

The Humility of the Cross

1. The Stigma of the Execution

- A. Jesus did not die of accident or natural causes but crucifixion, a form of Roman execution that was shameful, scandalous and reserved for the vilest criminals.
1. Gentiles: a God on a cross was foolishness – 1 Cor 1:18, 22-23. It was not intellectual enough. It lacked the “earmarks” of mythology; it was morally restrictive.
 2. Jews: God on a **Roman** cross was disappointment their Messianic expectations and to their emotional cravings for signs. A stumbling block – 1 Cor 1:22.
 3. We may have glamorized the cross in our songs (“The Old Rugged Cross”), but it carried a huge negative stigma in the first century.
- B. Why a cross?
1. As a test of humility – 1 Cor 1:26-29.
 2. The cross does not cater to fleshly motivations. It does not stroke the ego. People like associate with the rich and famous. (L. Ron Hubbard, Scientology – Get the celebrities involved to gain credibility.) Jesus’ *whole life* – and death – shrouded in humility.
 3. Our society is searching for self-glorification. Humanism, New Age philosophy, positive imagery, health & wealth gospel, etc. all cater to desires, potential and fulfillment of **me**. We want affirmation; the notions of submission and service are weaknesses.
- C. But God made every spiritual blessing available in Christ. We are to be dedicated and loyal even if *there is nothing (earthly) in it for me*. Thus, we should be careful to glory only in the Lord – 1 Cor 1:30-31; Gal 5:14.

2. Ashamed of the Cross

- A. During Passover, Jesus forewarned the disciples that Satan would “*sift you as wheat*” – Lk 22:31-34.
1. Sitting in a controlled, secure environment, Peter could not envision ever denying Jesus.
 2. But Jesus tells him that *before morning* he will deny even knowing Jesus *three times*. Surely what Peter thought he would gain in denying Jesus was not worth the grief and despair that he felt afterward.
- B. Has something similar ever happened to you?

1. Some are ashamed of the Lord in front of their peers. They might be afraid to stand up for what is right, pray before eating, laugh at raunchy jokes, etc.
 2. Some work to reach the pinnacle of their profession only to find that Jesus is now “beneath” them (instead of above them on a cross).
 3. If *we* are ashamed of *Him*, *He* will be ashamed of *us* – Mk 8:34-38.
- B. If anyone has the right to be ashamed of another, Jesus *should be ashamed to be identified with us!* But He is not – Heb 2:11-12.

3. Humility Among Brethren

- A. The problems of the Corinthian church centered around pride: 1 Cor 4:6, 18; 5:2; 8:1. Paul thus emphasizes the cross to bring them down to earth. All the Corinthians were and had was what *God gave them* – 1 Cor 4:7.
1. A particular problem for “conservative” people: convictions become conceit without us realizing it. **My** opinions are sensible; **my** views are sound; **my** thinking is orthodox. We can even become proud of our *unorthodox views*.
 2. A sense of superiority is devastating to unity and family cohesiveness.
- B. But the cross is the great equalizer of Christ’s followers:
1. We *all* stand by grace before God – Tit 3:1-7. Our best is inferior; the best of our knowledge is woefully inadequate; the best of our works is only what we should have done.
 2. In areas where we might treat brethren with contempt (race, economics, dress), “*Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs ...*” (Jas 2:5).
 3. Paul warns the spiritually strong: “*Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died*” (Rom 14:15). We must be careful about our judgments lest we usurp the authority of the rightful Judge (14:8-13).
- C. These great ideals are easy to acknowledge in principle but *hard to put into practice*. When we’ve been hurt by others; when our emotions get involved, our help to do the right thing is the cross. Jesus put His own pride, self-concern aside to provide **our** needs.

Conclusion: The *privilege* of heavenly fellowship is shrouded in the *humility of the cross*.