

Christ and Him Crucified

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[0:00] 1 Corinthians 2 verse 2! For I am determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

! I want to look at this one verse really and pick up some key things.! Firstly, I determined, committed. Paul was committed. That was his commitment.

He was determined, he was decided, he was resolved. It takes a decision. Becoming a Christian is a conscious choice. It's an act of the will.

I don't believe that God forces us to choose Him against our will. But He wants us to respond. The response is up to us. His invitation is extended to all and the response is up to each one.

To respond, to receive, to hear and obey. And determination. I'm committed, he says. I'm determined. I'm determined.

[1:01] It's like determination. When I think of determination, I think of like a kamikaze pilot. You know? A kamikaze pilot, when he steps into the cockpit and takes the run down the runway, he's not coming back.

He's determined. He's got a goal. He's got a task. He's devoted and committed. He is determined. He's got stickability for the mission ahead.

And that's the kind of commitment that we should have to Christ. A commitment that there's no turning back. Once we've taken our hand to the plough, we can't turn back. There's no turning back. It's a determination.

It's a commitment. It's a one way forward. Following Christ. And it's solid and steady with stickability. That's the kind of commitment. That's the kind of determination that we should have as Christians.

That the faith that we have, when we have faith in Christ, it's not some light and frothy, weak kind of casual commitment. Because there is no such thing as a casual commitment.

[2:00] Either you're committed or you're not committed. Christianity takes commitment. There's no half measures. We should be all out. Sold out. Committed. Totally committed.

And not to be like a soldier who goes AWOL, who doesn't report for duty. A soldier has to be on duty all the time. I know it's said of soldiers really that they don't work a seven, seven and a half hour, eight hour day.

There's no really, they're on call all the time. And at any time they could be called up for duty to serve their country. And it's like that for a Christian, that it's a full time commitment.

You are all in full time ministry. Every Christian has a full time ministry, has a full time commitment to Christ. It's not like we clock on and off with our commitment to Christ.

It's not like it's a job where you sign on and then sign off and then you've got your free time. All of your time is God's time. As a Christian, you're 24 by 7 by 365.

[3:00] And it's like that kind of commitment that a kamikaze pilot would have. That kind of commitment. The perseverance of like a bulldog. When you see these dogs that hang on and won't let go.

It's like, I know, we had a lizard in our laundry and I had to pick it up and throw it out the backyard. And I've heard it said that if some of these lizards grab hold of you, they don't let go, do they?

They clamp on with their teeth. That's the kind of commitment that we should have as a Christian.

That we take a stand. That we're willing to stand firm and put our heart into it. And hang on for dear life, for eternal life.

Because the Christian life is something that once you take that trek, once you take that course, there's no turning back. We have a saviour who is worth everything to us.

And the kind of Christian commitment that we're talking about is a one-off lifetime commitment. It's for time and eternity when we trust him. And we don't want to be slack.

[4:03] We want to be there, boots and all. And be full on. Lock, stock and barrel. Committed to the cause. Committed to Christ. To our saviour. Because the one that we follow has given his all for us, hasn't he?

If you're a Christian, the one who you love and serve, the one that you've given a commitment to, he's committed his very soul, his very life. His life's blood was shed for you. But you can be saved. When the Romans crossed the channel and landed on the shore of Britain, the first thing they did was to burn their ships. Because there was no turning back for them. That's like it for a Christian too.

There's no turning back to the world and going back to that. Going back as a dog to his vomit, as the Bible says. And go as a pig back to wallow in the mire again.

As a Christian, you've been changed. You've been transformed. You've become a new person. A new creature. And there's no turning back. It's like you've changed from a goat into a sheep.

[4:59] You know, there's a change in your nature, in your person. You're a brand new creature in Christ. That's the kind of commitment that we're talking about. Where there's a zeal. It's been said that the word zeal has been humorously defined as a certain nervous disorder afflicting the young and inexperienced.

But really, zeal is something we should all have. Whatever our age and background, whatever our culture, zeal should be something you should have as a Christian. You should be full on.

You should be fully committed to Christ. There's no half measures in this commitment. And just some like scriptures around the theme of one thing. We'll come back to 1 Corinthians 2. But John 9, for example, verse 25, talks about a commitment.

In John 9, 25, we read of the blind man who had been born blind. And from verse 25, he's challenged about what's happened to you.

And he says, he answered and said, whether he be a sinner or no, I know not. One thing I know that whereas I was blind, now I see. He said, one thing I know, whereas I was blind, but now I see.

