

Obsessed with Christ

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Date: 04 July 2021

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[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's help and blessing, let us turn back to the portion of scripture that we read together, the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 1, and we'll read at verse 23.

But we preach Christ crucified unto the Jews as dumb and block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

The most important of all questions is how we as lost and guilty sinners may stand before a just and a holy God.

The writer of this letter was a man transformed by his contact with the risen Christ on the Damascus road.

From then on, this man, whose name was Paul, was Christ's man. Whereas before he had been a blasphemer and a persecutor, now he had become, as he liked to express himself as a slave of Christ, or a slave for Christ.

[1 : 25] Immediately upon his conversion, he came to perceive the centrality of the cross, or of the crucified Christ. He saw that all that is essential in the work of Christ is summed up in his death on the cross.

He understood that the cross was and is the essence of the wisdom and of the power of God. That it is the essence of salvation, and that it is the essence of the preaching of the gospel.

Paul was aflame with the conviction that Jesus crucified, but now exalted to God's right hand, was God's appointed Messiah for the salvation of mankind, both Jew and Gentile.

All that Paul was and all that Paul hoped for centred on the action of God in the cross of a crucified Christ.

Paul saw that in a crucified Christ, God had brought out salvation for mankind. A salvation that was adequate to deal with every aspect of man's need.

[2 : 42] It was in a crucified Christ that Paul saw as he saw nowhere else, God's will to save man. And Paul sums up his message to us in the words of our text.

We preach Christ crucified. When he came to Corinth, he came with a determination not only not to preach anything else, but Christ crucified.

He came with a determination not only not to preach anything among them, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The crucified Christ was primary in his preaching.

This to Paul was a fact of great significance, not simply of historical curiosity. Paul here, by the very tense that he uses, tells us that not only that Christ was once crucified, but that he continues in his character as the crucified one.

He is the one crucified on the cross of Golgotha, and he is the lamb in the midst of the throne. John's designation of Jesus as the lamb, which he applies to him 28 times in the book of Revelation, has little to do with the meekness of his character, but rather to the fact that he has been slain as a sacrificial victim to redeem his people.

[4 : 20] It is a symbolic imagery for us of the crucified Christ, the slain lamb in the midst of the throne.

So that the Christ that was once crucified on a cross continues in his character as a crucified one. Here Paul says, we preach.

Now I would like to focus for a moment on these words. We preach. Obviously, he is referring to himself and others as preachers.

Paul, in writing his letter to Rome, quotes Isaiah, who says, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things.

Jesus delegated the power of his own commission from the Father to his faithful laborers when he said to his disciples after his resurrection, As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

[5 : 28] The disciples were consecrated or set apart to the great work of laying the foundation and raising the superstructure of Christ's church.

Well, what about the preaching? By the foolishness of preaching, as it appears to worldly wisdom, The people of God are called and come to Jesus and are made wise into salvation.

That which may leave us amazed is that the life which is conveyed to the people of God by the word of life in the hands of poor men is by the same means preserved and advanced.

So important is the preaching of the gospel that Paul speaks of it as the primary activity of his mission, Even to the exclusion of the sacraments.

In verse 17, he says, For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel. Paul puts the preaching of the gospel before the sacraments of baptism, As also through of the Lord's Supper.

[6 : 44] We see something of his love for the gospel in the string of references that he makes to it in the opening chapter of his letter to the Philippians, Which we studied not so long ago.

And there we saw how Paul stresses his own activity of preaching the message, And welcomes the preaching of others, even of his enemies. If so be, he says, that the gospel is made more widely known.

It is because of the gospel that it is of crucial importance that he can cry out later on in this very letter itself, Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.

We should understand that along with the kind of language that we find in his letter to the Galatians in chapter 1, Where he says, Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, Let him be accursed.

Why would Paul use such language? It is the expression of a deeply held conviction that the gospel he preaches is divine in origin and divine in content.

[8 : 11] The deep conviction must be held by all who is involved in the preaching of the gospel. That it is divine in origin and content.

We must not lose sight of the fact that this Christian ministry originated from the triune God. God hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

Yet it was also the gift of his exalted son, promised by him to the church before his departure from the earth. And at the same time, it is also the ministration of the Spirit.

