

# The Folly and Glory of the Cross

by Doc Greenway

---

*The cross is both foolishness to those who perish and the power of God to those who are saved.*

**Duration:** 25:36

**Topics:** "Cross"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a powerful testimony of a man who was once an alcoholic but had a life-changing encounter with God. The man cried out to God for help and experienced a transformative moment while on his tractor. He and his wife sought guidance from their minister and surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ. The sermon emphasizes the power of the cross to break the chains of sinful habits and the importance of believing in Jesus as the Savior for eternal life. The speaker also highlights how those who do not believe in Jesus view the preaching of the cross as foolishness due to their ignorance and arrogance.

---

## Transcript

The first chapter of the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, and verse 18, we read these words. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. Unto them that are perishing, or unto those that perish, it is foolishness.

Unto us who are saved it is the power of God. Every time an aeroplane goes over and you hear the sound of it, you have to realize that it is up there because they have learned how to cope with the law of gravitation. They have accepted it, it is a law.

They have bowed to it, and in bowing to it they have mastered it. And yet when Isaac Newton discovered that law, they said it was out of his mind. They said it was utter foolishness, and he was discounted and discredited.

Yet by today everybody accepts that this law exists. And as I said, they bow to it, and they try to utilize it. No one any longer thinks that this law is foolishness.

It is accepted. Isn't it strange then that just as really as in Paul's day, so in our times, there are still those who think that the preaching of the cross is foolishness? Isn't it remarkable that after all these hundreds of years, there are still some who cannot accept in spite of all the evidence that the cross of Jesus Christ is the greatest transforming agency in all the world? Do you find a very clearly defined mark here, surely?

The classes are divided up quite positively to those that perish foolishness. To us who are saved, the power of God.

And there is no sort of merging of these things. Never the twain shall meet. Now why is it that the cross of Christ, the proclamation of the cross, or as it really means here, the word of the cross, is foolishness to some people? Why the folly of the cross? Who are these people? Think for a moment of their condition that is mentioned here, them that perish.

And I find that it is the present tense that is used here. Those who are perishing, who are in the process of perishing, in the process of self-destruction, these are the people and this is their condition. All those who reject the message of the cross are already under judgment.

Let us remember this. All who are not already saved are already lost. And there can be no doubt about this.

Every person in the world who is not already saved by the grace of God and through the preaching of the cross of Christ is already lost, is already under judgment and condemnation. And please don't take my word for it, take the word of Jesus. In the third chapter of John and the 18th verse, he that believeth on him is not condemned.

He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. Believe, you are not condemned. Believe not, you are condemned already.

And so it isn't a question of waiting until the books are open, until the throne is established, until all the nations gather before him in order to know one's destiny. Here it is. Those who are not already saved are already lost.

Jesus said, These are they who do not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God. Did they not believe in him at all? Oh yes, they did. They believed in him as a teacher.

And in fact, they said, Never man speak like this man, for he speaketh as one having authority, and not as the scribes. He doesn't have to refer to some teacher or other to give credence to what he declares. He has the authority in himself.

They accepted him as a teacher. They would gather even to a wilderness, to a desert place, in crowds to listen to him. Yes, they accepted that he was a teacher.

They did not accept him as a prophet. Surely they did. Time and time again you find Jesus in this role of prophet, accepted by the nation.

When he spoke to the woman at the well, you recall, and disclosed her inner heart, because he knew her circumstances, she ran to the people and said, Come see a man who told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ? Is not this the promised prophet, the anointed Messiah? They would accept him as a prophet. What about Jesus as a healer? Yes, here too.

They were ready and willing and anxious to receive him. And as you study especially the gospel of Mark, you will find that each day in the life of Jesus seems to be filled with his activity of laying his hands upon people, speaking the word of healing to others, touching them. Are they touching him and receiving healing? They wanted him as a teacher, as a healer, as a prophet.

Yes, and even as a king. They would have anointed him king over and over again. But he knew that this was not God's way.

But to believe in him as a teacher, as a healer, as a prophet, and even as a king, he is not believing on his name, because his name is Jesus. And Jesus means savior. And they would not receive him as the savior of mankind.

And this is where these people stand. This is their condition. In John chapter 3 and verse 36, you hear Jesus say, He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

The ultimate sin is unbelief in Jesus, our savior and Lord. One may believe all sorts of things about Jesus. But unless we believe him to be the savior of mankind, unless we put our trust, our faith, our confidence in him personally as our savior, then we have not believed on him, and we are still abiding under the wrath of God.