[6:11] One thing I know. There's something you can know. You become a Christian, you can know you're a Christian. One thing I know, once I was blind, but now I see. Once I was lost, now I'm found. There's a challenge there.

There's a testimony there that you can testify of that life change. And Luke 10, 42, there's another occurrence of this phrase. One thing. Luke 10, 42.

The Lord Jesus is talking about Martha and Mary. And Martha is cumbered with all that's working and going on, serving, doing so much, no doubt, good things. Serving the Lord in her way of preparing the meal and preparing for the Master and serving.

But when Jesus saw this, he said, Martha, Martha, you're careful, you're concerned, you're troubled. You're worried about all these things, about many things. But verse 42, but one thing is needful.

One thing is needful. And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. What was she doing? In verse 39, she was sitting at his feet, hearing his word. That's the one thing that is needful.

[7:12] Sometimes we fill our lives with, I want this, or I need that, I need this, I need that. Especially Christmas time where people buy things that they think they need or want. And it's all about wanting and needing and getting and the world's way of materialism.

That you've got to just have the latest gadget or thing that's advertised. But one thing is needful.

There's one thing that you need. And Mary has chosen that good part, to sit at the Lord Jesus' feet and to hear his word.

That is where we see that which is priority. And Philippians 3, verse 13, just one other occurrence of this phrase, one thing. And Paul says this in Philippians 3, verse 13.

He talks about how I want to be found in him. Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ. The righteousness which is of God by faith.

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection. And the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable to his death. If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of Christ.

[8:16] And he goes on, verse 12. Not as though I had already attained other work made perfect. But I follow after. If that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

He says he's following on. And he says, verse 13. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended. He says he's still learning. You know, he's not arrived yet, he's saying. But this one thing I do.

This one thing I do. He says, forgetting those things which are behind. And reaching forth unto those things which are before. I press toward the mark. For the prize of the high calling of God. In Christ Jesus. So, there's an urging there. That this one thing I know. Even though there might be all kinds of things in my past. Things that I could brag about. Things that I could be ashamed about. I forget those things that are behind. And I press toward the mark. This one thing I do. I press toward the mark. And as a Christian, that's what it's about. Is that single-eyed focus.

[9:13] Is that devotion. Is that zeal. Is that commitment. That should be a hallmark of a real Christian. So, commitment.

For I determined. I determined. I committed. And the second thing you can pick out from this verse is. I determined not to know anything among you. Save Jesus Christ. So, he was committed.

What was he committed to? To Christ. The Christian life is a commitment to Christ. There's lots of things we can be committed to in our lives. We know for every one of us.

We live in a time poor world. Where there's so many challenges. So many calls on our time. There's so many things we could give our time to. There's so many causes we could devote ourselves to. There's lots of things that we can know. The encyclopedias on our shelves at home are jam-packed with knowledge. And the internet is such. Knowledge is such. Information.

[10:08] We're living in the information age. We can just fill our minds with all kinds of facts and figures and knowledge about many subjects. But there is one subject that we cannot possibly afford to be uninformed or ignorant of.

And that is Christ. Christ. Paul says, I determined to know Christ. To know Christ. To know him. In Isaiah 11 verse 9 it says, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

One day this whole world is going to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. But sadly to say in these days that we live, to many the Lord Jesus is like the description in Acts of he's still the unknown God.

He's the unknown God. You know, people see his handiwork all around them, not acknowledging him, not realising, not knowing him, maybe giving praise to some other kind of thought or philosophy of God, but not knowing Christ.

Not knowing Christ, not having that knowledge of him. Him to know is a life eternal. And how can we know that we know? In 1 John 2 verse 3 it says, And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

[11:28] So as a Christian, you can profess to know him, but unless you're taking heed and intelligently seeking to follow his will and to obey him, then it's likely that you're not personally knowing him.

The Bible should be our guide and our source of how we can know him. In 2 Timothy 1 verse 12, Paul says, For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

Paul says, I know whom I have believed. I know him, and I know that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. To know Christ.

Now there's various Christs in the world today. Which Christ will you follow? There's some who say, and I've seen some New Age magazine that talks about the Christ.

He's already arrived. He's already arrived. You're just waiting to be revealed. That Christ has already come to planet Earth. And supposedly, some New Age Christ that has supposedly come to Earth.

[12:36] And then you see, you go down the bookshops, and there's various books that have been written by the Christ. You know, supposed prophecies and forth-tellings of this Christ, of some mystic kind of New Age guru type Christ, who's writing the Scriptures still today.

