincere repentance! Leave her while you still have the a little desire to do so. Tomorrow might bring the last day this desire is with you and so as it takes flight,

like a bird flying from you, so to will all chances for your admittance into the heavenly Jerusalem. Flee the Harlot Babylon and turn to the "message of the cross" and find a ready and loving Savior. He invites you to enjoy His everlasting fellowship, eating as His heavenly table with Him. Come I say, come, and meet a wonderful and merciful Savior. He awaits all who will meet Him at the cross, the place He willingly gave His blood to be spilt. Face up the fact that it was your sins, which caused that horrible scene to happen. Furthermore, believe that your sins came to an end there, that they were eternally removed from you because of Christ! Believe that the resurrection of Jesus, worked by God the Father, was the public announcement of God's approval of Christ's bloodshed for the forgiveness of our sins! Believe!

America will likely be shown that it is not a lasting city once thought to be. What then is the church to do! Preach Christ slaughtered for our sins is the answer! When America's materialism begins to fail the church will either find a new pagan system to play the harlot with, or be turned back in loving repentance. This will happen if the "message of the cross" is preached, for only its message has the power to save! The whole world could hold hands in one glorious unity and sing a happy song, but if the message of the cross is not preached, then there would be no power to save sinners from being Judge to Hell, by God Almighty. God has already made up His mind and will not relent from His decision. If all angels, humans and demons wrote a 10 billion page petition, God still would not change His mind about judging all sinners to Hell's everlasting fire! We need saving on the divine level and only the "message of the cross" can bring that powerful truth to a human heart.

Warning of teaching Christ crucified:

This postmodern age has become very materialistic. But why should that bring up a warning?

A materialistic person in their worldview makes this world and its goods everything to them. Furthermore, it is with the prizing of their body that their pagan adultery climaxes and is best seen. It is materialistic people who fight to have the death penalty abolished. This is because a person's body is all they have and so you cannot destroy it, in their mind's eye. The body means everything to them and so you cannot harm it. Although the person might be a killer themselves, if the government kills them in return for punishment, it still violates the most sacred law of their pagan worldview. Moreover, it is also materialistic persons who are usually pacifists in times of war. They cannot bear to see more bodily harm done, although this might throw justice out the door.

Accordingly, this is why sex has become "The religion" in America, because it is being fueled by a materialistic worldview. Abortions, infidelity, kids out of wedlock are all dismissed as trivial under a materialistic system. This is because the gratification of your, one and only body, is first in this worldview's ten commandments.

Still we must preach the message of cross to these people. You might ask, "Why is it such a risk preaching this message to them?" The bloody killing of Jesus, which was ultimately done by God the Father concerning His wrath for our sins, flies straight in the face of a materialistic worldview! "How can Jesus' Father ever allow, let alone ordain and cause, such horrific pain and suffering for His most beloved Son", they will say. "So what if Jesus had our sin transferred to His human account record!" "So what if God hates sin; how can He still have His Son slaughtered like that", they say in their prideful God hating hearts.

The only way they can truly understand the cross is if they sincerely face the reality for what it is. First, that God is God and, second, that our sin is far more serious and horrible than what they would ever like to admit. Therefore, the message of Jesus Christ crucified on the cross is a hateful offence to materialistic person. Accordingly, to the faithful child of God who preaches this message will come against much hate from men. Men will hate you for preaching this message, because it goes against everything this world preaches, which they follow.

It is for this reason, I believe, that parts of the church are not preaching the "message of the cross", but only a message of love or grace that is no different than any other pagan religion. It is ironic God had to use a secular Hollywood to make a movie called "The Passion of the Christ" to finally preach the "message of the cross" to a country where much the church would not. What an indictment this is on us!

I recall the news being lit up with controversy concerning the film. The secular world could not stomach the bloody scenes of the cross. It flew straight in the face of their sinful and materialistic worldview. The world hated the movie. Yet, I was also concerned when Christians could not stomach to view the movie either. Ironically, these same so-called Christians could stomach to look at god-dishonoring pornography on their computers, they could stomach to hear and watch hours of god-dishonoring T. V. and movies! They could bear to watch horrific violence of other movies at the theater, but not the bloodshed from the King of Love! It seems they could not stomach looking at their Savior die for their sins because in reality they have never authentically looked there with faith themselves. It appears they were hiding a secret hatred and embarrassment for Christ's bloodshed! I fear many who claim the name of Christian have never surveyed the blood stained cross of the God-human Jesus Christ with saving and admiring faith. Lastly, this movie taught me that when the gospel is preached, as it should, then those who are perishing will loudly protest their hate and detest of its message!