In the work of the Christian ministry, the triune God, each person of the Godhead is distinctly glorified. The Christian ministry has an equal concern and dependence upon each person of the Godhead and owes equal honour and service to each in the preaching of the gospel.

Paul, unable to express this overwhelming sense of responsibility, says, Who is sufficient for these things? Who is sufficient to open the wisdom of God in a mystery?

[9 : 32] To make known that which passes knowledge? To bear the fearful weight of the care of souls? Who is sufficient for these things?

Who can sustain such a vast work? The Lord himself has provided Paul and us with the answer to those questions by his promise, My grace is sufficient for thee.

A person will not be long in the work of the Christian ministry until he realises that our sufficiency is of God. Otherwise, who would enter into such a service?

And if entered, who could continue in it? Our experience proves to us that our sufficiency is of God.

Paul wrote to the Galatians and told them that he had said forth before their eyes, Jesus Christ as crucified. And the picture he draws there is that he gives us of a person who draws or paints on a canvas.

[10 : 51] He has said Jesus Christ as crucified so visually before them that he had turned their ears into eyes and had made them see what he was preaching to them.

It was as if they were present at the crucifixion of Christ himself. And so we must preach Christ crucified not as a historical event of the past, but we must preach Christ crucified as a present reality.

The cross is not something of historical past. It is something of the present. And therefore we must preach Christ crucified not as a historical event of the past, but as a present reality.

The cross of Golgotha is as significant to me and you today as it was when that actual event took place back in history.

We must bring the present reality. We must bring the event out of the past into the present. Overcome the time barrier and make past events present realities in such a way that people have to respond to them.

[12 : 11] We must remember that the power and benefits of Christ crucified are permanent, that a crucified Christ will never cease to be God's power for salvation.

Paul did not set forth Christ crucified before their eyes so that they might simply stare at it. His purpose was to persuade them to come and to put their trust in him as their crucified Christ and as their crucified saviour.

In our preaching of Christ crucified, we are not to begin, as it were, out on the outskirts of the gospel and try to reason it out step by step till we come to Christ.

But in our preaching we are not to keep the sinner in the dark. There is no need for a long ceremonial approach from a distance to see Christ.

But let the great object be placed in the immediate view of the sinner. Because the sinner is dying. He is in instant urgent need of the only cure that there is.

[13 : 33] And we have the answer. So let us not keep it back from the sinner. Let us bring Christ crucified. Let us bring the cross of Golgotha immediately before the sinner.

The response to the message. Remember the prophet's complaint. Who hath believed our report? And that has applied to every success ministry in the church.

Oh, who hath believed our report? It was echoed in reference even to the ministry of Jesus Christ, who spoke as never man spoke.

He retained a listening multitude hanging upon every word that came from his lips, wondering at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth.

And in the gospel of John, it is recorded for us. Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees. And they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?

[14 : 42] Because they had been commissioned to bring Christ to them. And they said, Why have ye not brought him? And the officers answered, Never man speak like this man.

And then answered them, The Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Here is a man who preached like no other man ever preached. And yet they did not believe.

And such a complaint is there before us. Who hath believed our report? And that has been the expression of the experience of faithful labourers in the Lord's harvest.

Who hath believed our report? But it is not only to Christian leaders of the past at which we must look, but to scripture itself.

For how can we walk through the pages of the Bible without realising that its whole theme is a plan of redemption? Consequently, we stop and look first at one and then at another of the portraits that we have throughout the Bible of the cross.

[15 : 58] The sketch is drawn by the Old Testament writers who anticipated the cross centuries before it became a reality.

Remember how Isaiah could write of the suffering servant 700 years before it became a reality. David, writing of Psalm 22 and numerous others, speaks of the reality of the cross.

They spoke in anticipation of the cross. Then we come to the New Testament. And we have the eyewitnesses of the Gospels. When the cross became an experience.

So from the promise of the Garden of Eden to Golgotha. From the question of Isaac, where is the lamb for the burnt offering? To the answer provided by John the Baptist at the baptism of Christ.

Behold the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Then we have Paul and other apostles who reflect and explain the cross for us and who apply that to us.

