

The Centrality of the Cross

Despite the world's frequent preoccupation with romantic love, Scripture plainly declares: "*No one has greater love than this, to lay down his life for his friends*" (John 15:13). "*This is how we know love: He has laid down His life for us*" (1 John 3:16).

The purest and most perfect love is to be found in that most unlovely event, the suffering and death of Christ. With this selfless act, our Lord Himself redeemed those who had done, and could do, nothing to justify His love.

Despite the fact that some consider Christ and His death foolishness, we know that this - and nothing else - is our sure salvation. Not only does Scripture declare that we are, in and of ourselves, sinful and deserving of condemnation, but it also constantly reminds us that there are no thoughts, words, or deeds by which we can justify ourselves. Instead, God became man, took our sins upon Himself, and in His death He justifies us. Therefore, like Paul, we cannot boast in our own works, but only "*in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Galatians 6:14).

What is true for us as individuals is also true for all people. Salvation has been won once and for all on the cross. This is why, when speaking of our salvation, we shall only boast in the cross. But the cross will be central not only in thinking about and rejoicing in our own justification but also in proclaiming salvation to others. We shall, of course, say to friends and family, "God loves you," and other similar truths. But we shall also remember that God's love is not generic and that His saving love comes at a price. This is not a price that we must pay but one that Christ has paid on the cross. Therefore, there can be no proclamation of God's love and salvation without the proclamation of the cross. This clearly informed Paul's evangelism efforts, for he says, "*For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified*" (1 Cor. 2:2).