

# The Message About the Cross



## SABBATH—JULY 4

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** 1 Corinthians 1:17–31; Colossians 1:20; Acts 13:16–47.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Some people think that the message about Christ’s [the Savior’s] death on the cross is silly. Those people are destroying themselves [their own lives]. But it is different for us, the people that God is saving. The message about the cross shows us God’s power to save us” (1 Corinthians 1:18, EASY).



We will learn how the Cross is the answer to separation and other problems in the church, both in Paul’s day and in ours.

**CICERO** was a Roman writer. He died about 50 years before Jesus was born. Cicero wrote about the cross. Most Roman people didn’t need to worry about dying on a cross. The cross was a punishment for slaves, the worst criminals, and the enemies of Rome. So, Cicero told the Roman people not to bother to think about it. Cicero’s words show us that the cross was a symbol of shame for the Romans. They hated the cross.

Compare Cicero’s words with Paul’s. Paul wrote: “The message about the cross shows us God’s power to save us” (1 Corinthians 1:18, EASY). For Paul, the Cross was God’s answer to the sin problem. God accepted sinners because of the Cross (Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20). Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on the cross (Colossians 2:14).

The Cross is Paul’s answer to the problems in Corinth. This week, we will look at the powerful message about the Cross. We will learn how the Cross is the answer to separation and other problems in the church, both in Paul’s day and in ours.

## THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE CROSS (1 Corinthians 1:17–31)

Paul says that the message about the Cross shows us God’s power to save us. So, we shouldn’t be surprised that Paul wanted to preach only about “Jesus Christ and his death on the cross” (1 Corinthians 2:2, ERV).

**Read 1 Corinthians 1:17–31. What important idea do we learn in these verses?**

In 1 Corinthians 1:18–31, Paul compares human thinking with God’s wisdom. The Cross shows the worst about us and the best about God. 1 Corinthians 1:18–31 is introduced with powerful Bible truth from 1 Corinthians 1:17: Jesus’ death on the cross can save people. So, the message about the Cross must be the most important part of our preaching (also read 1 Corinthians 2:2).

Paul says that God didn’t send him to baptize. God chose Paul to be an apostle. An apostle is a preacher and teacher of the Good News. The word “apostle” comes from the same word in the Greek language as the word “send.” So, the words “apostle” and “send” are connected. This connection shows us that Paul’s basic task was to preach the Good News about Jesus and not to baptize. Is Paul saying that baptism isn’t important? Of course not! Paul is scolding a few baptized Christians. These Christians praise the church leaders who baptized them more than they praise Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 1:17, Paul talks about “clever words” (EASY). Paul isn’t saying that clever words and fancy sermons are bad. But they must teach us about the Cross. In Athens, Paul used science, clever words, and fancy ideas. But he didn’t convince many people to accept Jesus. So, Paul “decided to follow a different plan in his work in Corinth. Paul wanted to get the Corinthian people to pay attention to his message. He decided not to use fancy words and clever explanations. He ‘decided to teach’ the Corinthians ‘only about Jesus Christ.’ He ‘taught’ them ‘about his death on a cross.’ He ‘wanted to forget everything else’ [1 Corinthians 2:2, EASY].”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 244, adapted.

**Why did Paul’s preaching have more success in Corinth than his preaching in Athens? How can fancy words and clever sermons often get in the way of our message about the Cross?**



**The Cross shows the worst about us and the best about God.**

**PEOPLE WHO THINK THE CROSS IS SILLY  
(1 Corinthians 1:20, 21, 23, 25, 27)**

Paul compares human ideas to God's wisdom: "Some people think that the message about Christ's [the Savior's] death on the cross is silly. Those people are destroying themselves [their own lives]" (1 Corinthians 1:18, EASY).