There's Christ like that. There's the Mormon Christ. A different Christ. Which Christ will you follow? 2 Corinthians 11 verse 4 talks about another Jesus.

There's another Jesus. There's another Spirit. There's another Gospel. So we need to be careful. Is the Christ that we follow the Christ of the Bible? Is it really the Christ who's revealed and speaking to us through his Word?

Or is it a fraud? A substitute? An imitation Christ? And there's much talk in these days of changing the Word of God around and changing what people believe.

In fact, I read this some while back. It says that there's been a ruling by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, the New York General Assembly, that worship leaders must use inclusive language for God.

[13:51] The proposal was that it could be possible for a minister to be charged as breaking this church ruling who baptises in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Because that's not inclusive language. And an elder leading worship who begins the Lord's Prayer, our Father, could also be liable to disciplinary action. You know, of course, in these crazy days, there's some churches that think instead of our Father which art in heaven, you read our person that art in heaven.

You know, you can't use a, you can't call God a he or a, you know, the he could be a she or an it. It's crazy. It's a crazy world that this is going on. These people are not committed to the Bible Christ, to Bible Christianity.

There's something going wrong there and we need to be alert to that too. Does the Christ that you serve, is he in your heart? Is he? I know there's much talk about the shallowness of some who say invite Jesus into your heart.

And of course, there's so much more to it than simply saying words or having some warm, tingly feeling. But certainly the Bible does say that Christ will dwell in our hearts by faith.

[15:05] And if you're really a Christian, Christ will become a very part of the very core of you. As a Christian, Christ will come and dwell within you by his Holy Spirit and indwell you such that Christ is in you and you are in Christ.

There's that incredible union that can happen as you become a Christian. And there's a story told of how there was a soldier in Napoleon's army one day as a bullet had entered his chest above the heart and the surgeon was probing the wound to remove the bullet from this soldier's interior.

And as he was carried to the rear and the surgeon was probing the wound with his knife, when it lent the guardsman, exclaimed, an inch deeper and you will find the emperor.

Because he had been committed to the cause of Napoleon, to the cause of the conflict there. And likewise too for a Christian, that our captain is in our heart.

The one that we serve is in our heart. He is our love. He is our driving force. He is our whole life. To live is Christ.

[16:13] To die is gain. And when you become a Christian, Christ comes and lives within your innermost being and changes your life from the inside out. That's what it means to be a Christian.

That Christ is all and in all. And Christ is your all in all. That is what happens when you become a real Christian. There's only one way to be saved.

And that is Christ. I know I mentioned earlier this morning how there was a Buddhist man mentioned to me on Friday night and was talking about how, oh there's many paths. There's many paths, there's many ways, there's many knowledges, there's many ways of peace and salvation effectively is what he was saying.

But that goes contrary to what our Lord says in the Word of God. Because the Lord Jesus made it very plain. He says, I am the way.

He says, I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me. And it says very clearly too that there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

[17:21] So there can only be one way. There can only be one. And as much as, I know there's talk in these days, there's some recent news I read about how there's some kind of a manufacturing of an agreement between Islam and Christianity that somehow they're trying to boil it all down to

being nice to everybody, love your neighbour and love God.

But of course, is the God of Islam the same God of the Bible? It certainly is not. The God of Islam is definitely different from the God of the Bible. A genuine Muslim could not accept that the God of the Bible is Allah as neither can a definite Christian who loves and believes the Bible to be the Word of God.

They're not reconcilable. You can't reconcile the two. They're completely different. You can't blend Christianity with Islam. The messages are different. If you try to manufacture that kind of union, you've got to cross out many of the verses in the Bible, many of the things that the Lord Jesus declared.

And you'd have to declare Christ a liar and the Word of God a lie if you were to take that kind of track. But Charles Spurgeon said of the salvation message, he said, there were many rooms in the ark but only one door.

Many rooms but only one door. And there is only one door in the ark of salvation. There's only one way to be saved and that is Christ, says Spurgeon. Moody said too, we should be in the world but the world should not be in us.

[18:57] So we committed to Christ. Christ is the one we love and adore we want to follow. And just thirdly, the third aspect here is we committed to Christ, to Christ crucified.

