

The Cross of Jesus Christ:

What are its uses and applications, by the Spirit, in the Scriptures?

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The cross seems to me to be used in scripture as especially connected with shame and disgrace. The cross was in itself a cruel and a disgraceful *heathen* mode of death — kept, even by them, for the very vilest. It seemed to say — This is a wretch, who has no feelings to be considered, and whose sufferings may be protracted so as to scare others from committing what he has done. By the Jews seeking it for Jesus, it was saying, either "We are not Jews," or "He is no Jew;" for then, if a sinner, he should have been stoned — and in it they were saying that He was not their king (as you will see in John 19), nor their prophet, much less Son of God; as done by the Gentiles also, it was the denial of His being the Son of God from whose hand the Gentiles had received their kingly power. (See Dan. 2.) The cross is used in scripture as the thing which, in one word, tells what is the present result among men of serving God; of being a disciple; of becoming one; and this not only at the hands of the world, but of the professing world. The cross of Jesus proved this as to Jerusalem and its law; while at the same time it told of His thorough self-renunciation, perfectness of obedience, and of the estimate the world had of God: — Jew and Gentile would crucify His Son. The priests of His temple, they would seek it for Him; Pontius Pilate would rather yield it to them, though he knew Jesus was innocent, than have it said himself was not Caesar's friend. It was God's way of telling what He felt about man's sin; about the old man in each of us; about carnality, self-righteousness, and human wisdom; about there being no ground of justification or means of purification, in whole or in part, in us; no door open by which a new life could come in to us; of making the Jew and Gentile shake hands; of stripping all of boasting, specially from the Jew, etc., etc. In so many different connections is the cross presented. May the believer pass and repass through the testimony of scripture about it, and learn to use the cross of Jesus for the purposes for which it is given and made known to him!

Death was the penalty of sin. Death, therefore when Christ undertook to endure the penalty, was all that we should have looked for; but His blood was needful for atonement also. Perhaps those who had understanding then would have thought, "The Father loves Him, and therefore you will see His death will be one of peculiar ease: how it will be we know not, but perhaps the veins will open outwardly of their own accord, and that quiet stupor pass over Him which comes in bleeding to death, and He will gently fall asleep, without a struggle or a groan." But this was not God's way. For He came not only to endure the penalty and to give the blood in atonement, but to be the standard by which God might measure the world and the flesh in man. And in the cross we see the effects on Him of His really drinking that cup of trembling to the dregs which was our doom. The poisonous draught could not take that effect on His pure human and perfectly divine person which it would on our impure human and only mortal persons. But Oh what an effect it did take! for it cut off all intercourse between Him and God. The whole vital energy of the relationship between the creature and the Creator was drained, and the relationship severed; and even that Holy thing had no refuge left to Him save in the relationship between Himself and God in deity: these two things seem expressed thus: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" — "FATHER, into thy hands I commend my Spirit." And why was this? Because He had presented Himself as the Lamb, and was looked upon as already filleted and garlanded for the sacrifice with the wreaths of our sins and follies. How plain is it then that God can hold no intercourse with sin! He saw it laid lightly, only as by imputation on Jesus, and He hid His face from Him, and would not look upon Him. O how He has told out here His hatred to sin, and the unmendableness of the sinner, in himself, as such; and the impossibility of any one whatever treating with Him until all his

sins have been forgiven him, and all his iniquities been covered

PASSAGES TO BE CONSIDERED.