**Read 1 Corinthians 20, 21, 23, 25, and 27 (EASY). How many times do these verses use the word 'silly'? How does this word help us understand Paul's message about the Cross? Why is the message about the Cross silly to people who are destroying their own lives?**



**Whatever problems we have, God has people who are willing to hear Bible truth.**

In 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23, Paul talks about lost people. These people think that the Cross is silly. The word "silly" (EASY) in these verses doesn't mean stupid or not being smart. The word "silly" is really connected with bad behavior or evil thinking. The word also means fighting against God and not having any understanding. So, the people who thought the Cross was silly were really fighting against God. They didn't have understanding. Their thinking was evil because their behavior was evil. No wonder Paul talked so much about this topic in 1 Corinthians.

Think about Paul's problems in the city of Corinth. He is in a city where the people are filled with pride because they know a lot. So, they are very smart and wise in their own eyes. Paul tells them about a Jew, Jesus of Nazareth. The Romans nailed Jesus to a cross. Then Jesus woke up from the dead. Jesus did all these things to pay for their sins. He also died for the sins of everyone else on earth. No doubt the Corinthians said, "Is this guy Paul joking? How can anything he's saying be true?" They thought Paul's message was completely crazy. Why should any smart, educated Corinthian believe anything Paul said?

For many of the Jews, Paul's message was worse than crazy. What Jew expected Rome to kill their Savior? The Savior would beat the Romans. The Romans wouldn't kill Him.

So, from the start, Paul had many problems in Corinth. But Paul won many people, both Jews and non-Jews, to Jesus.

What lesson does Paul's experience teach us?

Whatever problems we have, God has people who are willing to hear Bible truth. We must be ready to let God use us to bless these people, wherever they are. Some of these places may be as bad, or worse, than Corinth was.

**GOD'S POWER TO SAVE US (Colossians 1:20)**

The message of 1 Corinthians 1:18 is easy for us to understand. What the Cross means to us depends on how we look at it. If we fight against God, the Cross is silly to us. If we love God, the Cross has the power to save us.

**What did Jesus do for us on the cross? Read Colossians 1:20 and 1 Peter 2:24 for the answer.**

When we look at 1 Corinthians 1:18 in the Greek language, we learn something very interesting. Paul says, "Those people are destroying themselves [their own lives]" (EASY). The people are the cause of their own suffering. So, they are lost.

In 1 Corinthians 1:19, Paul uses a quote from Isaiah 29:14. In verse 19, we read that God causes the people to be destroyed. But wait a minute. Didn't we just read in verse 18 that the people destroy their own lives? At first, we may think that these two verses say different things. But the verses do fit when we understand what Paul is really saying. The idea in verse 19 is that God will destroy the people who are already destroying their own lives.

Compare the lost sinners to the people that God saves (1 Corinthians 1:18). The lost sinners destroy their own lives. But "it [what happens] is different for us, the people that God is saving" (1 Corinthians 1:18, EASY). This verse shows us that only God can save us. The plan to save sinners comes only from Him. Do you see that Paul says God is saving us? We are not saving ourselves. We, of course, can't do that. We can destroy ourselves. But only God can save us. His saving love is a gift that He gives to sinners. As we see in 1 Corinthians 1:21, God saves people who believe. So, silly people reject the gift God offers them in the cross of Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:30). When they reject this gift, they destroy their own lives.

**"If you serve sin as your master, it will pay you with death. But if you belong to our Lord Jesus Christ, God gives you a gift! That gift is life with God for ever" (Romans 6:23, EASY). How does this verse also say what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:18, 19?**



**God's saving love is a gift that He gives to sinners.**

**A SAVIOR NAILED TO THE CROSS (Acts 13:16–47)**

Paul wrote, “Jewish people want to see God do a miracle. Then they will listen [believe]. Gentile [non-Jews] people want to listen to a message that has clever ideas” (1 Corinthians 1:22, EASY). No one, Jews and non-Jews alike, expected or wanted a Savior on a cross.

Read Mark 8:31, 32; Mark 9:30–32; and Mark 10:32–34. These verses show us that the Jews thought the death of a Savior on a cross was crazy and strange. As we already saw, the Jews expected the Savior to fight the Romans. That didn’t happen, at least not in the way we think a war should be fought and won.