To Christ crucified. Christ crucified was Paul's message. It was his one message that he wanted to underline, to emphasise, to repeat, to declare as soundly and as clearly and as widely as he could. In 1 Corinthians 1.23, but we preach Christ crucified. We preach Christ crucified. And as he says in 1 Corinthians 2.2, for I determine not to know anything among you, say Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

It was something that he emphasised and he constantly was about that task. As were the preachers of the Bible in the Acts. For example, in Acts 5.42 it says, And daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

He was their sermon. He was the one that they couldn't speak enough about. And I know, for example, when the open air preachers are preaching in the city, that the message is the same.

[20:07] And it can be the same because it's the needful message. It's the message our world needs to hear. The same message, the same truth, the same one who needs to be declared soundly and loudly and clearly for our world to hear about.

And Philip, in Acts 8 verse 5, it says of him, Acts 8 verse 5, Then Philip went down into the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them.

Christ was the message. Christ was the essential message that had to be declared. Acts 9 verse 20, the first thing Paul did when he was changed from Saul into Paul, when he got saved.

Acts 9 verse 20, and straightway, he preached Christ in the synagogues that he is the Son of God. He preached Christ. And as much as this might seem such a simple message, it's that emphasis that we need to capture that in our lives, in our living, in our talking, in our walking, that Christ and him crucified should predominate, should drive us, should inspire us, it should send us and be so essential for us to declare that, that we just can't shut up about the Lord Jesus Christ because our world needs to hear him.

It needs to hear his message. It needs to receive that salvation that only he can give. And so they didn't preach some kind of flashy, glossy, substitute gospel.

[21:36] They didn't preach some kind of prosperity gospel, some kind of health and wealth, some kind of health laws or dietary laws or Sabbath keeping. They didn't preach all of that.

They preached Christ. Christ and him crucified. That was the message that they had to preach.

There was a story about an 88-year-old woman, an 88-year-old woman in China.

And she had been witnessing for many years with a poster, just a simple poster, which showed a cross on top of a stony hill. And she kept this small red poster folded in a bag that she carried around with her.

And every so often, she'd get that poster out with the cross and the hill and some simple words on it. And this paper was all tattered and taped together and falling apart.

But she used to pull it out in the marketplace or on the bus and she used to use it to declare the gospel to the people around her. And this poster, it only had three words.

[22:37] It is finished. It is finished. That was the simple message. And of course, what an opening that would give as the Chinese people would come to this lady and she would speak to them and say things such as, Mao could not say that.

Deng Xiaoping could not say it. And you cannot say it. There is only one person who can say it and he is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And many Chinese have become Christians because of her boldness. A simple message. Christ and Him crucified. That was the message of her witness to the world around her. That should be our message for every one of you here.

That trusting, that claim to be born again, believers in Christ Jesus today. That is your message. That is your testimony.

That is your witness. It should be. And we need to be crucified with Christ. That we need to be thinking of that cross that Christ died upon.

[23:38] Not as a physical symbol on a wall or on a building, but the cross on which He died. The piece of wood, whatever it looked like, is irrelevant. That He was nailed and scarred and bruised and pierced and bled and died for your sin and mine.

That is the critical message. That is the fundamental truth that our world needs to know. There was a story told about how a preacher was getting a red carpet tour of another minister's church.

And this minister here, he was very proud of the rich imported pews and the luxurious decorations of the sanctuary. And as they stepped outside, darkness was falling and a spotlight shone on a huge cross atop the steeple.

And the minister said, that cross alone cost us \$10,000. And the minister had a very satisfied smile. And the other preacher said, you got cheated.

Times were when Christians could get them for free. You know, Christians used to die on these pieces of wood too. As our Lord was crucified and many of the early martyrs, the Christians, were also nailed and killed on these crosses.

[24:51] Friends, we're not talking about some kind of cheap, well, expensive cross or, you know, not speaking about a piece of wood that people might bow down as we know some, bow down to crucifixes and worship them, which goes against the very word of God itself anyway.

But we're not glorifying the cross because the cross itself was a torture instrument, an instrument of death and killing. But we want to worship the one who was Christ and Him crucified.

When we think of His death and burial and resurrection, when we think of His nail-scarred hands, of His bruised and battered body as He was torn, as His back was shredded, as His life was led out of Him, as He gave up the ghost in agony for us, this is the one we love and care that He came and died for our sin, for yours and mine, so we could be saved and so we could be His witnesses and declare it to others too.

You know, there was an actor who portrayed Jesus in the Matthew video series, an actor, Bruce Marchionio, and he said, I believe every Christian should hang on a cross for at least 30 seconds. Their lives will never be the same. You know, just think of it, what it was like for our Saviour as He was hanging there. But most of all, more than the physical torment, was the very weight of our sin and mine, of that burden, of our guilt, of all the wrong things we've ever done and thought and acted out.