[17 : 07] We are told here that the sum of Paul's preaching was the message of the cross or a crucified Christ. Surprising that Paul would make a crucified Christ the focus of his preaching.

When we recall the horror with which crucifixion was regarded in the ancient world. The Romans regarded crucifixion with such horror that Roman citizens were exempt from crucifixion.

Except in extreme cases of treason. The Jews also regarded crucifixion with horror. Though for a different reason. To anyone who was hung whether on a tree or a cross.

Because the Jews made no distinction between hanging and crucifixion. They applied to these people the curse of Deuteronomy chapter 21. So to them anyone who is hung on a tree or cross is under God's curse.

The Jews could not bring themselves to believe that God's Messiah would die under the curse by hanging on a cross. For their expectation was that the Messiah would be like a military commander.

[18 : 22] Evict the Roman armies and give back to them their freedom. Whoever had heard of a crucified Christ. For it spoke of weakness.

It didn't speak of power. It spoke of defeat. And not of victory. It spoke of humiliation. And not conquest. So we can understand why Paul's message of a crucified Christ was for many who heard it foolishness.

It was absolutely stupid. It was even regarded as madness. To put one's hope on a man who had been condemned as a criminal.

And subjected to the most humiliating form of execution. It was absolute foolishness. Yet this was central to his preaching.

Despite the fact that at Corinth both Jews and Greeks rejected the fact that God had done anything of a saving significance in the cross of Christ.

[19 : 24] Yet it continued to be central to the preaching of the apostle Paul. The truth was that the reality of the cross was entirely different from the way that they saw it.

The cross showed forth the power and the wisdom of God. What is the power of the message of a cross of a crucified Christ?

Where is the power? Where is the power? Where is the wisdom regarding the cross of a crucified Christ? Well, it is the power to deal with sin.

And it is the power to restore a people to right relationship with God. It is the power to reconcile us to God.

It is the power so that we can have peace with God. It is the power so that we can be saved from hell. It is the power to bring us into a living relationship with God.

[20 : 34] A crucified Christ has the power to effect atonement and to transform a sinner.

John Stott reminds us of the power of the cross of a crucified Christ. Although we may not agree with John Stott on every detail and especially his opinion on hell.

Nevertheless, he did write some great writings. And I am going to quote him just now. He said, There is wonderful power in the cross of Christ.

It has power to wake the dumbest conscience and melt the hardest heart. To cleanse the unclean. To reconcile him who is far off and restore him.

To redeem the prisoner from his bondage. And lift the poor from the dunghill. To break down the barriers which divide people from one another.

[21 : 38] To transform our wayward characters into the image of Christ. And finally, make us to stand in white robes before God.

I end the quote. That the power of all that I've said there and quoted belongs to the preaching of a crucified Christ.

Now how did Paul come to his knowledge? To this kind of knowledge?

Well at the beginning we said that immediately upon his conversion. He came to perceive the centrality of the cross of a crucified Christ.

He saw that all that is essential in the work of Christ is summed up in his death on the cross. He understood that the cross was and is the essence of the wisdom and the power of God.

[22 : 44] That it is the essence of salvation. That it is the essence of the preaching of the gospel. How? Well the very fact of his encounter with a risen Christ.

Was the evidence that Paul gave. To understand the power of a crucified Christ. Here he was face to face.

With a Christ that was condemned. With a Christ that was cursed. The Christ that died. And was buried. And here he was face to face with him.

And the evidence was there set before him. That the Christ who had died and was buried. Is now alive. Here is the one who was not consumed by death.

But the one who rose from the dead. His resurrection declares that. God had accepted his sacrificial sacrifice.

[23 : 49] As a sufficient answer to the curse. And that he had been released. He was raised from the dead. He had victory over death. And the grave.

And he had that victory because. God was satisfied. With his. Death on the cross. Paul concludes.

The crucified Christ. Redeems us. From the curse of the law. Because he became. A curse. For us.

There. You know. A crucified Christ. Speaks to us. Of substitution. There on the cross. He stood. For us.

There he on the cross. He stood for me. And you. If we put our trust. In him. On the cross. He became.

