

# The Miracle of “Grace Received”

## The Power of the Cross, Part 1

1 Corinthians 1.18-31 Notes

Pastor Guy Gray

*“For 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.” – 1 Corinthians 1:18*

### **The Power of the Cross is in its Meaning**

You can find Christian Crosses everywhere. You can find Crosses on churches and in cemeteries. You'll find Crosses portrayed in art and formed into jewelry. Crosses are cherished by many as religious objects and by others they are mocked or used as an attention getting device. On a recent tour Madonna ended her act with a mock crucifixion in which she sang her final song from a cross. The artist Andres Serrano caused outrage in 1989 when he exhibited a crucifix immersed in a jar of his own urine as a work of art. The Cross is perhaps the most widely used symbol of all time. But the power of the Cross is not in the Cross itself. The power of the Cross is in its meaning. This is why Paul says in 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 comes from what the Cross actually means—so what does the Cross mean to you?

### **The Message of the Cross as Foolishness**

For many, the message of the Cross is the craziest thing they've ever heard—scandalous and foolish. It's just not the kind of message people are looking for. “Jews seek a sign and Greeks seek wisdom” (1 Corinthians 1:22). If you're looking for proof of God it makes sense to ask for a sign. “God, if you are real, couldn't you just do a miracle right in front of me to prove it?” So many people want to find God through some kind of supernatural personal experience. Others are looking for an intellectual explanation or argument that will demonstrate the reality of God to them to satisfy their intellectual quest and answer all their questions. Instead of this, the gospel message presents “Christ crucified” (1 Corinthians 1:23). This seems like crazy talk. God on a Cross? This seems shameful, weak, pathetic and strange. What's the point? The Cross is an instrument of judgment, condemnation, torture and death. How could this possibly save anyone? Our passage teaches that to the proud, wise, accomplished and self reliant people of this world, the message of the Cross is utter foolishness.

### **The Message of the Cross as Power**

The message of the Cross is a message that startles us. It is extreme! It's a message about human sin and divine sacrifice (1 Corinthians 15:3). It implies things about us that are disturbing. It shows us the true depth of our sin and guilt before God. It speaks of the price that had to be paid so that we could be saved—a price that we could never pay, only God himself could pay it. This humbles us. It shows that no one can be saved by their own achievement, goodness or wisdom. The Cross is therefore the end of human pride and boasting. It shows that each of us is at the same level of helplessness and need before God. This is tough to hear. But it is so powerful! It sets us free from pride. It gives us hope, not in ourselves, but in the mercy and grace of God. It sets the stage for us to love others freely, even as God loved us through Christ at the Cross.

### **The Miracle of “Grace Received” is the Power of the Cross, “Part 1”**

To hear and respond to the message of the Cross is to humbly receive the grace of God for your life by faith. This is where the power starts. This is the first dimension of the power of the Cross—the power of God's grace given through Christ's sacrifice and received by faith. Those who truly hear this message and “get it” are transformed. They are all about Jesus. They boast, but only about Jesus! When a whole Christian community is boasting only about Jesus instead of arguing about who is the coolest or

wisest or who has the best worship music, that's when amazing things start to take place in the church. Then everyone get's on the same page and the church is a witness of the gospel of Jesus in powerful ways. Pray that we might know the power of the Cross—grace given and received. As we do, may our love and zeal for Christ multiply! May our love for one another bring a unity stronger than ever before!

### **Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

What does the Cross mean to you?

What would be a modern day equivalent of the “foolishness of the Cross”?

How has the truth of the Cross brought humility into your life?

How has the message of the Cross set you free from self-effort to earn God's favor or blessing?

#### **Today:**

“HELP” needs your help!

Today through next Sunday,  
women's ministry is  
collecting onesies &  
receiving blankets for HELP  
Ministries, located in the  
Philippines. Items can be  
left in the basket in the  
Lobby. Contact Maureen  
Gray for more information  
@ 638.9657

#### **Friday 9/28**

Parent Date Night, 6:-9:00pm  
@ RWLG We watch your  
kiddos and YOU go out &  
enjoy a Friday night! Space  
is limited. Find Lindsie to  
sign up or contact her at  
699.2226 or  
Lindsie@riverwest.org.

#### **Coming Up:**

Foundations—Thursdays  
starting in October,  
7:00-8:30pm @ RWLG  
Foundations is a series of  
classes designed to help  
you stand strong in your  
Christian faith. Classes  
start on October 5th,  
everyone is invited to  
come to any of the  
classes on a drop in basis.  
Childcare available with  
pre-registration. For more  
information contact  
Pastor Adam McMurray at  
699.2226 or adam@riverwest.org