

I Corinthians 2:2
Nothing but Christ Crucified

And I, when I came to you, brothers, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. **For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.** And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

I. Determination of Christ Crucified

- A. Not against all knowledge
- B. Not in excellency of words
- C. Not in wisdom of this world
- D. Plainly, with power in the Spirit

II. The Scope of Christ Crucified

- A. What is central? Bloody, weak, broken Christ
- B. Christ crucified is a stumbling block and foolishness
- C. OT/NT
- D. Experiential

III. The Application of Christ Crucified

- A. Greatest of knowledge
- B. Plain knowledge
- C. Passes knowledge
- D. Knowledge unto godliness

On June 15, 1707, one of my favorite pastor-theologians, Thomas Boston, preached a farewell sermon to a congregation in Scotland as he prepared to begin a new ministry in another part of the country. His closing words to his congregation were, “Above all, I exhort you to go to Christ, and be daily making use of him, for the supply of all your wants. I dare not say I have been useless here. I hope you and I will not forget the many sweet days we have had in this place.”

As I reflect on twelve years of ministry among you, I will not forget the many sweet days we have had in this place and I considered today what has made the days so sweet. I want to bring my ministry here among you to a close with the words, not of Thomas Boston, but of the Holy Spirit from the pen of the Apostle Paul. This morning we will look at I Corinthians 2:2:

“For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

This has been the sweetness of our time together: Christ crucified.

The Determination of Christ Crucified

We begin with looking at “The Determination of Christ Crucified.”

Our translation uses the word “decided” as the Apostle Paul makes this decision to bring Christ crucified to the Church in Corinth. The Greek word here (krino) means esteem, judge, determine, and separate and choose. The Apostle has looked at his ministry among the people of Corinth and he has said that what was most important to bring to them—what was most important to impress upon their souls—was this: Christ crucified. He was determined that it would be the center of his ministry among them.

Looking back on his work, he made a clear decision that Jesus Christ would be preached, and the manner in which he would preach him would be to bring forth a crucified Jesus into the forefront of their minds so that they would know him and that they would rest in him and that they would cling to him.

Now this is not against other things—this is not against preaching hard doctrines and even things that might be controversial—but it is what is central.

And it is not saying that Paul did not bring other things before them, as if they did not come to know his likes and dislikes and his style and his character and hobbies, but these things did not become what he preached; he preached Christ crucified.

Paul also is not saying that other fields of knowledge are inappropriate for a minister to bring or for a people to be interested in—the sciences, the arts, literature, music, and the like—but these things were not Paul’s ministry: Christ crucified was his ministry.

And look at the verses around verse 2. Starting in verse 1 and reading to verse 5, Paul says, *“And I, when I came to you, brothers, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”*

So, he did come with excellency of words. This was not a ministry where the church looked at Paul and commended him for his excellent words—for his knowledge of ancient philosophy and rhetoric—although Paul knew those things.

Paul was not incomprehensible because of his great rhetoric—his words were never considered excellent in his preaching.

And he did not come with the wisdom of this world. Paul did not preach the current fads and psychological theories. He did not come preaching Christ in a manner that reflected a Jesus that was palatable to the world—instead he preached Christ crucified plainly.

Plainly—in a way where the text was explained and Jesus was brought forth with the power of the Spirit.

Have you seen Jesus, congregation? Have you seen a crucified Christ in

the pages of the Scriptures? Has the Spirit of God impressed him upon you and allowed his bloody person to embrace your soul? The Spirit of God has brought this.

Paul was determined—with a single eye—to bring Jesus Christ to the *people*.

So, what does that look like? What does it look like to bring a crucified Christ to the people in Corinth?

The Scope of Christ Crucified

Our second heading this morning is “The Scope of Christ Crucified.”

So, what did this look like for Paul? We know that Paul had an extensive view of systematic theology and taught from all portions of the Word of God—we see that in his *magnum opus*, the Book of Romans. Paul taught the whole counsel of God—but what is the center? What is central to teaching all of the Scriptures and the grand doctrines of the Scriptures and the dark corners of the Scriptures? It is Christ crucified.

A bloody, weak, and broken Jesus. The theme of the Word of God is the blood of Christ, the second person of the Trinity coming down and taking on flesh and living in humiliation and suffering for sinners that are in need of a savior. Weakness. Brokenness. Bloody. This is the Jesus that is before you: a suffering savior with wounds in his hands and scars on his side and marks on his head and back, a bloody savior put before you week after week after week.

Christ crucified must be central to your faith and your walk as a Christian. People struggle with this and they always have.

Preach a Christ that just makes our lives better. Preach a Christ that brings prosperity. Preach a Christ that is all about power and influence. Preach a Christ that is culturally transformative. So many voices tell us what to preach when we preach Jesus.

Paul says: preach a Christ that is crucified, blood stained, and weak, for in that weakness and in that blood is your salvation.

And again, this has been a stumbling block to some, and it is foolishness to others. What a waste of time, they say, as they call it foolishness. Where is salvation, they ask, as they trip over a bloody Christ?