[24 : 47] Our substitute. The crucified Christ. Became. Our substitute. There on the cross. The crucified Christ. Was making access.

For me. And you. Again. Into. The fellowship. And communion with God. There on the cross. Of Golgotha. He was restoring. Restoring. To me. And you.

If we put. Our trust. In him. The communion. And fellowship. That was broken. By sin. The communion. And fellowship. With God. That was broken.

By sin. The curse. That was owed to us. Or the curse. That we deserved. Was transferred.

To him. The punishments. That my sin. And your sins. Deserved. Was transferred. To him. My friend. Look. Today. To the cross.

[25 : 42] Of Golgotha. Don't look at it. As something. Of historical past. But look of it. As the present reality. Look upon it. Today.

The cross. Of Golgotha. What do we see there? We see there. Our substitution. We see there. One. Who took our curse.

Upon himself. The curse. That we deserve. The wrath of God. That our sins deserve. Placed. On. Him. Transferred.

To him. He assumed it. All. He took it. Upon. Himself. So that I and you.

Might. Escape it. Is there. A more wonderful message. In the world today. Than the message. Of a crucified Christ.

[26 : 38] Is there a more wonderful message. In the world today. Than the message. Of the cross. Of Golgotha. Where the son of God. The darling of heaven.

Took. What my sins. And your sins. Deserved. Upon himself. So that I. And you. Could escape.

What our sins. Deserved. Is there. A more wonderful message. Than that. Christ.

Through a crucified. Christ. We receive. All the blessings. Of salvation. Paul writing. To the Galatians.

Says. That he glories. In the cross. Of our Lord. Jesus. Christ. There is no. Exact. Equivalent.

[27 : 40] In the English. Language. To the word. That Paul uses. Here. When he says. That he glories. In the cross. Of our Lord. Jesus Christ. What it means. Really is.

That he boasts. In it. It is his boasts. The cross. Of a crucified. Christ. It is his glory. He glories. In it.

He trusts. In it. His trust. Is in the cross. Of a crucified. Christ. He rejoices. In the cross.

Of a crucified. Christ. He lives. For the cross. Of a crucified. Christ. And I ask you today. Is that true. Of yourself.

Do you boast. In the cross. Of a crucified. Christ. Do you glory. In the cross. Do you trust. In the cross. Of a crucified. Christ. Do you rejoice.

[28 : 35] In it. And do you live. For the cross. Of a crucified. Christ. Paul's. Obsession. Was. With Christ.

And. His cross. He was. Totally. Absolutely. Taken up. With Christ. And his cross. Am I.
And you. Absolutely. Taken up. With Christ. And his cross. Are we. Obsessed. With Christ. And.

His cross. As others. Look upon me. And look upon you. Are they saying to themselves. That is a man. That is a woman. That is a boy. That is a girl.

Who is obsessed. With. Christ. And. The cross. Well. That it would be so.

[29 : 31] Regarding me. And you. That our light. Would shine forth. The light. That has been implanted. In us. By the Holy Spirit.

And the day. That we trusted. In Christ. That it would shine forth. And that others. Would say. He or she. Is obsessed. With Christ.

And. The cross. That which the average. Roman citizen. Regarded. As an object. Of shame.

Disgrace. And even. Disgust. Was for Paul. His pride. His boasting. And his glory.

Why? Because Paul. Saw the cross. As the way. Of acceptance. With God. In the only way. There are not many ways.

[30 : 28] To God. There is only one way. To God. And that is. Christ. And Tim. Crucified. And let us.

Always. Hold that. Before our people. Whoever we come into contact with. Let us always. Remind them. Let them know. By our own life.

By our own walk in life. By our own conversation. Let them know. That there is only one way. To God. There is only one way. Of acceptance.

There is only one way. Of salvation. And that is. Through a crucified Christ. Through Christ. And. The cross. To preach.

Christ crucified. Embraces. All that is. Honorable. To God. God. God is honoured. By the preaching. Of the cross. God is honoured.

[31 : 24] When you. Manifest. Or show forth. A crucified Christ. In your life. God is honoured. And this is the only thing. That is profitable. To man.

Because. It proclaims. All the delightful ways. Of divine faithfulness. And love. And all that concerns. Our character. Our professions.