- 1, There is no SERVICE to Christ which is without a cross (Matt. 10: 38; compare vers. 32-42)
- For 2, The disciple is the DISCIPLE of *the cross* (Matt. 16: 24; compare Mark 10: 21 and Luke 9: 23);
- 3, People who may think of becoming disciples, as well as disciples, ought to know the cross is the disciple's present portion (Mark 8: 34);
- 4, and such is the cross, as that it is a hard thing, and to nature impossible, to, become a disciple (Luke 14: 27, read the chapter)
- 5, Jesus knew that Jerusalem would give Him up to the Gentiles to crucify, and told the twelve so (Matt. 20: 18, 19).
- For, 6, Jerusalem, that place so highly favoured for religious privileges, had a way of its own; and if God's way did not bend to it, it would murder and crucify His messengers (Matt. 23: 34);
- And, 7, first and foremost among them the Son of man Himself should suffer on the *cross* (Matt. 26: 2, etc.);
- 8, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, each describe the scene of the *cross*;
- 9, Jerusalem might not be scandalised by the bodies remaining on the cross on the sabbath-day; for it was a high day! (John 19: 31-33);
- 10, Interest in the *crucified One* led the angels to honour several, etc. (Matt. 28: 5);
- 11, The cross on earth the contrast of the glory of the Lord in heaven (Acts. 2: 23,24);
- 12, And that place of honour in heaven was one sought for in grace toward man even as the cross was endured for man (Acts 4: 10-12);
- 13, The cross is God's sentence against the old man in us ("Rom. 6: 5-7);
- 14, The cross is God's sentence against all that is carnal in the church (1 Cor. 1.);
- 15, Even as it is the sentence of God against all that is carnal in the world (1 Cor. 2: 2);
- 16, The cross was, in Jesus, the proof of how He had emptied Himself — "being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (2 Cor. 13: 4);
- 17, The cross was that to which the Jews (Peter and Paul among them) had to flee from Moses' law, for justification, purification, and the power of a new life (Gal. 2: 20);
- 18, The cross, therefore, strongly condemns any one who, having heard of it, would in any way share the honour of salvation between Jesus who died on it and self (Gal. 3: 1);
- 19, Offensive as the cross is, it was Paul's only testimony for justification or purification (Gal. 5: 11-24);
- 20, The cross, therefore, by itself, as giving nothing but shame to nature, will not do for popular preachers; yet it is the Christian's only stay (Gal. 6: 14-16);
- 21, The cross is the power of union to Jew and Gentile, as throwing a shade over the ordinances

of the one, and the intellectual pride of the other (Eph. 2: 16);

- 22, The cross was the measure of the obedience in humiliation of the Son of God (Phil. 2: 8-13);

- 23, The *cross*, therefore, is the *sine qua non* of a true Christian — in other words, "no cross, no Christian" (Phil. 3: 17-20);

- 24, The *cross* is God's estimate of everything great and noble in the world which He will reconcile to Himself (Col. 1: 20);

- 25, Especially thus connected with the Jew under Moses' law (Col. 2: 14);

- 26, The cross was the measure of the Lord's willingness to endure (Heb. 12: 2);

- 27, The *cross* was the world's and earth's estimate of the value of the Son; What is the religion of the earth!!! (Rev. 11: 8.)

1. *There is no service to Christ which is without a cross.* As it is written, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10: 38.) This chapter is the Lord's "charge" to His apostles, telling them what they and the church would have to expect from the time of His death. The part of the chapter more immediately connected with this verse is from verses 32-42, which seems to me to read thus: "According as those who on earth standing in the place of my servants confess or deny me before men, so will I confess or deny them before my Father in heaven: [nature would say, Oh, we will all confess Thee; therefore Jesus goes on to tell the difficulties of so doing, for the result is both painful, and, among men, disgraceful]: the result of so doing will be *family discords of the worst kind.*" If any man says, "Christ is in God for me; henceforth I will live here only by and to Christ," he gets thus at once out of the centre man knows, and everything and everybody is against him. Man judges of everything by its *present RESULTS*; the present results of the truth are painful, and as man thinks disgraceful: yea, most shameful! "A fine religion," he would say, "to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother," etc.* Therefore, "he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me." This was addressed to the twelve more particularly, as servants of God; yet in principle it is true of every disciple's *service*. If you read the chapter you will see this.

*But so it is; and the cross is to the disciple morally just what Jesus' cross was literally to His mother and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene, and the disciple whom He loved, when standing by it. (John 19: 25.)

Cruelty, shame, and disgrace, are the three things which service to Christ will gain for you from earth. For the cross of Christ is not a thing which can be used merely to moralise or to obtain a good or healthful *influence* over men's minds. It is either eternal life, delivering a man into the liberty of a son of God, or it is the manifestation that Satan is blinding his eyes.

