

# THE CHALLENGE OF THE CROSS

## Introduction:

1. The charge to a handful to take the gospel to all the world seemed an impossible task.
  - A. Population at that time is estimated at between 250 - 300 million.
  - B. Transportation and communication systems were primitive.
  - C. They were without prestige, wealth, or political power.
2. Yes, these early disciples were extremely successful.
  - A. Thirty years after the initial charge, the gospel was preach to all. Col. 1: [6](#), [23](#)
  - B. Even powerful Rome had to reckon with this force.
3. What was the secret of their success?
  - A. The challenge of the cross was a tremendous force in their lives.  
[John 12:32](#); [1 Cor. 1:18](#); [Phil. 2:8](#) [Heb. 12:2](#)
  - B. Long before the Cross became a symbol on buildings, it became a symbol in their lives.  
Gal. 6:14; 1 Cor. 2:1-2.

## I. THE CROSS IS A CHALLENGE TO LOVE IN A WORLD OF HATE.

- A. We live in a world of hate, animosity, envy. “Do unto others before they do to you!”
  1. Consider the number of murders committed each day.  
(Two-thirds are by acquaintances)
  2. We are inclined to love only those who love us. Matthew 5:46.
  3. Christ had a right to hate, if there is one.
- B. Yet the greatest display of love was on the cross. John 3:16.
  1. Would you put your child on the cross for me?
  2. Illustration: “Dog bites Master” c. Rom. 5:8
  3. “Love so amazing, so divine, demands my . . .” 1 John 4:7, 8-9.  
Without love we are nothing – 1 Cor. 13

## II. THE CROSS IS A CHALLENGE TO GIVE IN A WORLD OF GETTERS

- A. We live in a world of “getters” – Acts 20:35
  1. Being a getter led to Judas’ downfall. Matt. 26:15; 1 Tim. 6:10
  2. Getters account for gambling, pickpockets, drug pushers, dishonest politicians, etc.  
People want, possession – status – covet – do so greatly that they will go to many means to “get.”
    - a. Hard to be a good Samaritan when we live in a society that tends to measure a man by what he has and not by what he is.
    - b. Jesus warned . . . Luke 12:15
- B. Christ gave himself completely, freely and unselfishly.
  1. Through the cross Paul challenged Corinthians to give. 2 Cor. 8:9.
  2. “Christ gave . . .” Illustration (4x6 )
  3. This should cultivate giving. (Illustration: Gratitude) 2 Cor. 8:8.

**III. THE CROSS IS A CHALLENGE . . .  
... TO HAVE CONVICTIONS IN A WORLD OF COMPROMISE.**

- A. We live in a world of compromise. – at work, selling house, etc.
  - 1. We often prefer a happy, pleasant relationship more than we prefer the truth.
  - 2. Through compromise we have lowered the Lord's standards.  
Instead of teaching pointedly, we back off and shy away.
  - 3. Illustration: "Fresh Fish For Sale"
- B. Christ never compromised. Mark 14:61, 62.
  - 1. Compare with Peter's compromise – Mark 14:67-72.
  - 2. After the cross Peter would not bend. Acts 5:29; 4:13
  - 3. Why have we grown? Better to die for a conviction than to live by a compromise.

**IV. THE CROSS IS A CHALLENGE TO BE PURE IN A WORLD OF IMORALITY**

- A. We live in a time of immorality. There has never been in our American society such a display of sex and raw obscenity as there is now.
  - 1. Looking back on the trend in our culture is not an encouraging site.
  - 2. Sexual immorality, porn, divorce, situation ethics.
  - 3. Scanty dress is not a mark of purity. Illustration.  
(cf. p. 4 bulletin insert "Adorned in Immodest Apparel" )
  - 4. A challenge to be "righteousness" and not just "religious." 88-CL-Du 4x6
- B. Reflections upon the cross encourages purity of life.
  - 1. It was his innocence that crucified Christ – Luke 23:4; 1 Peter 2:22.
  - 2. Many members live so far below standard, you'd have to backslide to be in fellowship with them.
  - 3. Our need – Psa. 51:10; 1 Tim. 4:12; Phil. 4:8

**V. THE CROSS IS A CHALLENGE TO OBEY IN A WORLD OF REBELLION**

- A. Rebellion and disobedience is common. Against the 1) home; 2) society; 3) God
  - 1. Begins at home; continues in school. "Gain-say" parents.
  - 2. Civil disobedience encouraged by professors and preachers. – but Rom. 13
  - 3. All rebellion is against God – Rom. 13:1  
Heb. 13:17.
- B. Christ became obedient unto death – Phil. 2:8
  - 1. Obedience was not by force, but willingly. John 10:18
  - 2. Our obedience must be from the heart – Rom. 6:17.
  - 3. Illustration: (Gus Nichols and "bread" bullet mold – FHC Lect. 1971, p. 270, about being molded into the Lord's likeness.)

**Conclusion:**

- 1. In summation: the cross is a challenge to deny self, take up the cross and follow Jesus.
- 2. We are to follow Christ in love, giving, convictions, purity and obedience.
- 3. Alien sinners accept the challenge by obeying the gospel.
  - \* Illustration "Cheap crosses for sale" 88-CL-Du C-5
- 4. Erring Christians do this by returning to first love.

**THE CHALLENGE OF THE CROSS — Scriptures**

**Colossians 1:6** Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth: *KJV*

**Colossians 1:23** If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; *KJV*

**John 12:32** And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. *KJV*

**1 Corinthians 1:18** For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. *KJV*

**Philippians 2:8** And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. *KJV*

**Hebrews 12:2** Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. *KJV*

**Galatians 6:14** But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. *KJV*

**1 Corinthians 2:1-2** And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. *KJV*

**Ephesians 4:26** "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: *KJV*

**Matthew 5:46** For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? *KJV*

**Romans 5:8** But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. *KJV*

**1 John 4:7-9** Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. *KJV*

**Acts 20:35** I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. *KJV*

**Matthew 26:15** And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. *KJV*

**1 Timothy 6:10** For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. *KJV*

**Luke 12:15** And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. *KJV*

**2 Corinthians 8:9** For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. *KJV*

**2 Corinthians 8:8** I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. *KJV*

**Mark 14:61-62** “61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? 62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. *KJV*

**Acts 5:29** Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. *KJV*

**Acts 4:13** Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. *KJV*

**Luke 23:4** Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. *KJV*

**1 Peter 2:22** Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: *KJV*

**Psalms 51:10** Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. *KJV*

**1 Timothy 4:12** Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. *KJV*

**Philippians 4:8** Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. *KJV*

**Romans 13:1** Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. *KJV*

**Philippians 2:8** And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. *KJV*

**John 10:18** No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. *KJV*

**Romans 6:17** But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. *KJV*