Our privileges. Our obligations. Our hopes. And prospects. For eternity. Is all. Together. In Christ. And him. Crucified.

The simplicity. Of the message. Our message. Is sufficiently simple. It is the way.

By which. One man. Can be. Recovered. It is only. By a crucified. Christ.

[32 : 21] It is important. That the sinner's way. To Christ. Be like those. To. Who were told. In the Old Testament. To run. To the cities. Of refuge. And we are told. They that. The way.

Had to be made. Plain. No. Nothing. That would hinder them. Nothing. That would make them stumble. Oh. Let me not. And let you not. Put a hindrance.

Before anyone. Coming to Christ. Or put a stumbling block. Before anyone. Coming. To the Lord. Jesus Christ. For salvation. Let us make the way. Plain.

Let us take anything. That would hinder. Or stumble away. And make the way. Plain. For the people. To come. To Christ. To us. The refuge.

For sinners. We know that. No sermon. Can. Give the whole gospel.

[33 : 15] In detail. But we know. That the simple message. Of the gospel. Is this. Repent. And be converted. Believe.

And be saved. Look. And live. And whosoever will. Let him come. Can it yet be more simple than that?

Repent. And be converted. Believe. And be saved. Look. And live. And whosoever will. Let him. Come. We know.

That no sermon. As we said. Can give the whole gospel. In detail. Yet our sermons. Should. Give the crucified Christ. As a. Part of. A connected. Whole.

And should convey. Its distinct relation. To the whole system. Of. Our preaching. For instance. When we preach. Of the perfections. Of God. It should be. With a view.

[34 : 13] Of their harmony. In the work. Of a crucified. Christ. When we preach. The purposes. Of God. It should be.

Showing. Their connection. With. The. Work. Of a crucified. Christ. When we preach. Of the glories. Of heaven. It should be. Without reference.

To Christ. As the way there. When we preach. Of the power. Of defilement. Of the power. Of sin. And of guilt. And the condemnation. Of sin. Which we must preach.

We must tell the sinner. That he's a sinner. We must tell the sinner. That he's bound to hell. But. We must do so. With the doctrine. Of salvation. Through Jesus Christ.

It's no use for me. To tell you. Today. That you're a sinner. Unless I'm going to tell you. How you can be saved. From your sin. So. While I tell you. That you're a sinner. Bound for hell. I also tell you.

[35 : 09] Today. That there is salvation. And refuge. In a crucified Christ. He has to be centred. To every other doctrine. That we preach.

And as we find here. In the chapter. There are some that plant. Others that water. Some lay the foundation. Others build upon it. Yet all have their testimony. And acceptance.

In the Lord's own time. And we. The preaching of a crucified Christ. Never returns unto God void. When delivered in the simplicity of faith.

Nor will it. Under the most unpromising circumstances. Fall. Of accomplishing the unchangeable purpose. Of God. God. We are ready to believe.

And to complain. That none labour so unfruitful as ourselves. As I come to the end of my ministry.

[36 : 11] Among you as a people. My great complaint today is. How unfruitful. My ministry has been. I feel myself.

That I have been a failure. Among you. However. I know. That the God. Who commissioned me. To preach the gospel.

To you. Is the God. Who has that unchangeable purpose. And who will fulfill. His purpose. Men of the world.

Expect the return. In some measure. In proportion. To their labour. But with the preaching of the gospel. Sometimes. His labour. Is attended.

With a very. Scish. Measure. Of effect. At the same time. We are compelled.

[37 : 11] To realise. The awful sight. Of immortal souls. Perishing. Under. Our very eyes. Dead.

To the voice. Of the gospel. Dead. To the life. And love. And madly. Listening. To the voice. That plunges. So many.

Into. A lost. Eternity. We are compelled. To preach. The gospel.

You know. In the gospel. We read these words. In one of the gospels. Compel them. To come. And the word. Compelled there is. Lovingly. Persuade them.

To come. Well. Maybe I have fallen short on that. But my desire was. To lovingly. Persuade you. To come.

[38 : 06] To Christ. That was my earnest. Desire for 22 years. Among you. To lovingly. Persuade you. My friends. To come. To Christ. To have Christ.