The formalist, the moralist, the philanthropist, the amiable man, the improver of society, the devotee, the bigot, the socialist, can all, though self is working in them differently, find grounds to go upon peaceably together; in fact they have one centre, "self," though it may work differently in them; and therefore self-love in the whole party will vindicate self for the others. But let a man get God's grace in the cross as his centre, made known as it is by the power of the Holy Ghost, and he becomes a speckled bird on earth: and he can bear it; for if earth and Satan its prince, and men his subjects, are against him, heaven, and God, and Christ, and the Holy Ghost are for him.

2. *The disciple is the disciple of the cross.* "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his *cross*, and follow me." (Matt. 16: 24.) Chapters 16, 17, and 18 contain the Lord's

instruction to the Jewish remnant about *discipleship*. When Peter heard that "the Teacher" was to be insulted and killed in Jerusalem and by the priests, he said, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee. But Jesus said that this care by Peter of His body was Satanic and offensive to Him; for it was the result of not looking up to God's feelings and will, but to man's: Peter had not the same centre herein as Christ: and then comes verse 24.

The disciple is called to be as the Master (Matt. 10: 24, 25); and he will find faithful discipleship leads to much suffering; and the worst of all is that which comes from what bears God's name upon the earth, without the power of it. But the disciple cannot help this, or stop in it — for to stay would be to sit down for eternity in what will be shortly judged by God in His wrath with eternal fire. The avenger of blood is behind him — and onward he will rush; though the way into the city of refuge be rough the place is safe when he gets there — for *there* there is no avenger, no judgment, but peace, and safety; and though the way be rough to the city, it is short.

3. *People who may think of becoming disciples, as well as disciples, ought to know that the cross is the disciple's present portion.* In Mark 8: 34, we find the same account as above: but it is added here that He "called the people with his disciples also," which shows how He wishes those who think of *becoming* disciples to know it is present suffering they come to. Unless a man does see what Christ has to give, in reality, and from what to deliver, he had better stop a moment ere he says, "I will be thy disciple." Stop and count the cost. But let him also, while so stopping, count *both* sides of the question; — what the issue will be if he tarries where he is; that is, what fearful wrath is coming on the place, and how there he cannot have the kingdom and glory which Christ gives to those that come to Him; and then let him look to it, that he set not out on the way in his own strength.

In Luke 9: 23, Peter's objection to Jesus' suffering is not mentioned; which shows that *that* was not the whole reason for the Lord's remark. And that this is the principle of discipleship is proved again, by the Lord's saying to the rich young man, "Come take up thy cross daily and follow me." (Mark 10: 21.)

4. *Such is the cross, that it is a hard thing, and to nature impossible, to become a disciple.* I cannot pass on from the cross, as connected with discipleship, without noticing that passage in Luke 14: 27: "*Whosoever* doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Read the passage (chap. 14); it is the account of the difficulties to nature of becoming a disciple. Luke 15 tells how a man, through grace, is made so. Luke 16: 1-13 tells what a disciple is to be; and Luke 16: 14 onward, the difficulties of being such. The outline in chapter 14 is this: — in verses 7-14, the Lord was telling the principles on which His Father made feasts. One admiring, said, "It would be good to be there!" (ver. 15); Jesus' answer says, "Men do not think so, for they find all sorts of foolish excuses; so that nothing but the fulness of my Father's grace and power can fill the table." All the respectable people decline; so first He sends out to bid the off-scouring of the earth — anybody that wants a supper — to come; and those that come, come *simply* on the plea, They are going to the house of *Him that wants to have His table filled*; but even as this will not do, He sends out to compel them to come in. (Vers. 16-24.) Then follow the difficulties told to the multitude. In order to be a disciple, a man needs to find a love which can make all earthly loves, in comparison, *hateful* (ver. 26); which can enable him to count what nature dreads an honour. (Ver. 27.) A man should consider this; for who in himself has resources to build a tower for God to dwell in in the midst of the devil's world (vers. 28-30); and that a tower, whence war is to be carried on against the devil! (Vers. 31, 32.) In order to do this, a man must indeed know Christ's resources, and be acting and living upon them, not upon his own.