But for those who are being saved they will love you for it. They will testify with the prophet and apostle saying: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel." [9] By the power of the Spirit, as they survey the slaughtering of Jesus Christ, they will finally come to know that all they lived for was empty with deadly consequences, namely God's wrath. They will see that their sinful crimes against God, Who created them, is far more serious than what they ever imagined. They will see this is true because of the bloody scene of God's only Son being crucified. They will realize this horrible thing could have only happened if God really meant that He hated sin as much as He did; and He would punish every sinful crime just as thoroughly as He promised. This person who is being saved, will finally see that materialism is empty, but Lord Jesus Christ is everything. Christ will be to him as the bright morning Star and then all life will be viewed to glorify His wonderful Name! This person in faith will mournfully repent of their sins committed against Someone so worthy and beautiful! With exceedingly great joy they will trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and Him crucified, so that their sins are taken away. In great happiness, the Lord Jesus Christ, will be seen as having secured a way for them to know God, Who is true. Loving and believing in Jesus Christ will be seen as the only intelligent worldview. God will become everything to this person, as He should be with every true believer in Jesus Christ.

So I encourage all to be that beautiful person who shares the good news of Christ's free grace at the cost of His bloodshed. The scripture's call all of us to be this person as we herald the message of Christ slaughtered for our sinful crimes, in our place and, thus, securing away for us to be with God forever in peace and pleasure! Amen

Missions:

Acts 6:2,4,7, "The twelve (apostles) said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables...but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith."

What is the reason, for why many people become, believing Christians according to the bible, regarding to the early church? The answer is the "word of God spread" and so, accordingly, many people were saved! What exactly is this "word of God" referred to here. In the pervious chapter the apostle spoke clearly to the High Priest what this "word of God" is. This, word of God, concerns Jesus Christ whom they killed by hanging on the cross; for He was, the Son of God, raised from the dead as, the royal Prince and Savior, of men to give then forgiveness.[10] They called it the preaching of Jesus as the Christ! In other words it was centered on the Son of God being cruelly crucified for our sins, so that we could have forgiveness. Does this not sound similar to what we have already gone over? My friends, it was by no mistake the spreading of the "word of God", or (as we have already learned) the "message of the cross", was credited to why so many people were saved. Its message is the power of God to save!

One particular hot topic that has been floating around for years, in the church, is how the church is going to reach this current postmodern generation. To me this has always been a simple question, but yet not so with my peers. Although, the answer to this question has been an obvious one, still I have given myself to much study, prayer and meditation about this. Although, my answer now is a little more particular it is still the same when I first considered it in my early teens. The way, or better said, the only way to reach people in this secular and postmodern age is to preach the "message of the cross, of Christ crucified." Human beings are human beings. We have the same created bodies, emotions, minds and spirits that the generation 2000 years ago had! If you are a sinner, then this message of the cross is timeless; yet, it needs to be shared in a timely manner.

The simplicity of this answer might make the bible look overly optimistic or foolish, which many, I might say, do look at the bible's answer as such. But the bible's answer is not blind optimism, but its answer is based on "the power of God." The message of the cross is the "power" of God that saves. This is not mere word play, but the bible is stating reality. Jesus Christ the Lord has declared all who commit sin is its slave, that all sinners are captives of Satan, and that it is impossible for sinners to submit to God's commands. With such a horrific situation, then surely God has sent some from

of "power" to save us? He has and today, (unlike the disciples who physically saw Jesus crucifixion and resurrection), this power is in the "message of the cross", being preached by saints, and made active by the Holy Spirit.

The question now is how do you bring the particular message of Christ Crucified to our culture? After much reading on how to reach the lost in our time I have come to this conclusion on the particulars of it. There is no right or timeless answer! Every generation and culture must find the particular avenues to share the message of the cross. To answer how does one reach the lost is simple. (1) You must teach the biblical message of the cross, in all its depth and clarity, and (2) you must find the particular ways to preach this message as missionaries in the social constructs that your culture revolves around. How the China underground church preaches to the lost is different than how America does it. But both much preach, "Christ crucified" to the people around them.