As your salvation. As your hope. Is it not. Is it not.

Is it not sufficient. Encouragement. To cast. Our bread. Upon the waters. That we shall find it. After many days. I. Very often. Take encouragement.

In these words. Where we see. Read. In the morning. Sow thy seed. And in the evening. Withhold not thine hand. For thou knowest not. Whether shall prosper. Either this.

Or that. Or whether shall be both. Alike. Made good. One will plant. Another.

[39 : 00] Will water. But it is God. That giveth. The increase. Christ crucified. Is God's grand ordinance.

Christ. No soul. Therefore. Can be won to him. Except by setting forth. His name. And his work. And his glory. And it wasn't for.

Believing that. I would have given up. The ministry long ago. But I believe. I totally. And absolutely.

Believe. That no soul. Can be won to Christ. Except by setting forth. His name. And his word. And his glory. And therefore. I continue. To preach. Among you.

Because. The cross of Golgotha. Has arrested. The attention. Of the most ignorant. In one of the gospels. We read there. At the cross itself. At Golgotha.

[40 : 00] Now. When the centurion. And the centurion. Was a hard man. He was a brutal man. He gloried. In crucifixions. He gloried. In seeing the sufferings.

Of others. He was a brutal man. But what do we read. Now when the centurion. And they that were with him. The soldiers. Watching Jesus. Saw the earthquake.

And those things. That were done. They feared greatly. Saying. Truly. This was. The son. Of God. And my dear friend.

It has. Wart. Irresistibly. Upon the most. Dubon. Of people. Of which the writer. To this letter. Is a great example. The apostle Paul.

Let us follow. The example of Paul. Who was determined. To know nothing. Among the people. But Christ. Crucified. Let that be. True of me. And you. Let his name.

[40 : 54] And his grace. His spirit. And his love. Triumph. In the midst. Of all our sermons. Of all our witness. Let our great end. Be to glorify him.

In the heart. To render him. Lovely. And precious. In the eyes. Of the people. To lead them. To him. As a sanctuary. To protect them.

As a propitiation. To reconcile them. As a treasure. To enrich them. As a physician. To heal them. As an advocate. To present them.

And their services. To God. As wisdom. To counsel them. As righteousness. To justify them. As sanctification. To renew them.

And as redemption. To save them. Let Christ. Be the diamond. That shines. In the bosom. Of all our sermons. And of all our witness.

[41 : 50] In the world. Let us be obsessed. With Christ. With a crucified. Christ. And dear friend.

Let us today. On this day. Understand. The tremendous. How tremendous. The guilt. Of rejecting the message.

Of a crucified Christ. He that heareth you. Heareth me. Says Christ. Christ. And he that despiseth you.

Despiseth me. And he that despiseth me. Despiseth him. That sent me. Oh how solemn.
The tremendous. How tremendous. The guilt. Of rejecting. And despising. The message.
Of a crucified Christ. Well.

[42 : 48] May the preaching. Of a crucified Christ. Prosper. And may it flourish. In North. Tolstair. In the years. To come. And may.

The. May the crucified. Christ. Be connected. With the experience. Of you all. And enabling you all. To say like Paul. I have been crucified.

With Christ. And I no longer live. But Christ. Lives. In me. And as we look. As you look.

To the future. As you come. Into a new era. And as you come. To a new. Experience. And in God's time.

As another man. Is set over you. As a pastor. May this message. Of a crucified Christ. Be central. To everything. In the message.

[43 : 44] And in your life. And in the life. Of the congregation. And in the life. Of this. Community. Of North. Tolstair. And may there be many. Who will come.

To faith in Christ. Through the preaching. Of a crucified Christ. From this pulpit. In North. Tolstair. And from the lives.

Of Christian. Men and women. Boys and girls. In this village. And may our rejoicing. Be together. At the great day.

When I and you. Will meet again. And may our rejoicing. Be centred. On the preaching. Of a crucified Christ. From this.

Very. Place. May the Lord. Bless our doors. Let us pray. good boy. Goodbye. See ya.

[44 : 44] Bye bye. Bye. Bye.

Bye. Bye. Bye.