

The Death of Christ (2) Perplexing Cross Perspectives

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Luke 22:21-38

INTRO Hours before his death, in a room alone with his followers, Jesus is teaching hard. The disciples are questioning, disputing, over confident and over reacting. They seem quite far apart on basic life and faith perspectives such as evil, greatness, testing and opposition. Jesus uses these moments to teach us again about the basic and radical 'point of view' that is both illustrated in the cross and empowered by his death. Between his command to remember him and his time of agonizing prayer in the garden, Luke records 4 specific warnings from Jesus to his followers in 22:21-38.

The issues that challenged the confidence of Theophilus (1:3) which lead Luke to write his gospel were likely the same as the issues that challenge our confidence. How do you reconcile God's good control with the many evil things that take place? Why do the rewards seem to always go to the strong and proud? What makes any sense about the most faithful being the most subject to testing and trials? Why can't people be more open and receptive to Christ and his message? These are the very concerns that Jesus addresses in his farewell teaching time with his followers.

It is at the cross that confidence and certainty of God's love and grace are found. The Apostle Paul's testimony is that it is at the cross his faith is personally encouraged by the fact that Jesus 'loved me and gave himself for me (Gal.2:20).' When our focus strays from the cross and Jesus' death, we both lose confidence in Christ and place our confidence and affections in other ungodly things.

Read Luke 22:21-38

Questioning about betrayal	21-23
Disputing about greatness	24-30
Over-confident about testing	31-34
Unprepared for opposition	35-38

Note . . . the tone/atmosphere of challenge, almost conflict between the disciples concerns and Jesus viewpoint.
v.23, 24, 33, 38

Jesus teaches a 'view point' of life that is radically different than what we are used to or comfortable with. These challenging perspectives are basic to living a cross centered life. Let's learn carefully as we visit the upper room and listen as Jesus warns us about the impact of his death and the cross on our lives in these ways.

Perplexing Cross Perspectives

1. God providentially uses evil for your good. 21-23

Note the strong adversative 'but' that begins verse 21. Even while all the benefits of Jesus death as described in 19-20 are received, nevertheless there is still the tension around the table between present evil and the purposes of God.

Note the elements of what has been decreed, human responsibility of the betrayer and the certain judgment upon evil.

Cmp John 13:31-32

Heb.2:14

Col.2:14-15

2. Greatness is achieved by your serving others. 24-30

Note the initial dispute was about who among them would be the greatest. Jesus instructs and then illustrates the principle that greatness is measured by service.

Do not be like worldly authorities who promote self importance, pull rank and give themselves special titles. 25

Rather . . . 2 pictures of greatness . . . like the youngest and like the one who serves tables. 26-27

Faithful service results in exalted fellowship and acceptance in the kingdom. 28-30

Cmp. John 13:1-17 Phil.2:3-4ff

3. Testing of your faith is necessary. 31-34

Note Jesus raises this serious issue (repeats name twice) with Simon. The pronoun you in 31 is plural referring to the disciples as the object of satanic attacks. This request from Satan falls specifically on Peter as indicated in 32 and following.

Testing – Satan wants to pick you apart. 31 expose weakness and lack of faith

Intercession – Jesus prays that faith may not fail, complete renunciation, not return

Temporary failure – predicted in v34. Expected to strengthen others. Jn 21:15-17

Issue testing addresses – self confidence 33

John 15:2, 8

4. Opposition to your faith validates your faith. 35-38

Note Jesus initiates this issue as well. He refers them to their experience of past ministry assignments in L.9:3; 10:3-4.

Earlier ministry assignments were received well and provided support for disciples. 35

Now as those identified with Jesus who is numbered with transgressors, you will be treated differently. 36-37

Jesus calls them to readiness and alertness – they do not understand well. 38

John 15:18ff John 16:1-4

Take Aways

1. Identify the complexities of life you are trying to manage away from the cross.
2. Determine to stop self promotion by becoming a servant to those closest to you.
3. Come back from temporary failure to strengthen others with your renewed faith.
4. Receive opposition to your faith with joy as a fellow sufferer with Christ.

Application Questions

1. Read Luke 22:21-38 as a group. Share observations, impressions, key terms or questions with each other. Describe the mood or atmosphere of the interaction in the upper room.
2. Read Heb.2:14 and Col.2:14-15. What good did God accomplish by permitting Jesus to be betrayed and killed? Compare Genesis 50:19, 20. Share with the group from your experience how God has used evil for good in your life. What types of evil have kept you from embracing Christ with confident faith?
3. Describe the perspective on greatness the disciples had apparently adopted in 24-26. What are the characteristics of children and table waiters that Jesus wants us to understand and copy as servants? What parts of Phil.2:3-4 do you struggle with the most? Why?
4. Share a recent time when your faith was significantly tested. What did you learn from it? How could what you learned help others? How have the failures of others benefited your faith? What impresses you most about the scene recorded in John 21:15-17?
5. Why did Jesus warn us about opposition to our faith in John 16:1-4? Do you think that you are prepared to face opposition similar to what Jesus faced? Why or why not?
6. How do these perspectives and responses relate to the cross? How are they illustrated in Jesus death on the cross and empowered by him?
7. What do you want to do, use or remember from today's study?