[26:26] His body bore our sin, it says. He bore our sin in His own body on the tree. Christ and Him crucified. It's not the cross itself that we adore, as such as, I know there's a song that talks about the old rugged cross and so on, but it's what He did there for us that matters.

You know, there's a story about an emperor of Abyssinia. He wished to modernise his country and in 1890 he ordered three electric chairs from New York, the state-of-the-art killing instruments of the day.

The electric chairs were ordered from New York and after they arrived he realised that they would not work without electricity and in those days Abyssinia had none.

Not one to waste things, Manalek, the king, the emperor, used one of the electric chairs as his throne. So he could make use of it.

But in a sense the Lord Jesus used the instrument of execution of the cross as his throne. Now his great act of devotion of love was his very death for us, wasn't it?

[27:39] His very dying for you and I was that greatest expression of love. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. When we think of Christ and Him crucified we think of His great love and how He is worthy to be enthroned and crowned as the king of our hearts.

Someone has said the cross is the ladder to heaven. It's not a ladder of good works as some of various religions and philosophies and pretend Christian beliefs have a ladder of good works. We've got to do so many good things, do so much good works, give so much or do so much and do and do and do and do and keep on doing in the hope, the vain hope that all of those good works will be a ladder high enough to reach heaven.

Friends, that's not Christianity. The ladder to heaven is Christ handing His hand down and extending it down and dying as coming down as man, as God revealed in human flesh, as God becoming man and becoming our substitute and saviour.

God reaching down from heaven to reach us when we could just only reach so far. If the Bible says that the Lord's arm, God's hand is not shortened that it cannot save.

[28:55] Now God's hand can reach the very lowest of the low, the very gutter most, the very furthest, the very vilest, the very worst.

His hand is not shortened that it cannot save. And so there's not anyone out of reach of His hand. He's just waiting for us to look heavenward, to see our state, to see our need, to see our great lack without Him.

And you need Him. You need Christ. You need Christ and Him crucified. Without Him, you're lost, eternally lost. And this is the great bridge. The cross is the bridge, the most important bridge.

You know, we're accustomed to bridges so much that we no longer marvel at them and yet every bridge in some ways is quite a marvel of engineering. And they've been around a long time. The world's first bridge was made in Egypt in 2650 BC across the Nile River.

But the world's most important bridge was the bridge that Christ built in AD 30 at Golgotha where the Lord Jesus on the cross, He bridged the gap, the gulf, the chasm between our sin, between our sinfulness and God's holiness.

[30:09] He bridged the gap so that we can have everlasting life. He bridged that chasm, that gulf of our very sin, between sinful man and sinless God.

And His love was given so freely, so fully. Another story just to close. There's a story of a little boy whose sister needed a blood transfusion.

The doctor had explained that she had the same disease the boy had recovered from two years earlier. Her only chance for recovery was a transfusion from someone who had previously conquered the disease.

And since the two children had the same rare blood type, the boy was the ideal donor. The doctor asked the boy, would you give your blood to Mary? John hesitated.

His lower lip started to tremble. Then he smiled and said, sure, for my sister. And soon the two children were wheeled into the same room in the hospital, Mary pale and thin, Johnny robust and healthy.

[31:08] Neither spoke, but when they met, Johnny grinned. And as the nurse inserted the needle into his arm, Johnny's smile faded. He watched the blood flow through the tube. And with the ordeal almost over, his voice slightly shaky, broke the signs, doctor, when do I die?

Only then did the doctor realise that why Johnny had hesitated, why his lip had trembled when he'd agreed to donate his blood, he had thought that giving his blood to his sister meant giving up his life.

And in that brief moment, he had made his great decision. Johnny fortunately didn't have to die for his sister Mary. Each of us, however, has a condition more serious, more serious than Mary's.

It required the Lord Jesus to give his blood, not just his blood, but his life, and to be that bridge, to be that one, that he had you, as it has been said, while on the cross, he had you on his mind and in his heart.

The Lord Jesus, friends, today, let's be like Paul, for I determined, I committed, I'm committed today, I determined not to know anything among you.

[32:19] This is my one subject, this is my one message, this is my one vital message that I must declare and deliver to whoever I can.

I determined, I committed not to know anything among you, so Jesus Christ and him crucified. Christ crucified, he is the one that we need to preach to declare, to deliver that truth of salvation that only he can impart.