What do I mean by missionaries? First, I will give an example. I remember taking a short-term mission trip to Ireland in the late 1990s. During the first few days of this trip we did not hand out gospel tracts, preach in churches or any such things. The lost or sinners were not at the churches! It is clear to us these people loved soccer. Therefore, we went to them and played soccer. We looked for and found a local soccer field. Then we formed a very bad, but functional soccer team, and began to play the local kids in the park. Note, we did not mention or hardly say anything about who we were or our message, all we did was play soccer and got to know the kids. Then about 2 or 3 days into this one of the local kids asked, after we played a game of soccer, "how come you guys are so happy all the time and yet you do not drink any vodka." [11] At this point we were glad to preach the message of the cross and tell them where the fountain of our happiness came from. They listened intensely and as of today I still know of a few who are still in church severing and loving God with persevering faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The point is that we went outside of our church and found a social framork to met the kids where they were. At this point they were the ones who first asked us the questions and so when we told them or preached, the message of the cross, to them they wanted to listen. This I found makes a huge difference, if they ask you the question first.

Another example of this was at my local town in TN. For some odd reason, although our town was small, it was a redneck car cursing strip haven. As much as two hours away, kids would come at night to cruse the strip in their cars. Therefore, what we did was find convenient places to set up our cars and hand out free cokes to the cursers. I wish at the time I had more money and I would have really pimped out a car and actually cursed on the strip more with them. I say all this to demonstrate how we are to be missionaries in our own towns. Find what areas or cultural social hubs that the lost are centered at and find a creative way to mingle with them. Go buy a soccer outfit and play soccer. Let your church buy a pimped out car, fill it with free coke and have people gifted with evangelism to curse in it and share the gospel where the kids are at.

The point is that there are a million and one ways where you and your church can connect with the lost. Just find one or two areas to focus on and then train people to go out to blend in and then preach the gospel. I have often found, college campus ministries, to be continually successful. My church here in Florida even started a kids kick ball summer competition on our property. Our pastor asked, although we were not playing, just to hang around. As a result our church members built friendships with many neighbors and had lots of them and their families start coming to our church. The point is that we simply found a way to connect face to face with the lost.

But beware, and take care to remember that relationships, creative connectivity and kindness has no power to save! They are useful because they are avenues, when used right, that leads the sinner to a Christian, who is able to preach the message of the cross to them.

Example, if you are trying to share, Christ crucified, through the medium of movies, yet find yourself watering down that message because of the fear of man, then Stop!! Refresh yourself in Christ and scripture, and then find another social avenue where you won't compromise the message of the cross. It only has the power to save! Ultimately, it is how deeply and consistently you share Christ crucified that you will be successful in saving the lost, particularly if it is to be enduring.

One of the easiest ways to know if you are connecting with the sinner well, but not sharing the message of the cross well, is how long your new converts persevere in true faith.[12] If not, then you are not preaching the gospel deep enough or consistently enough, for if you did there would be more than enough power to save them!

Last thoughts:

First, before you come to a conclusion, submit all your ideas and experiences at the foot of the cross. Take your experience and view it while you watch your God, in soft human flesh, whom Paul said loved him and gave Himself for Him, slaughtered. Look at His soft human hands angrily priced, because they were full and swollen with your sinful crimes against God. Look at God's fury as it came through hateful men spitting, happily watching the human Jesus Christ gasp for air, pushing with up with nailed priced feet, because they were tainted with your nasty sin against an innocent and Holy God.

Example, I constantly see an arrogant and worldly wisdom taught or at least blindly assumed, by the church. This is the idea that sinners actually seek God! Churches even, in the sight of God, pattern ministries after a pagan ideal that flies arrogantly in the face of the cross and its message. Romans 3:11, "There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God." The Lord Jesus the one who brutally died on the cross said: "no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father." He also said that: "whoever commits sin is a slave of sin." This is the "message of the cross!" No one seeks God. Slaves are bond, by ball and chain, and not allowed to seek. This is why only if the Father grants a slave freedom, by the Holy Spirit (to be born again)[13] can they even be free enough, to believe in the first place.