Christ is to be preached—and my prayer is that to you, that bloody and weak and crucified savior is not a stumbling block and it is not foolishness—for it is the power of God unto salvation.

So, the scope of this crucified Jesus must be seen in the Old Testament as well as the New. From the first Adam needing to be covered in the skins of a sacrificed animal, to the provision of the lamb to Abraham, to the sacrificial system of Moses, to the prophetic psalms of the crucifixion from the lips of David, to the suffering servant of Isaiah—Christ crucified is from the Old Testament to the New.

Jesus is preached; a crucified Jesus is exalted before your eyes.

And besides the promotion of Christ in the Old and New Testaments, you are encouraged to find the best books to show you Christ crucified. The Christian faith has filled the libraries of the world with meditations on a crucified Christ. Make him the determination of your reading and your mind. Make him the great interest of your soul as you read and explore the great promoters of Christ throughout history: Augustine and Anselm and Aquinas and Bernard and Calvin and Owen and Watson and the like—the scope of Christ crucified ought to saturate your mind and your heart as you come to love the blood of Jesus.

Oh! precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know,
For my pardon, this I see,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

For my cleansing this my plea,
Nothing can for sin atone,
Naught of good that I have done,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

This is all my hope and peace,
This is all my righteousness,

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Glory! Glory! This I sing—
Nothing but the blood of Jesus,
All my praise for this I bring—
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

You see the scope of Christ crucified is found in the OT and NT. The scope is found in the best literature from Christian history. And the scope must also come to you experientially. You must know this Jesus—this bloody Jesus—and that blood must saturate your very heart. You must be clothed in the pure white bloody garment of Christ's righteousness. Know that for your soul. Know that in your mind. Know that in your heart. Know that with every fiber of your being—God calls you to come and reason with him—and you are called to reason through a bloody savior who spilled his blood for sinners that are not worthy, never worthy, who are fully unworthy of his love.

How precious is the blood of Jesus—how glorious is a crucified Christ.

The Application of Christ Crucified

So, we have seen Paul's determination to bring nothing but Christ crucified. We have talked through the scope of Christ crucified, and now I would like to conclude thirdly this morning with "The application of Christ crucified."

As you apply a crucified, bloody savior to your hearts and minds, I want to consider some meditations that may help you be spurred on to apply Jesus more and more in your life.

Paul says that he is determined to KNOW nothing but Christ and him crucified. This means that this is knowledge—there is a knowledge of Christ crucified.

As you apply a crucified Christ I want you to first consider that the scope of this knowledge—Paul uses the Greek word that is to know, like with your mind—the scope is beyond the word: it is to behold or to look at or to perceive or to see or to turn your mind towards.

So, there is application here—look at this Jesus, this Christ crucified—and behold that Jesus Christ crucified is the greatest of knowledge.

You all have many interests and many talents. We have folks here with great knowledge in math and chemistry and the arts. We have those who know history and have great skill with their hands. We have musicians and scientists and those with great skills in home economics and languages and business. There are folks here who know animals and gardening and design and have so many neat gifts and interests and training. You all have great interests in so many things—and here the Apostle Paul tells you that the greatest of all knowledge, the center piece of his ministry and his teaching and preaching and the great experimental knowledge of his soul is this: Christ crucified.

This is the greatest and highest of all knowledge, for this knowledge is not only the highest and greatest knowledge; this bloody Jesus is also the way of salvation. Determine to know him. Determine to study him. Determine to deeply swim in the depths of that bloody ocean of his love.

Christ crucified is the greatest of knowledge.

But this knowledge is also plain. That's what Paul said—he came with plain words. You don't need a seminary degree to know this Jesus and him crucified. You don't need a magic decoder ring to know this crucified Christ. This is plain knowledge—it is accessible.

“Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” The children among us know this: “Jesus died for me.” That is Christ crucified.

It is not knowledge that is out of reach for any of you. Children—know Jesus and him crucified.

It is plain knowledge.

But Christ crucified is not only the greatest of knowledge and the plainest of knowledge—it also excels knowledge. Ephesians 3 says, *“I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and*

grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

Did you catch that? That you may comprehend Christ and his love which surpasses knowledge.

That means that you will never come to an end of getting to know the crucified Christ. There is no closure. There is no final message concerning his crucified, bloody, weak, yet victorious body. Ministers come and go, yet this Christ remains. That knowledge is high and low and wide, and that bloody knowledge—that crucified knowing—will never end. You are to continue to grow and know and grow and know this Jesus.

Because this knowledge is the key to godliness and the way of happiness, I Timothy 4 tells us, “godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”

Congregation—apply this Christ crucified, for he was made bloody for you. There is great profit in knowing this Jesus—there is value in every way, for this life and also for the life to come.

Apply Christ crucified.
Know the scope of Christ crucified.
Be determined concerning Christ crucified.

“Above all, I exhort you to go to Christ, and be daily making use of him, for the supply of all your wants. I dare not say I have been useless here. I hope you and I will not forget the many sweet days we have had in this place.” (Thomas Boston)

And from the Apostle Paul, “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

Amen.