For sure, Christians in Paul’s time also thought that a Savior dying on a cross was a crazy idea. But the Cross is a symbol of faith for so many Christians today. So, we may have trouble understanding how Christians in Paul’s time thought and felt about the cross.

The Cross shows us everything God was willing to do to save us. The idea of the Lord dying on a cross for sinners is surprising. Why would He do that? (Imagine in your mind what the angels thought when they saw Jesus die on the cross. They knew and worshiped Jesus in heaven!)



Imagine in your mind what the angels thought when they saw Jesus die on the cross.

**Read Acts 13:16–47 (look closely at verses 26, 38, and 47). What do these verses teach us about the Cross?**

Paul says Jesus sent him to preach the Good News. So, Paul preaches the message of a Savior who died on a cross (1 Corinthians 1:23). Paul talks again about these ideas in 1 Corinthians 2:1–5. Paul did what Jesus sent him to do. When Paul preached, he says, “I did not use clever words when I spoke to you. I did not try to make you think that I was very wise” (1 Corinthians 2:1, EASY). Paul says, “While I was with you, I decided to teach you only about Jesus Christ. I taught you about his death on a cross. I wanted to forget everything else” (1 Corinthians 2:2, EASY). Paul also says, “I did this so that you would not believe because of man’s wise words, but you would believe because of God’s power” (1 Corinthians 2:5, WE).

**Does God always do things the way we expect? Why is the answer important for us to understand when things don’t happen the way we expect?**

**GOD’S POWER AND WISDOM (1 Corinthians 1:24–29)**

In 1 Corinthians 1:19, 20, 30, 31, Paul says that God’s wisdom and human wisdom are very different. Paul doesn’t reject all human wisdom. Paul rejects human wisdom that tries to replace God’s wisdom. Human wisdom can’t free people from sin. Only Jesus can, as the chart below shows us:

“The teaching about the cross seems [is] foolish [silly; not wise] to those [people] who are lost.	But to us who are being saved it [the teaching about the cross] is the power of God [the power God uses to save us].”	1 Corinthians 1:18 (ERV)
“But Christ [Jesus] is God’s power and wisdom	to the people God has chosen, both Jews and Greeks.”	1 Corinthians 1:24 (ERV)

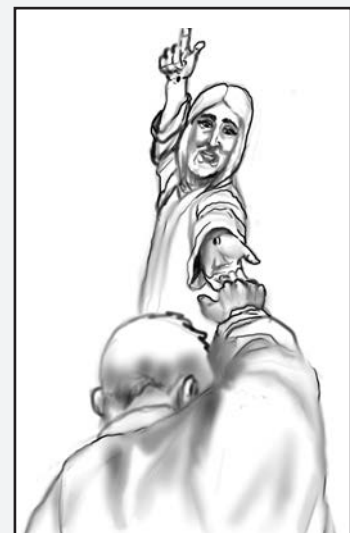
Both 1 Corinthians 1:18 and 1 Corinthians 1:24 show that Jesus is God’s power. What does that mean? God in Jesus saves people from their sins. “The good news is the power God uses to save every one who believes” (Romans 1:16, WE).

Jesus is more than God’s power. Jesus is also the wisdom of God. What does that mean for us? God solved the sin problem in Jesus. Human wisdom was powerless to solve it. Human wisdom can’t save anyone (1 Corinthians 1:21). But “the Bible has taught you how you can be truly [really] wise. You understand that God saves you because you believe in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15, EASY).

**Read 1 Corinthians 1:24–29. Notice the words Paul uses: “silly,” “weak,” “power,” and “wise.” What is Paul using these words to say?**

People may think the Cross is silly. But God “is wiser than people with their clever ideas. . . . he is stronger than any human power” (1 Corinthians 1:25, EASY). Paul isn’t saying God is weak or silly. Paul is saying God’s power and wisdom are more powerful than anything human.

**Think about the idea in 1 Corinthians 1:26 that God doesn’t choose many people who are “clever or powerful” or who “belonged to important families” (EASY). What is the message for us in this verse?**



**God solved the sin problem in Jesus.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “Calvary,” pages 741–757, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“Today, people respect the cross of Calvary. They love what Jesus did for sinners there. But in Paul’s day, people hated the cross. The cross filled them with terrible fear. So, when they heard about a Savior who died for them on a cross, they thought the idea was silly.