People might seek happiness, forgiveness, love or the like, but seeking God, this is something a sinner has never done. If someone is seeking Jesus Christ it is because they are already saved! This is why Jesus said He came to SAVE us by dying on a cross, because the entire world was in a hopeless position! Mankind was so lost in sin that we even lost the ability to seek God any more! But my postmodern narcissistic age hates this "message of the cross." It flies right in the face of arrogant sinners who have come of age by growing without families, in singleness, doing this life thing all by themselves. Even their laptop computers are now white because it reflects how they see themselves. But the "message of the cross" throws that idea to the ground and ask my generation to smell the coffee by looking at the slaughtering of God's only Son, because He merely took on their filthy sins!

Dear Christian do not permit this world make you filter the cross through its failed wisdom. But first submit all things to the foot of the cross and what you see there in the scriptures. If your experience seems to suggest that sinners do seek God, submit that to the cross and believe what you find there over any experience you think happened. Do not let your pride or this world's irrational ideas change God's written, timeless theology. Instead let God's truth of the cross humble and silence your stubborn, arrogant hearts. Do not let your hypocritical double minded ways give the world the avenue to blaspheme the message of your Savior.

Second, may your deepest repentance and sorrow be directed personally, to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is in heaven with the same human face and still has those nail scarred hands. Although you should sorrow over hurt you cause others, the greatest horror and sorrow should be given to Christ alone. It was He who had to find the deepest heart to forgive you the most, even as it cost Him His life. No one has suffered more for the bad things you did, than Jesus Christ God's only Son.

Accordingly, if you desire to honor your Savior then it is by broken repentance and deepest love for what He went through for you. He died to free you from the consequences of your crimes against God. If Christ is to have the Honor you wish to give Him, then He must have your greatest sorrow in repentance. The greater the love, then greater the hurt you should feel for hurting that love! This should be your daily experience! You must with the greatest of confidence believe Jesus has taken each of your sins away! Do not doubt His love and mercies for you; this then is how you honor Him. With the greatest joy believe and love Him for what He did for you! Know that He really saved you when you were dangling over Hell, by a mere thread, ready to break. He saved you! He not only saved you but also has personally taken you by the hand and is leading you to His home in heaven. He is leading you like a father leading his children to his table of food, lovingly prepared for them. You are now His child and He will love you, protect you and be with you every step of the way. He found you in the miry cay and is now securely leading you into the green pastures of his Heavenly home. One day you will meet your, King of Love, face to face. You will be filled, even having your soul overflowing with the infinite joy, of the Holy Spirit that He purchased for you as a gift when He was hung on the cross.

Third, above all dear Christian, preach the message of the cross to yourself! Preaching the "message of the cross" is the greatest, most privileged and most important Christian discipline. Its neglect in the average Christian is glaringly obvious. How much more obvious to God's all seeing eyes. Preach how Jesus was horrifically killed as a human for all your sins. But never forget that He did this because He loved you being both God and human. It is this same Person, of Jesus Christ, whom you will one day meet in Glory face to face. God loves you and it is the bloody scene of the cross that proves His love is as real as your need for Him. It was on the cross that God proved His love; God proved the unshakable-ness of His Love, by the depths of blood and pain. As a result, of God in His great wisdom, proving His love by mercy believers have an unmovable foundation to rest all their cares and hope upon. Let the Lord Jesus being crucified for you sins ever still your disquieted mind and burn sincere faith in your heart that Your Creator Loves you, He Loves you, He Loves you!

Romans 8: 32-39, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Sincerely Yours in Christ: Oshea Davis

[1] Many people ignorantly repeat phrases like "Christ crucified" more like an empty clichés. It was not like Paul went to every city shouting "Christ Crucified, Christ Crucified" then left because he preached the message of Christ. We are not to repeat these phrases without regard to their original contexts and meanings. These phrases from scripture represent entire groups of doctrines, some of which are elaborate and complex. We must be faithful to continually explain what "the message of the cross and Christ crucified" means, with the same elaborate complexity that they are found in the scripture.

[2] John 6:55,57

[3] Revelation 5:12

[4] Isaiah 57:15 and 66:2

[5] 2 Corinthians 4:4

[6] Mark 12:31

[7] Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her."

[8] James 4:4

[9] Romans 10:15

[10] Chapter 5 verse 30-32 and 42.

[11] In what I observed, most of the local kids drank vodka like water. It was usually mixed half and half in a 20 once plastic Coke bottle.

[12] This does not mean that some people will leave even at the best of preaching, but that, like the bible experience, most who confess will stay in lasting faith.

[13] John 3:3