Think again of the evaluation of these people. The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. Moria, moron, comes from this word.

It is silliness. It is absurdity. Now, why do they regard the cross in this way? They do it because of ignorance.

For the scripture reminds us, The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness unto him. The natural man is the man as he is by nature, untouched by the grace of God. How do you describe a sunset to a blind man? How would you describe Handel's chorus to a deaf mute? How would you explain Einstein's theory of relativity to an infant class? And how could you possibly hope to explain, to define the things of the Spirit to the natural man, their foolishness unto him? D.L. Moody tells us that at one Christmas time, when he was standing outside a huge store, he looked upon a group of children looking in at the presents in the window.

And they were describing the toys to a little girl who stood by them. But she was blind, and they found it an impossibility to explain what those toys looked like. And so it is here, the people who are perishing, the natural men, it is impossible to explain the things of the Spirit to such people, to them, their absolute foolishness.

And so their evaluation stems from their ignorance. They cannot comprehend, they do not understand. And again, why do they regard the cross as foolishness? They do it because of arrogance.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verses 22 and 23, you read, 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. It is to them an offense to national pride.

The arrogant Jew had no place for a crucified Redeemer. The arrogant Greek had no interest in a proclamation that was not philosophical. Their pride of race prevented them from accepting the cross, which they, in their arrogance, regarded as foolishness.

They forgot that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men, and the weakness of God is stronger than the strength of men. This, perhaps, is why we sing in that wonderful hymn, especially at communion services, When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of glory died, My richest

gain I count but loss, and poor content on all my pride. This has to be done if we are going to accept the cross from God's standpoint.

No one has yet succeeded in bridging the gap between human attainment and divine atonement, and of these we can say with assurance, never the twain shall meet. You cannot be clever at Calvary. From the standpoint of human reasoning, the cross is a symbol of failure, of tragedy, of utter defeat.

When the governor of Alsace and Lorraine entered the city, this man found that every window had its blinds drawn, every door was closed. There wasn't a person in all the streets of the town as he entered, and the reason for this was because he had been defeated on the battlefield, and this was their response to someone who had been conquered. No one appeared to welcome him, no one was there to cheer.

And this is how people who are perishing regard the cross, the symbol of failure, the symbol of defeat, of tragedy, of hopeless conquest. This is how they regard the cross, that the Redeemer there ended his days in shame, in defeat. Why do they think of the cross as foolishness? They do it because of indulgence.

The wise man declared in Proverbs 24 and verse 9, the thought of foolishness is sin and the scorner is an abomination unto men. And never is there a truer assessment than this, in considering man as he is by nature, untouched by the grace of God. The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

The man of the world will ridicule the preaching of the cross, not simply because of an intellectual objection, but also, and more importantly, because of a moral degradation. The cross is God's exposure of man's sin in all its vile offensiveness, in all its awful consequence. I am reminded of a university professor who complained to a Christian minister that he could not accept the gospel because it did not somehow coincide with his intellectual reasoning.

The man of God gave him a book to read, a book concerning the death of Jesus as an atonement for man's sin. It was entitled, Why the Cross? Sometime later, the professor returned to say that he had read the book, he had studied the relevant passages of scripture, and he had come to the conclusion that there was nothing there which his mind could not accept. But he said, I would not be a Christian because I have found that the trouble is not with my mind, the trouble is with my heart.

I do not want to give up my sin, for the preaching of the cross is to them that are perishing foolishness. It is foolishness because of their ignorance, because of their arrogance in the face of God's demands, and because of their indulgence in sinful and selfish pursuits in the fulfilling of carnal desires. It is to them foolishness.

But then, having looked at the folly of the cross, let us think of the glory of the cross. For unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. Now look at the character of these people.

Unto us who are saved, here it is the present tense, being saved. For salvation applies to past, present, and future. To the past because we are saved from sin's penalty.

To the present because we are being saved from sin's power. To the future because we shall be saved from sin's presence when the Lord comes to receive us unto himself. In both the Hebrew and Greek words from which this word saved is translated, the idea of deliverance is present.

And this is deliverance from almost any kind of spiritual, material, mental, or even physical problem. Here the word saved applies to deliverance in the present tense from the power and dominion of sin. The cross is the power of God in conversion when we are born of the Spirit.