“Paul knew what the Jews and Greeks in Corinth would think about his message. . . . His message would make the Jews angry. The Greeks would think Paul’s message was silly and crazy. They wondered, how can the cross save anyone?

“But to Paul, the cross was the most important object in life. In the past, Paul hurt the followers of Jesus. Then Paul saw God’s love for sinners in Jesus’ death. Ever since that time, Paul always talked about what Jesus did for sinners on the cross. This new understanding of God’s love changed Paul’s life forever. . . . Paul knew from personal experience that a change happens in the heart when we understand God’s love. Then Jesus becomes everything to us.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 245, 246, adapted.



**“Paul knew from personal experience that a change happens in the heart when we understand God’s love.”**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, “ ‘Father, if it is possible [if You can do it], please save me from this time of great [terrible] pain’ ” (Matthew 26:39, EASY). What does this prayer teach us about the price Jesus paid on the cross?
- ② Paul says, God “is wiser than people with their clever ideas” (1 Corinthians 1:25, EASY). In what ways is God’s wisdom different from human wisdom?
- ③ The message about the Cross upset the Jews. The Greeks thought the message about the Cross was silly. What Bible truths do we preach today that cause people to feel and think this way? Why do you think that is so?
- ④ Paul says, “If someone does not believe in God, they cannot accept the message that comes from God’s Spirit” (1 Corinthians 2:14, EASY). How can we touch the hearts of these people with our words about Jesus? Or do we touch their hearts only with how we live and what we do?

## THE HEALING TOUCH OF JESUS

**F**abiola lived in a peaceful town in Brazil. But she felt no peace in her heart. She learned she had breast cancer during COVID-19. Fabiola was so afraid she was going to die.

In the meantime, in the city of Salvador, a woman named Luisa was suffering deeply. Her marriage of 23 years ended when her husband cheated on her and gave her a terrible disease. At the same time, Luisa's mother started not to remember names and words. Around that time, Luisa saw a neighbor end her life. Luisa wondered if she should do the same thing.

Both Fabiola and Luisa were suffering deeply, the same as the woman in Mark 5. This woman bled for 12 years. Fabiola and Luisa needed healing, the same as this woman.

Fabiola and Luisa needed Jesus' healing touch to fill their hearts with hope.

God gave them hope in surprising ways. Fabiola was watching TV in the evening. Her small dog hopped onto her lap. The dog stepped onto the TV controller and changed the channel to the Hope Channel in Brazil.

Some 800 miles away, Luisa's dog did the same thing! In Fabiola's and Luisa's suffering, God caused their dogs to put their paws on the TV controller. The dogs changed the channel, and the lives of both women changed forever. Both women learned about the life-changing love of Jesus, their Savior.

The hearts of both women filled with hope.

Today, Fabiola has a new life. She encourages people around her with the same message of hope she got from Jesus. The message from the Hope Channel helped her to think about her breast cancer in a new way. She is no longer sad or afraid. Now, as she waits in the doctor's office, she shares Christian books, talks about Jesus, and encourages everyone around her with the hope she found.

The shows Luisa watched on Hope Channel helped her to understand she needed help. She felt so very sad! The help she got changed her life.

Luisa says, "I was the same as that woman who bled for 12 years. I had no hope. But after Jesus touched my heart with His love, I want Him to live in my heart forever."

*Hope Channel helps people who are suffering, the same as Fabiola and Luisa. Many people are looking for hope, healing, and Jesus. 84 Hope Channels worldwide are touching people's lives with Bible studies and other Christian shows. Thank you for your support. Your help allows Hope Channel to help many more people know the love of Jesus in their lives. When you give to the offering during Sabbath School, part of that money helps support Hope Channel's work. Thanks for your support.*

## INSIDE *Story*

by VYACHESLAV DEMYAN



**The dog stepped onto the TV controller and changed the channel to the Hope Channel in Brazil.**