



# The Paradox of the Cross

1 Corinthians 1:17-23

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**17** For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

**18** For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

**19** For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

**20** Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

**21** For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

**22** For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

**23** But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;



## The Cross is a Paradox

- . It is both a symbol of suffering and of victory.
- . It represents judgment and mercy, death and life, shame and glory...
- . ...Sin and righteousness
- . ...Condemnation and justification

God sent Paul to preach Christ, and Him crucified.


1 Corinthians 2:2 <sup>2</sup> For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

Galatians 6:14 <sup>14</sup> But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

**How should we keep the biblical message of the cross when we witness or preach and teach the truth of the gospel?**

1 Corinthians 1:17 <sup>17</sup> For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to **preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.**

## **1. Do Not Attempt to Remove the Offense of the Cross**



So we may be tempted to remove the sting of its message:

1 Corinthians 15:55–56 <sup>55</sup> O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? <sup>56</sup> The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law.

**Paul's evaluation of himself and his salvation experience is telling:**

Philippians 3:4–8 <sup>4</sup> Though I might also have **confidence in the flesh**. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might **trust in the flesh, I more**: <sup>5</sup> Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. <sup>7</sup> But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. <sup>8</sup> Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,

And then he also wrote:

1 Timothy 1:15 <sup>15</sup> This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world **to save sinners; of whom I am chief.**

But the chief of all sinners was then transformed into a servant of Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:1 <sup>1</sup> **Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ**, called *to be an apostle*, separated unto the gospel of God,

Romans 6:16 <sup>16</sup> Know ye not, that **to whom** ye **yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey**; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?




1 Corinthians 1:18 <sup>18</sup> For the preaching of **the cross is to them that perish foolishness**; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:19 <sup>19</sup> For it is written, I will destroy **the wisdom of the wise**, and will bring to nothing **the understanding of the prudent**.

1 Corinthians 1:22–23 <sup>22</sup> For **the Jews** require a sign, and **the Greeks** seek after wisdom: <sup>23</sup> But we preach **Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness**;



## **2. Do Not be Surprised by the Response of Unbelievers**



It is God the Holy Spirit that works in the hearts of unbelievers.

- God saves, not you or me.
- Salvation is of the Lord

1 Corinthians 2:14 <sup>14</sup> But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

This conflict of wisdom is even more profound in the responses to its message

Their responses demonstrate the diametrically opposing worldviews.

3 responses:

- It is *foolishness* – some will laugh at you like you still believe in Santa Claus
- It is a *stumbling block* – others find it too easy and it cannot be that simple
- It is the good news to those who believe – the wisdom and power of God to experience His *mercy and grace!*

**Richard Dawkins** (British Evolutionary Biologist)

He asked Christians: *“Who created God?”*

He believes the universe is all there is and it created us in the process of evolution.

But he has *not* answered the same question asked of him:  
*“Who created your creator?”*

**The fact:** Something does not come from nothing!

**The implication:** Is the universe then “eternal”?


If his answer is yes, then he would confirm that he believes in an **uncreated eternal creator** just as Christians believe in eternal Creator – God.

**Stephen Hawking** (Theoretical Physicists)


In *The Grand Design*, he declares “**Philosophy is dead**” —  
ironically, in a book that the main topic is the philosophy of science!

**Martin Rees** (British Astronomer)

Lord Rees on Hawking's more recent comments about there being no need for God in order to explain creation said,  
"Stephen Hawking is **a remarkable person whom I've known for 40 years** and for that reason any oracular statement he makes gets exaggerated publicity. **I know Stephen Hawking well enough to know that he has read very little philosophy and even less theology, so I don't think we should attach any weight to his views on this topic,**" he said.



**Richard Feynman** (Nobel prize-winning Physicist)  
Even **brilliant scientists** can get things badly wrong.  
He said that **outside his or her field, the scientist is just as dumb as the next guy.**



1 Corinthians 1:20 <sup>20</sup> **Where is the wise?**  
where *is* **the scribe?** where *is* **the disputer of**  
**this world?** hath not God made foolish the  
**wisdom of this world?**

1 Corinthians 1:21 <sup>21</sup> **For after that in the**  
**wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew**  
**not God**, it pleased God by the foolishness of  
preaching to save them that believe.





### 3. Do Not Claim to Have All the Answers to Hard Questions

Proverbs 3:7 <sup>7</sup> **Be not wise in thine own eyes:**  
Fear the Lord, and depart from evil.



For every hard/complex question, there is always a simple *wrong* answer!


Isaiah 55:8–9 <sup>8</sup> For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the Lord. <sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are my ways higher than your ways, And my thoughts than your thoughts.

## The Scopes “Monkey” Trial, July 10-21, 1925

- Should evolution be taught in our schools?
- Darwinism – “On the Origin of the Species” (1859)
- Genesis creation – literal 6 days or an allegory?
- The intellectual climate of the 20<sup>th</sup> century shattered the harmony between science and Scripture
- The “**Theistic Evolution**” compromise (anti-supernaturalistic)
- The wisdom of this world thought they discovered the middle ground which many Christians bought into

## Dr. Henry Morris (Hydraulic Engineer) (The Genesis Flood) Creation Research Society (1963)


- Influential in the creation-science movement with the purpose of restoring the harmony of science and Scripture
- True science can and will confirm Christian revelation
- The Scripture contains true scientifically accurate facts
- This resulted in **the fact that there are an unusual number of engineers in the creation-science movement** (ca. 1991)



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#### **4. Do Not Resort to Craftiness to Adorn Its Message**



The good news is truly good because the bad news is truly bad.

Romans 1:16 <sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**: for it is **the power of God unto salvation** to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to **the Greek**.

End