Young disciples sometimes interpret this passage wrongly. Self does not mean my outward body

only, or even chiefly. There are three places the enemy wishes to establish self in. He tries, first, to get us to take self in our own doing as *a foundation* to stand upon before God: this is to dishonour Christ's finished salvation; for grace says, Whosoever believeth in Jesus is pardoned and accepted by God for Christ's sake; and truly, a pretty sort of denial of self it is to claim for self and its works the place of JUSTIFICATION which God has given to Christ His Son. Secondly, he tries to make us take self in our *energy* as a power by which to hold and to profit by Christ: this is to dishonour the Holy Spirit, and put self in His place; and a strange denial of self it is to rob the Holy Ghost in order to do self honour. Thirdly, he tries to make us take self as the end of salvation; as though, if we were saved, all God's object was accomplished: this is to dishonour the Father; for He saves us not for any other reason than that Christ may be honoured, and now He (Christ) may have an obedient people in the world. What is it then, say you, to deny self? Why he alone denies self who says everything about myself is bad and failed; — but to me, a poor leprous bankrupt, God has given Christ for justification and righteousness; and He has given me the Holy Ghost for guardian. Now then, He, the Holy Ghost, shall lead me on by faith in Christ Jesus, drawing out His resources, and so making me live *to God*. By His grace I will neither please my bad nor my good self, but only please God, and my neighbour for his good to edification. Such an one was Paul — a *thorough* self-denier.

5. *Jesus knew that Jerusalem would, give him up to the Gentiles to crucify, and told the twelve so.* The next reference to the cross may be where Jesus says to the twelve, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles [so far for Jerusalem] to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify." (Matt. 20: 18, 19.) Thus we see that the crucifixion of Jesus was done by the *Gentiles*: given up by the Jews to them for this purpose, and they executing it. And the blessed Lord foresaw it all; but He hid not His face from spitting, nor His cheek from them that plucked off the hair.

6. *Jerusalem, that place so highly favoured for religious privileges, had a way of its own; and if God's way did not bend to it, it would murder and crucify His messengers.* Summing up Jerusalem's state, and marking the serving disciple's portion from it, He says, "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and *crucify*" (Matt. 23: 34); that is, be so far gone as to use Gentile cruelties toward God's servants. And this, too, said of Jerusalem.

7. *First and foremost among them the Son of man Himself should suffer on the cross.* And the first and foremost of these witnesses referred to (Matt. 23: 34) was to be HIMSELF, as He says to His disciples (Matt. 26: 2): "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified." The immediate connection of this with the instruction in chapters 24 and 25 is important. There He had been telling them — Jerusalem is to be overthrown and remain in desolation till I come in glory. (Matt. 24: 1-44.) But after Jerusalem's overthrow there will be a house (44-51) and a kingdom (Matt. 25: 1-13) of mine; both of which, however, before my return, will become degenerate. The principles of their degeneracy are simple. (14-30.) Then I shall come in glory to judge the Gentiles, as the harbinger of the general judgment. (31-46.)

"And it came to pass, when he had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified." (Matt. 26: 1, 2.) *Then* (vers. 3 and 4) the Jews sought to kill him.

8. *Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, each describe the scene of the cross.* It was a confederacy of the chief priests, scribes, and elders, held in due order at the palace of the high priest, that led to the murder of the Lord. (Matt. 26: 3, 4.) The chief priests paid the money. (Ver. 15.) The multitude that came to take Him were from the chief priests and elders of the people (ver. 47); there was a servant of the high

