

## Notes on 1 Cor 1 : 18 – 25 ‘Daring to be conventional – starting with the cross’

What does the cross mean to you? How would you explain or describe it to someone else? How do you respond and live it out in your lives day by day? Last month we all had the opportunity to do this as we ate and enjoyed our Easter eggs and here in 1 Corinthians 1 verses 18 and 23 Paul wants to equally inspire, energise, and excite us in the task of knowing the astonishing glory of the cross ourselves and to enable us to share this with others too.

As a child I loved FA Cup Day and in particular the excitement of being able to watch a whole match live because it was such a rare experience. However, today the FA Cup final is just one more live match you can watch among so many others. When you think about the cross which of these ‘FA Cup Days’ describes how you think or feel about the cross? The cross is a breath-taking reality because it is so big and so vast that I want to immerse myself in it day by day. I do not want to cheapen it or presume upon it. I do not want to empty it nor ignore it. I do not wish to despise it or lessen it because it is the power of God to all of us who are being saved.

The cross is the power of God because at the cross we know we are loved by God according to the vastness of his measure and scale. At the cross we know we are at peace with God, where we know we do not need to earn or prove ourselves to him. At the cross we know we have been redeemed by him, bought with a price beyond measure or count because the price is the blood of Jesus. At the cross we know we have shalom, or wholeness, in him because we are no longer broken but made whole in him. At the cross we are healed by him, whether from sin or from any wile or scheme of the enemy. At the cross we know we have been reconciled to God, for we are no longer far away as an enemy of his, as now we have been brought close to him as his friend. At the cross we know we have been purified by him, where all our sin and shame has been washed away from us and that we now stand clean in his presence. At the cross we know we are his new creation, where the old has gone and the new has come and we will know this in its fullness when we are resurrected in glory. At the cross we know we are justified by God, where we hear the cry of not guilty from him who sits upon the throne. At the cross we are filled by him because as his people we are able to receive his promise of life by the Spirit. At the cross we are defined by him, for here we are called his children, his people, his servants and his lovers. At the cross we see the extent of the sorrow of God at what sin, death and the enemy has done to all of his creation. At the cross we see the suffering of God in its fullest as he bore our sins upon the tree and, as Wesley says, the immortal dies. At the cross we know we are freed from the wrath of God as we have already been put right with him and so when he comes to put all things right and right all wrongs, we shall be safe. At the cross we know we have been

adopted by God into his family, where we are able to call him Father and are free to come into his presence.

The cross is the power of God because here Jesus defeated the power of death, sin and the enemy, where they no longer have the final word but are now and for ever subservient to him and will one day be destroyed by him. The cross is the power of God because it was on the cross that he bore our sins and took our place as the Servant who gladly substituted himself for us. The cross is the power of God because now he has opened the door of the Kingdom to enable all to life the fullness of life that he had promised.

The cross is the wisdom of God because the cross is how God fulfilled his promises and purposes to Abraham and Israel. It is how he fulfilled the heart and soul of the Law and what it means for us to live knowing him. It is how he fulfilled the hope of the Prophets who yearned and desired for the time when God will become King. It is how he fulfilled what Genesis 1 and 2 describe as those who are now truly made in the image of God.

The cross is the heart of story we are to tell all and we do so because it is a story that has gripped us by its truth and we know is real within our lives because the cross is both the power and the wisdom of God. But what is also real and true is the pain and the sorrow it speaks of, as described by Jesus when he tells us to 'take up your cross and follow me'.

We are to tell others of the cross because we have first known it in our lives. We know what it means to be held by it. We know what it means to trust in it. We know what it means to be made alive because of it. We know what it means to be compelled by it. We know what it means to live it out in our lives day by day. Is this true for you? Oh, Holy Spirit of God come on all of us that this may be true of us all. That we will be people who hold out the glorious wonder of cross because it holds us in the clutches of its arms.

#### Questions on 1 Cor 1 : 18 – 25 'Daring to be conventional – starting with the cross'

1. What does the cross mean to you?
2. What does Paul mean when he says the cross is the power of God for salvation?
3. Which of the adjectives that Andy uses speaks most powerfully to you?
4. What does Paul mean when he says the cross is the wisdom of God?
5. Describe what it feels like to be gripped by truth of the cross?
6. Why does taking up your cross and following Jesus involve pain?