

Worship services are being cancelled until further notice because of Covid-19. However, we will have worship services through the Internet Zoom platform every Sunday at 10:30 AM in NB, NS and PEI. The Zoom link for this service will be sent to you by email. The telephone numbers for Zoom always remains the same but the Meeting ID and password number change every week.. Please let Mr. Vautour know if you would like to be added to the weekly email list. See the bottom of the bulletin for the contact information

If you have friends or acquaintances who want to join in the worship service, please do not hesitate to share with them the Zoom links to join with us in the worship our great God.

Please note that audio and video sermons are available at www.gcine Brunswick.org

Session 10 on the study of the book of Acts by Mr. Gary Deddo is now available on our local website under "Members Only". It is an excellent Bible Study. You are encouraged to take the time to study it.

Prayer Meeting: Our Prayer meeting will be this Thursday, January 28, 2021 @ 7:30 p.m.

To see specific prayer requests from the church, please go to www.gcine Brunswick.org – under "Members Only" and type the password. If you do not know the password, please contact Mr. Vautour.

- Let us pray for the Church to put first things first which is **to love God with all of our heart, with all of our soul and with all of our mind.** The secondary commandment and flowing from the first is **to love our neighbour as ourselves.**
- Let us pray according to God's will as per his instructions: **"1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1Ti 2:1-4 ESV)**
- Let us pray that God will strengthen his people with faith, perseverance, and love during this difficult pandemic period and that the good news of the Gospel will be spread widely.
- Please pray for the leadership of GCI as they seek to lead us in the will of God to help all of us participate in what Jesus is doing now.
- Please thank God for his church and pray for all of God's universal church as Jesus is directing it and causing it to grow in his grace by the Holy Spirit.
- Please pray that as our world distances itself from God that our love will not grow cold. This is an ever present danger as iniquity abounds, as we can read in Matthew 24. Let us pray for one another and encourage one another.
- Let us pray that God will give us to wisdom to know how he is working and how he wants us to humbly participate in his work of salvation. **"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Eph 2:10 ESV)**

There is an article, called "Meet Mr. Bill Hall", Canadian Director of GCI on the gci.org website. You can find it by typing [Meet Bill Hall – GCI Update](#) on search on at www.gci.org or by copying [Meet Bill Hall – GCI Update](#) in your web browser.

Offerings: (Paraphrase of some information given by Mr. Hall, GCI Canadian Director): Just a reminder that any donations we receive via either Credit Card or Canada Helps are subject to about a 3-3.5% fee which means any donations we receive for your congregation, are reduced by that amount. Direct Debit (Pre-authorized Payment) or E-Transfers have much lower transaction fees, that we do not back charge to the local congregation. (Cheques do not have a transaction fee). A person can send E-transfers to khorwood@gcicanada.ca if their bank uses INTERACT. In the subject or message line, write the name of your church and your member number. If your bank permits, you can also write your name and address. If you do not know your member number, please write to Mr. Vautour at the email address below. You can send your offering directly to the following address: **Grace Communion International- Canada, Suite 203A, 2121 Airport Dr., Saskatoon, SK 7SL 6W5**. If you prefer, you can also call **1-306-653-2705**. You can also donate via phone using a credit card, or via Canada Helps using **the donate button** on our website at <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/7735> . We will credit all donations received via Canada Helps to a member's local congregation, if we can identify where they attend."

THE MESSAGE OF JESUS: TO KNOW CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED from gci.org.

The death of Jesus on the cross was the single most important act in human history. Without his death, we would have no lasting hope of any kind. For the apostle Paul, like other writers of the New Testament, the cross of Christ represented salvation itself.

Paul rehearsed how he exuberantly preached Christ that is, the Messiah — on the cross. He wrote to the Corinthians, **"I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified"** (1 [Corinthians 2:2](#)).

Paul was excited about proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah hanging on a cross. The message of the cross of Christ was "the power of God and the wisdom of God" for him (1 [Corinthians 1:24](#)).

The persecutor transformed

Paul hadn't always viewed Jesus' death in this manner. Originally named Saul, he had once been antagonistic to Jesus' way. To be plain about it, Paul had been an insolent, self-righteous, religious bigot. Years later, in one of his letters to the church at Corinth, Paul would write, **"I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God"** (1 [Corinthians 15:9](#)).

In one of his last letters, Paul would remind Timothy, and himself, that he — Paul — had once been "a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man" (1 [Timothy 1:13](#)). Before his conversion, Paul had hated Christians with a consuming passion. He had imprisoned Christians and conspired to have them murdered ([Acts 8:3](#); [9:1-2](#)). Paul's self-proclaimed mission was to destroy the church of God ([Galatians 1:13](#)).

To Paul, Jesus Christ must have seemed a charlatan and a hoax. Why, he was that renegade Jew who had blasphemed God. Paul must have felt Jesus had gotten his just reward when he was crucified. Yet here were these people — these followers of Christ — making a myth out of a monster.