priest among the number (ver. 51): and they led their prisoner at once away to Caiaphas the high priest, at whose palace the scribes and elders were assembled. (Vers. 57, 58.) Then comes the effort of the chief priests, the elders, and all the council to find false witnesses against Jesus to put Him to death. (Ver. 59.) Taken to the governor He answers nothing; but the people, to whom Pilate appeals in His favour, persuaded by the priests and elders, refuse the appeal, and demand that He should be crucified: "Let him be crucified." (Matt. 27: 22, 23: compare Mark 15: 13, 14; Luke 23: 21-23; John 19: 6.) Pilate proposes they should crucify Him (John 19: 6); and in order to make Jesus speak, threatens to crucify Him. (John 19: 10.) On the Jews again demanding Him to be crucified (John 19: 15), he asks, Shall he crucify their king? They reply, they will have no king but Caesar. Pilate delivers Him to be crucified. (Matt. 27: 26; Mark 15: 15; John 19: 16.) The Roman soldiers lead Him away to crucify Him. (Matt. 27: 31; Mark 15: 20.) Then they lay the cross upon Him. (John 19: 17.) Afterwards, forcing Simon the Cyrenian to bear His cross (Matt. 26: 32; Mark 15: 21; Luke 23: 26), they crucify Him in a place near to the city (John 19: 20), and part His garments, casting lots. (Matt. 27: 35; Mark 15: 24; Luke 23: 34; John 19: 23, 24.) And two thieves were crucified with Him; He, however, having had the superscription over His head. (Matt. 27: 37, 38; Mark 15: 26, 27; John 19: 18.) This (from John 19: 19, we find) was put by Pilate's order. And observe the scene; they that pass by are reviling Him, wagging their heads, and saying, If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. (Matt. 27: 39, 40; Mark 15: 29, 30.) The chief priests mock with the scribes and elders, saying, if He be the king of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. (Matt. 27: 41, 42; Mark 15: 31, 32); and the two thieves crucified with Him cast the same in His teeth. (Matt. 27: 44, Mark 15: 32.)

9. *Jerusalem might not be scandalised by the bodies remaining on the cross on the sabbath-day; for it was a high day!* We read also this (John 19: 31-33): The Jews, therefore, that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath-day, besought Pilate that their legs might be broken. But Jesus was dead already; so they brake not His legs as they did those of them who were crucified with Him. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in it a new sepulchre . . . there they laid Jesus. (John 19: 41, 42.)

Observe what a disgraceful kind of death, and how man did everything to add insult and shame and disgrace to Him in it. I think if those who did it had understood how the Lamb's sufferings were the expression of what was God's estimate of man's vileness: how nauseous and loathsome man's sin was to Him, they could not, in their self-righteousness, have more strongly expressed themselves against such an estimate of themselves than they did against Jesus. I do indeed think that this was in Satan's mind while leading them on. And O poor self-accusing sinner! stop thy self-accusations, and listen to God's charge and accusations against thee in the cross, for there He showed His utter detestation and abhorrence of thee; and Oh, there He was bearing the judgment of His own detestation of thee, that while He condemned thy sin, He might pardon thyself!

His being crucified was indeed a thing to be noticed; and it is but a little onward and we find the fact made a title for the Lord by the angels, and an interest in it that which made them love those that felt it.

10. *Interest in the crucified One led the angels to honour several, etc.* "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus that was crucified" (Matt. 28: 5; Mark 16: 6); yea, the two men in shining garments comfort them herewith. Remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be . . . crucified, and the third day rise again. (Luke 24: 6, 7.) And Cleopas journeying to Emmaus, tells it to the unknown stranger: The chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. (Ver. 20.)

11. *The cross on earth the contrast of the glory of the Lord in heaven.* In Peter's address to the Jews we have these words: — "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." (Acts 2: 23, 24.) They are summed up, a little farther on: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Ver. 36.) It seems to me that there is a contrast here presented between the extremity of the degradation and the height of the glory of Jesus. Earth and the Jews even crucified Jesus, but God and heaven yield Him the very highest name and place and title they have to give.

12. And not only so, but that a name and place such as His grace coveted; one whence he could give gifts to men — as Peter and John put it forward in Acts 4: 10-12, "Be it known unto you all [ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel], and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

And this is God's way of acting ever — to take up as means that which is in itself contemptible and despicable, as was the cross; though indeed it told what a heart was in Him. For thus He presents Himself, willing to endure all things if He may but gain the place of Blessor; and while indeed the cross comports not well with man's high thoughts about himself and God, it most blessedly lays mercy as a suppliant at the poor self-reproaching sinner's feet. And oh! though to proud nature it is a very offensive thing, to see in the cross what torture it gave God to meet man in his present state — and how, in the way He did meet him, there is the full expression likewise of God's disgust at what we are in ourselves — yet oh! 'tis sweet to know the virtue of that blood which though in nature it speaks of sin and vileness, in the Spirit and grace whispers of its healing and cleansing power; and throws open to the sinner those deeper depths in God than any of His handiworks could speak. God used the Fall as the opportunity of opening grace, and so angels and principalities and all intelligent creation have a fuller display of God than ever was known before. And thus we see how *That place of honour in heaven was one sought for in grace toward man, even as the cross was endured for man.*