At that point, the potential for a new creation is present. For if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. All things are passed away.

Behold, all things are become new. But here the cross is the power of God in confirmation, which is when we are filled with the Spirit. At this point, the potential for sanctification is present.

Let us not forget that when we read the exhortation, and be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit, it isn't something about which you may make up your mind. For this is an exhortation in the imperative mood, in the present tense. Be ye constantly, continuously, ceaselessly being filled.

It is in the passive voice. You cannot do it yourself. It is only the Spirit of God who is able to fill you.

And it is in the plural number. It includes all Christians everywhere. Be filled with the Spirit.

Conversion is a crisis experience. Sanctification is a progressive experience. Thus we read, the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

And these are contrary one to the other, so that he cannot do the things that he would. When we say yes to the Spirit of God, we are standing on the side of victory. When we say yes to the strivings of the flesh, we are standing on the side of defeat.

It is as clear and positive and plain as this. Let us then remember that to us, the power of God in the cross is not only the power of God in salvation, in the sense that we are born of the Spirit. It is the power of God also, in the sense of sanctification, when we are delivered from the power of indwelling sin.

The cross is therefore the power of God, unto salvation, to the uttermost and in the fullest sense of the word. Look again at the conviction of these people. The cross to them is the power of God, the dynamite of God.

We are reminded this morning that the power of the cross is an explosive force. Thus Isaiah speaks in the 51st chapter and the first verse, Look to the pit from whence ye were digged, and the rock from whence ye were hewn. It seems that in some cases it takes the power of the gospel as the dynamite of God to blast people out from the clutches of sin.

Thus in Romans 1 and verse 16 you hear Paul say, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power, the dynamite of God, unto salvation, to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. It takes the dynamite of the gospel to release people from the bondage of sin. John Richard Green, fresh out of Oxford University, went to East London with a social reform gospel and got nowhere at all.

General William Booth went there with his army, with his band, with the instruments, and with the gospel of redeeming grace, preaching the dynamite of God in the salvation of men, and he certainly got somewhere. The power of the cross is indeed a power that is explosive. It is also a power which is disruptive as a force in the interests of righteousness.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin, we sing. He sets the prisoner free, and he is able through the gospel to break the power of the chains of sinful habit, however strong they may be, however long they

may have entangled the life concern. When I was in Northland, I had as an elder a man who had been an alcoholic.

Indeed, like all alcoholics, he claims that he is still an alcoholic. But one day, sitting on his tractor, he realized that he had come to the end of himself, and he cried out from his heart, O God, do something with me. The next thing he remembers is that he was flat on his face on the ground, and there God dealt with him.

There his heart was opened to the gospel of Christ, and he got to his feet realizing that something tremendous had taken place. He went with his wife, who was a schoolteacher, to see their minister, and thank God the minister was able to help him. He understood what was taking place, and there together they made their needs known to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He accepted Christ as his Savior, and he was soundly born again. Now it took the destructive force of the cross of Christ to deal with this man's sinful habits and to release him from his clutches. Let me say, too, that the power of the cross is an expulsive force.

It expels the forces of evil. It drives out the powers of darkness. It does indeed deal with a realm where Satan seems to be holding sway in the lives of people, because, let us remember, on Calvary Christ was not defeated by Satan, but Christ there conquered the forces of darkness, the powers of evil, and dealt a mortal blow to Satan himself.

The power that is in the cross of Christ is an expulsive force. It expels the forces of evil. Finally, the power of the cross is a creative force.

In Galatians chapter 2 and verse 20, you hear Paul speak of his experience. I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.

And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. This is the new life created by the cross, which is the power of God. It is a life of unflinching faith, a life of unrivaled love, a life of unstinting sacrifice.

Christ comes in the power of the gospel to save men from the uttermost to the uttermost. Christ does not save men by his life, though that was holy, sinless, pure, nor even by his tender love, though that forever shall endure. He does not save them by his words, though they shall never pass away, nor by his vast creative power that holds the elements in sway.

He does not save them by his works, though men may think this would suffice. The awful need was greater still. He took his death, his sacrifice.

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. But unto us who are saved, praise God, it is the power of God. May God bless his word.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/27/SID27111.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/doc-greenway/the-foolly-and-glory-of-the-cross/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**