

I. Introduction

- A. Teacher was teaching the teen class about the importance of priorities
1. She pulled out a big jar and large rocks; she carefully filled the jar
 - a. After no more of the rocks would fit, she asked, *“Is the jar full?”*
 - b. *“Yes!”* She then pulled out pea gravel and poured it in around rocks
 - c. *“Is it full?”* They said *“Yes.”* So she then poured in some sand
 - d. *“Is it full now?”* *“Probably not.”* And she poured in some water
 2. She asked the class, *“What does our little exercise teach about life?”*
 - a. One student, *“Life can get filled up with a lot of different stuff?”*
 - b. Another suggested, *“You can fit more stuff into life if you try?”*
 3. Teacher said, *“Point is you always need to start with your big rocks”*
 - a. If you start with gravel or sand, there’s no room for the big rocks
 - b. Always start with your big rocks, the things that are important
- B. We come together each Sunday to focus together on our big rock
1. We live our lives in perpetual motion and in perpetual busyness
 - a. There are thousand different sirens singing a thousand songs
 - b. All of them competing for our time, attention, and interest
 - c. The gravel and sand of the urgent can crowd out the big rock
 2. Each Sunday we come back to the big rock, to the cross of Christ
 - a. It is the cross that saves us; there Jesus defeated sin and death
 - 1) It is the cross that unities us; it tears down the dividing walls
 - 2) It is the cross that shapes us; we are crucified with Christ
 - b. We come to affirm that the cross is what matters (**1 Cor 15:3-5**)
 3. A couple of weeks ago, we started a series entitled “2020 Vision”
 - a. We’re using as an outline our church’s mission/vision statement
 - b. We started with living as God’s family; today is “under the cross”
 - 1) What does it mean to live as a community under the cross?
 - 2) How would things change if we really see cross as big rock?

II. The Cross and Corinth

A. Nightline did a piece on the Freedom Fellowship Church in VA Beach

1. Why? They had a church fight. Literally. Every week. In a cage!
 - a. They started a Mixed Martial Arts “Fight Club” at their church
 - b. Led by associate pastor, ex-MMA fighter (“*Pastor of Disaster*”)
 - 1) Guys literally get in a cage at church to beat one another silly
 - 2) They invite the community to come in and watch Fight Club
(I thought the first rule of Fight Club is that you don’t talk about Fight Club)
2. Jesus said that the mark of our discipleship is love (**John 13:34-35**)
 - a. I’m not sure being known as the Fight Club church is the same
 - b. Corinth was a church much better at Fight Club than at love
 - 1) They fought everything, even over their favorite preachers
 - 2) They fought over doctrine, money, social standing, worship
 - c. Paul writes **1 Cor** to deal with disunity; we start at the beginning

B. After a pleasant greeting, he gets right down to it (**1 Cor 1:10**, NLT)

1. “*Live in harmony*” or “*agree*” (NIV) literally is “*together words*”
 - a. It doesn’t mean we’re parrots; it means that we’re to be together
 - b. It’s OK to disagree on a lot of different things (*3 chaps on meats*)
 - c. Harmony is not singing same notes but singing off same page
2. Paul begins by highlighting their disunity over preachers (**1:11-12**)
 - a. Were divided over style-n-personality of Peter, Paul & Apollos
(Another service that I provide; no style or personality to fight over)
 - b. A friend left area to become education minister at large church
 - 1) Didn’t have a pulpit guy; three other ministers rotated sermon
 - 2) People started coming only in weeks their “guy” preached
 - c. **Moral:** If we’re not unified in Christ, we’ll fight over anything
3. Paul asks series of rhetorical questions at center of issue (**1:13**)
 - a. Is Christ divided? Who was crucified? Baptized in whose name?
 - b. He even says, “*I’m glad I didn’t baptize many of you personally*”
 - c. Be cool to be baptized by apostle? *One more thing to fight over!*

III. Robbing the Cross of Its Power

- A. The next verse is the payoff that is foundation of all that follows (**1:17**)
1. Let's be clear that Paul isn't downplaying the importance of baptism
 - a. He is downplaying the importance of who it is that baptizes you
 - b. He says too many things for us to think Paul didn't stress baptism
 2. What Paul is downplaying is focus on what we do to save ourselves
 - a. What was the problem with the Judaizers that Paul fought against?
 - 1) It wasn't stress on Jewish tradition; Paul was fine with all that
 - 2) It was insisting that tradition was necessary for salvation
 - b. The gospel is the only power of God to save those who believe
 - 1) To stress our traditions or systems robs the cross of its power
 - 2) Have to get millennium or music right. cross isn't enough!
 3. Don McLaughlin tells of baptizing someone at youth retreat
 - a. They had a horse trough set up in case anyone responded
 - 1) Someone objected to using the water trough as unbiblical—
 ("Bible says that BOTH Philip and eunuch went down into the water")
 - 2) For baptism to work, you have to do it exactly right
 - b. This makes the baptistery the power of salvation, not the cross
 - c. If I have to get everything right, the cross is robbed of its power
- B. Don't we have to obey? Yes, but even that's the cross (**Gal 2:20**)
1. We're never going to be perfect— beliefs, actions, discipleship
 - a. But we are crucified with Christ; his redeeming power saves us
 - b. And his sanctifying Spirit leads us on to live new lives in Him
 - 1) The power of that new life is in Christ, not in ourselves
 - 2) If we're saved because of what we do, cross is robbed of power
 2. Martin Luther one said, *"The cross that puts everything to the test."*
 - a. If we are God's people under a cross, then the cross must test us
 - b. Everything we do as a church or people must reflect the cross
 - 1) How does our worship, fellowship, ministry point to the cross?
 - 2) Do we live as a crucified people? Do we point others to cross?

IV. Conclusion

- A. The puts everything to the test; the cross puts us to the test—
1. The cross tests how we treat our brothers and sisters (**1 John 3:16**)
 - a. The verses that follow speak of meeting physical needs
 - b. But the cross control all of our actions toward each other
 - c. We are crucified in Christ, but we are crucified for one other
 2. The cross tests how we treat those outside our group (**Eph 2:15-16**)
 - a. We may focus on our little group, bur the cross tears down walls
 - b. We might not agree with everything church down street teaches
 - 1) But we'll stand at the cross with anyone who'll stand with us
 - 2) And we'll stand pointing together to the One who died for all
 3. It tests who we include in our work and worship (**Gal 3:27-28**)
 - a. God really is no respecter of person– all are equal at the cross
 - b. The cross puts to the test the differences we see in people
 - 1) We will seek to include rich, poor, black, white, male, female
 - 2) We'd be horrified if one was forbidden a place because of race
 - 3) It's time to be just as horrified if the distinction is gender
 4. It tests what we really see as our central message (**1 Cor 2:2**)
 - a. It is not rare that someone asks, “*What does your church teach?*”
 - b. Why can't it be enough to teach Christ and His cross... like Paul?
 - 1) It's on the building; soon we'll have it on our sign (*long story*)
 - 2) We're a church of Christ; let our message be Him and his cross
- B. One night, Arturo Toscanini led a performance of Beethoven's 9th
1. It was the perfect performance– every single musician was perfect
 - a. The audience was stunned and erupted in thunderous applause
 - b. Toscanini closed his eyes, turned his back, said to orchestra
Toscanini, he is nothing. All of you are nothing. Beethoven is everything!
 2. We are nothing. Jesus Christ is everything. He is our only hope
 - a. We are saved only if we continue to cling to the old rugged cross
 - b. We will be the church God wants us to be if we continue to cling