13. *The cross is God's sentence against the old man in us.* "If we have been planted together [with Christ] in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man is *crucified with* him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin." (Rom. 6: 5-7.) The Holy Ghost is here telling us how, because God looks upon believers as having died with Christ when He died, they ought so to think of themselves, and live the life which they do live as "alive unto God through Jesus Christ." (Ver. 11.) But I observe that we do not only get "*dead with*" and "*alive with*," etc., in such passages, but here "*that our old man was crucified with.*" And herein doubtless we get one reason of our Lord's death being by the cross as well as a word of warning and comfort to ourselves. God not only sought blood for atonement, but Jesus did indeed stand in our place and experience the treatment we deserved; and He was therefore crucified, or put to open shame in His death, as to the mode of it. Well, says Paul, Christian! have you hope because God tells you to think of yourself as one who died with and revived in Christ? then remember that where you found this comfort, in God's declaration about Christ crucified, there you found God putting your old man to open shame in a cruel lingering death. And when you think of the cross, and that the cross of the Son, O see how utterly God abominated and loathed, from the very bottom of His soul, the evil nature which is in you; so that when its guilt was

seen by Him on Jesus, He hid His face even from Him. And as Christians, we see there is in this verse a word for us — for it is a constant memento of God's detestation of the old man in us, on the ground of which Christ was crucified.

14. It seems to me just on this ground, "*That the cross is God's sentence against all that is carnal in the church,*" that in the opening of the first Epistle to the Corinthians we have so much mention of the cross. Had the question been one about cleanness of conscience, or access to God, or power over the world, the flesh, or Satan, I conceive Paul would have brought forward the blood of Jesus. But here it was no case about learning to do well, but about ceasing to do evil — ceasing to lie under and cherish the flesh and its proceeds; and therefore the cross is brought forward.* For the cross of Jesus was the reproach of nature; having no wisdom in it to man's thoughts; yea, a perfect foolishness; and here the blood of atonement was found. Did any at Corinth say, I am of Paul? (1 Cor. 1: 12.) "Was Paul crucified for you"? (ver. 13) says he. Did any glory in Apollos, because he was mighty in the scriptures? or in Paul, because of his deep wisdom? his answer is, "Christ sent me . . . to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? . . . where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 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. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ *crucified*, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness."

*Read carefully chapters 1 and 2. The evil to be met was carnality, marring the testimony of union in the church as God's witness. Paul meets it by the cross, first of all.

15. *Even as it is the sentence of God against all that is carnal in the world.* "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2: 2.) This to the apostles was connected with the mystery of wisdom, which (ver. 8) none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

I learn here that if carnality or worldliness in any shape is marring testimony for Christ, as leaven working to fill the whole lump, the way to meet it is by a reference to the cross — Christ degraded in death for us — whereby, as it were, God has most lovingly yet deeply expressed His abhorrence of our old man altogether.

16. "For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God . . . We also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you." (2 Cor. 13: 4.) Thus, *The cross was in Jesus the proof of how He had emptied Himself — "being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."*

And two things are taught here. 1st, that the cross told of the weakness of the living-soul life of Christ when He would appear in God's presence — as the sinner's substitute, bearing by imputation our sins — He was crucified through weakness; though that might and did only make manifest the deeper quickening spirit-life He had as Son of God from before all worlds; by which, and according to the pleasure of God He rose Himself; and rose for us through the value of the blood just shed. 2ndly, it tells that so likewise weak as the fruits of the testimony of a saint may show him to be, it tells, in them that are converted, by the power of God in them, that the testimony is of one who has life with God. The Corinthians said, "Paul, can you prove you are an apostle, and that Christ has spoken by you?" (Ver. 3.) "Yes," says he (ver. 4, for he had preached the gospel to them, and they had been saved by it), "poor

thing as you think me. If I am not an apostle, I am a liar, and there is no hope for me; but I am not afraid of this, for God gave you the Holy Ghost when you heard me preach, and this shows I have the truth, and shall live I am therefore an apostle, for otherwise (ver. 5) you cannot be Christians."

