



Picture is Georges Rouault, *Jesus Despised, Miserere Series, aquatint roulette, and drypoint over heliogravure, 1948.*

pastor's notes

// 31 May 2020 //

Last week, I shared a short article by the late Ravi Zacharias. This week I want to share another for us to reflect on.

There is a striking verse in the New Testament, in which the apostle Paul refers to the cross of Jesus Christ as foolishness to the Greek and a stumbling block to the Jew. One can readily understand why he would say that. After all, to the Greek mind, sophistication, philosophy, and learning were exalted pursuits. How could one crucified possibly spell knowledge?

To the Jewish mind, on the other hand, there was a cry and a longing to be free. In their history, they had been attacked by numerous powers and often humiliated by occupying forces. Whether it was the Assyrians or the Babylonians or the Romans, Jerusalem had been repeatedly plundered and its people left homeless. What would the Hebrew have wanted more than someone who could take up their cause and altogether repel the enemy? How could a Messiah who was crucified possibly be of any help?

To the Greek, the cross was foolishness. To the Jew, it was a stumbling block. What is it about the cross of Christ that so roundly defies everything that power relishes? Crucifixion was humiliating. It was so humiliating that the Romans who specialized in the art of torture assured their own citizenry that a Roman could never be crucified. But not only was it humiliating, it was excruciating. In fact, the very word “excruciating” comes from two Latin words: *ex cruciatus*, or out of the cross. Crucifixion was the defining word for pain.

“*... humiliation and agony.
This was the path Jesus chose
with which to reach out for you and for me.*”

Does that not give us pause in this season now before us? Think of it: humiliation and agony. This was the path Jesus chose with which to reach out for you and for

me. You see, this thing we call sin, but which we so tragically minimize, breaks the grandeur for which we were created. It brings indignity to our essence and pain to our existence. It separates us from God.

On the way to the cross two thousand years ago, Jesus took the ultimate indignity and the ultimate pain to bring us back to the dignity of a relationship with God and the healing of our souls. Will we remember that this was done for us and receive his gift?

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We will then discover that it is sin that is foolishness. Our greatest weakness is not an enemy from without but one from within. It is our own weak wills that cause us to stumble. But Jesus Christ frees us from the foolishness of sin and the weakness of our selves.

This is the very reason the apostle Paul went on to say that he preached Jesus Christ as one crucified, which was both the power of God and the wisdom of God. Come to the cross in these days given for our contemplation and find out his power and his wisdom.

The Late Ravi Zacharias is founder and chairman of the board of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries. A longer version of this essay appears in Ravi Zacharias's The Logic of God, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).