Here, as in the first Epistle, he reads in the cross his own nothingness, and that even when in testimony for God.

17. *The cross was that to which the Jews (Peter and Paul among them) had to flee, from Moses' law, for justification, purification, and the power of a new life.* In 1 Corinthians we saw Paul meeting carnality of flesh by the cross; in this epistle he argues against the law upon precisely the same ground. The law was part of a religion of the earth when God was ruling in the world over Israel: a Christian who rightly understood the cross, would see in it not only God's estimate of our old man, but God's estimate of the earth and of worldly religion, and therefore no man that understands the cross can Judaize.

"I am *crucified* with Christ." (Gal. 2: 20.) This, observe, is his grand argument against being under the law for justification. The law cannot take hold of a dead man. Well, then, I am crucified with Christ. Then, lest any one should say, "But are you not alive," he adds, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." The law cannot take hold of Christ, for He fulfilled it. And neither will he admit it to be his standard of life, for he adds, "and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me [and then, observe, he goes on] — I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." This was his own clear ground to go upon. The cross of Christ had said to him, There's nothing good to come from your flesh, neither can Moses in all his search through you find anything; therefore Christ was put to open shame, through grace for you; look away from self and religion of the earth, to Christ Jesus, who is risen. And so much did he feel the power of this voice from the cross, that he contents himself with saying to the Galatians,

18. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" (Gal. 3: 1.) *The cross, therefore, strongly condemns any one who, having heard of it, would in any way share the honour of salvation between Jesus who died on it and self.* As though he had said, Why you must either be fools or out of your minds to have heard that he that knows the cross is one with Him that died upon it, and now to be thinking about going to be justified! or, from the law, a religion of earth, everything of which the cross condemns! or, by your own lives which God put to open shame upon the cross.

19. *Offensive as the cross is, it was Paul's only testimony for justification or purification.* "And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased." (Gal. 5: 11.) Here was the grand truth. If a man is justified by the cross, in itself and by itself, simply by the knowledge of it, then he is justified, but that comes entirely and solely from God: and it is a thing too which thoroughly condemns the world and all its wisdom — for the cross is a stumbling stone to the Jew, and foolishness to the Gentile, and a thorough condemnation from God of all that is natural to those whom He justifies by it. Nature, therefore, seeks to add some little thing to it; but whether we add circumcision or reformation, or a new life, or anything else, then is the offence of the cross ceased. It is the cross, in itself and by itself, for justification, which is God's instrument; and not only is it His instrument, in itself and by itself, for justification, but also for purification; — for, "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." (Ver. 24.)

Observe, if I know the cross of Jesus, I know pardon for myself; but I know it there where my flesh was put to an open shame, a cruel, lingering, disgraceful death: for that cross was not the

expression of God's feelings to Christ's own, flesh, but toward, ours, when the spotless Lamb of God stood in our place in judgment. This, you will observe, is just in substance what we saw before in Galatians 2. There, however, it was said to have been Paul's argument with Peter, when inclined to turn back to the law: as though he had said, Why I told Peter, the apostle of the Jews, that he and I were justified and purified from the world by the cross, not by the law; how much more then you. (Gal. 3: 1.) In this fifth chapter he shows how the same thing, is the theme of his own preaching; and in the sixth, how it ought to be the experience of the Galatians: three times repeating the same things in different connections.

20. *The cross, therefore, by itself as giving nothing but shame to nature, will not do for popular preachers; yet it is the Christian's only stay.* For "as many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. 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 As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them." (Gal. 6: 14-16.) As though he had said, Now observe, ye Galatians, if we Jews had to leave the law, that we might get justification at the foot of the cross, and there also find power over the evil which was in us (see Gal. 2.) — if such is my preaching everywhere (Gal. 5) such is my individual experience; and there is no blessing whatever for any of you in any other way. And those who teach another way are false teachers, and teach what, though it may give them occasion to glory in your flesh, will not give you power over the world.

I would press every one to ask themselves this question, Is what I hear preached as the gospel, and on which I rest for acceptance, the cross of Christ, in itself and by itself, received simply by faith? and that it leads to victory over the flesh and world through justification given to the poor sinner, before he begins to work.

21. *The cross is the power of union to Jew and Gentile, as throwing a shade over the ordinances of the one and intellectual pride of the other.* In Ephesians 2: 16, the cross is presented as the Lord's power over flesh in the Jew and the Gentile, both before God and toward one another. He is speaking of the union of Jews and Gentiles to Christ and to one another That He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby The Jew was far off from God, while his nature was boasting in the law: the Gentile was without God in the world: they find the cross before them; and the Jew that believes says, "What a deadly thing man's heart and mind and soul is! what a nothing man's strength, if this is God's estimate of me!" "Aye," says the Gentile, "it is nature, human nature's estimate this." Now, observe you, — the Jew is humbled, and his religious pride laid low before God; and the Gentile's sin in being without God in the world, is brought to light. "But," says the Jew further, "the cross! that's a Gentile thing. O Gentiles, my legal righteousness and boast in Moses is put to shame; there's my hand!" "Well," says the Gentile, "I take it heartily; for all my wisdom, I see, is foolishness."

22. *The cross was the measure of the obedience in humiliation of the Son of God.* The Epistle to the Philippians shows us, in a peculiar way, the fellowship which Paul had with the brethren in Christ; it is written: — God the Son "being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow Wherefore, my beloved, now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. 2: 8-13.) As though he had said, "You see because He went so low He is lifted now so high. And observe

the object — that every one may go down low before Him. This is God's object. And since such is God's object as to you, He is present to help you. Do not care then that I am away from you; yea, rather rejoice, and use it as a means of going down low before Jesus."

23. And then he goes on to warn them against those that do not so act: — "Mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. For many walk . . . as the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind *earthly* things. For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," etc. (Phil. 3: 17-20.) *Thus teaching us that the cross is the "sine qua non" of a true Christian — in other words, "no cross, no Christian.* And is not this word of comfort and of warning needed now? May each of us learn to join the apostle (2 Cor. 12: 9, 10) and say, "Most gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take *pleasure* in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong:" for if we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him.

24. *The cross is God's estimate of everything great and noble in the world He will reconcile to Himself.* — "Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself." (Col. 1: 20.) Here the cross of Jesus is spoken of as the way by which He in whom all fulness dwelt, marked, and stamped, as it were, "*was an enemy*" upon the things He would bring near to God. The full application of the passage I think is future, and refers, like Ephesians 1: 10, to the time of the display of the mediatorial glory. Afterwards, speaking of the means and energy by which the whole present reconciliation of Jew and Gentile in one virgin espoused to Christ has taken place, speaking of the Jew, he says, neither the means nor the energy were found in the law as to us; for we know Him as -

25. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2: 14); so that the cross being the taking out of the way of our ordinances, not giving us power to fulfil them, He that hung on the cross has all the glory of our salvation. *And the estimate just referred to is thus especially connected with the Jew under Moses' law.* Closely connected with this, as contrasted with it, is Hebrews 6: 6, "Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

This epistle was written to Jews, and the apostle is saying what it is for a Jew who has once recognised and acted upon what he says of himself in Colossians 2: 14, to turn back from Him that was upon the cross to Moses and his ordinances.

26. *The cross was the measure of the Lord's willingness to endure.* In Hebrews 12: 2, it is written of Jesus, "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." This, believer, is thine example. For the joy set before thee, endure the cross, despise the shame, and soon the bosom and the throne of Jesus shall be thy rest.

27. *The cross was the world's and earth's estimate of the value of the Son. What is the religion of the earth!!!* - Revelation 11: 8, "where also our Lord was crucified" is said of Jerusalem — a sort of parting word for the Jews as a nation. Christ was crucified there, and till they repent as a nation, they are aliens from Jerusalem. And to us it is a word of warning, as reminding us that, if we be faithful the worst persecution is always to be looked for from what bears the name of God in the earth, and has most self-complacency in thinking of itself, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we!"

Yet a little while, and the same scenes that were seen in Jerusalem at the close of our Lord's life may be seen in Christendom, at the close of the church's sojourn here. Are you ready for it?