But Paul's hate-filled view of Christ was shattered quite suddenly. It happened on the way to Damascus. As he was traveling down the road, a tremendous light flashed around him, and he was blinded. Paul fell to the ground terrified. A powerful voice thundered out to him, **"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"** A frightened Saul asked, **"Who are you, Lord?"** The reply out of the turbulence, reminiscent of God appearing to Job from the storm, was: **"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting"** ([Acts 9:4-5](#)).

Paul had come into direct contact with the crucified and resurrected Jesus. Jesus caught Paul's attention on that road to Damascus. Then Jesus forever changed Paul's life and thinking. Paul was converted. The persecutor became a believer himself ([verses 17-18](#)). The impossible had happened.

Christ's disciples now instructed Paul from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament. Paul learned that the very Scriptures he had so zealously studied as a Pharisee predicted Jesus' saving work. He now understood that Jesus had been the Word of God made flesh. And, he had died on the cross for the sins of humanity. And for Paul's sins! Paul knew he had been forgiven of his sins, including his persecution of God's people. But he would never forget how much he needed the cross of Christ and all that it symbolized ([Romans 7:24-25](#)).

Toward the end of his life, Paul said of himself, **"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst"** (1 [Timothy 1:15](#)). Jesus now called on Paul to suffer for his name, even as Jesus had suffered for humanity ([Acts 9:16](#)).

The tables had been turned on Paul. He was called to teach the faith he once tried to destroy. Soon Paul was preaching throughout Damascus, proving that Jesus is the Christ (**verse 22**). Jesus, the Son of Man — Jesus crucified — Jesus resurrected — became the center of Paul's life and mission.

That's when his troubles began. In the past, Paul had filled in the names of Christians on a hit list. Now, Paul's onetime cohorts in persecution wrote his name on the list. They conspired to murder their former companion (**verse 23**).

Sharing his sufferings

For Paul, it was the beginning of a lifetime of suffering on behalf of the crucified and resurrected Jesus. But Paul, like the other apostles, rejoiced **“because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name”** ([Acts 5:41](#); see also [Romans 5:3](#)).

Paul saw profound meaning in his own sufferings, which were many ([2 Corinthians 6:4-5](#); [11:23-28](#)). His own trials connected him to Jesus who had suffered on the cross and who had been resurrected. **“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings,”** Paul wrote, **“becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead”** ([Philippians 3:10-11](#)).

In one letter, Paul described in three different ways the link between the sufferings Christians undergo and Christ's cross:

“Just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows” ([2 Corinthians 1:5](#)).

“We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body” ([2 Corinthians 4:10](#)).

“We who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body” (verse 11).

The suffering of Jesus on the cross is played out in the lives of all God's people. Paul wrote to Christians, **“It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him”** ([Philippians 1:29](#)).

Shame of the cross

It was an ironic message. Here was the gospel — the good news of eternal life and spiritual glory — based on suffering and shame. Consider how a gospel of Jesus as the Suffering Servant who leads his suffering people might have come across to others. Put yourself in the apostles' day and imagine yourself teaching this peculiar message.

There was no New Testament. Christianity had not yet swept around the world. The word Christian did not yet have a respectable ring to it. Imagine Paul, Peter or John claiming that a Jew — a crucified felon — living in an obscure part of the Roman Empire was actually God in the flesh. “Surely, you jest, must have been the retort of most people. In the Roman Empire, crucifixion was originally the punishment of slaves. But later, foreigners and “robbers” — that is, bandits — were also executed by crucifixion. We remember that two “robbers” were crucified with Christ, one on each side ([Matthew 27:38](#)).

Imagine Paul preaching “Christ crucified” to an audience in the Greek-speaking Roman world. The listeners would have understood that this Christ had suffered a death usually reserved for rebellious slaves, political rebels or criminals.

A dead criminal?

A common theme in the early anti-Christian thought was that followers of Jesus worshiped “a criminal and his cross.” This was an oft-stated objection to the claim that Jesus was the Son of God. Roman historians and literary figures contemporary with the beginning of the Christian era, such as Tacitus, Suetonius and Pliny the Younger, were not impressed with this new religion. They laughed away the Christian faith as a belief in a “dead God.”

An early Christian, Justin Martyr (A.D. 110-165), recognized the absurdity. He replied to critics on the “dead God” issue in his *First Apology*, Justin Martyr wrote, *“They say that our madness consists in the fact that we put a crucified man in second place after the unchangeable and eternal God, the Creator of the world.”*

Jews, too, found the message of the cross offensive. Nailing a human being to a cross for execution had something in common with capital punishment as described in the Hebrew Scriptures. The law of Moses had said that a man guilty of a capital offense was to be put to death and his body was to be hung on a tree. But the body was not to be left there overnight **“because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse”** ([Deuteronomy 21:23](#)).

Given his background as a Pharisee, Paul would have been painfully aware that being crucified was like being hung on a tree after stoning, the Jewish mode of capital punishment. He knew that Jews would see the similarity between a public crucifixion of a living criminal and a dead one being hung on a tree.

The cross, therefore, was a symbol of humiliation. To the Greeks and Romans, crucifixion was a shameful mode of execution used for slaves and criminals. To the Jews it was a sign of being under a curse from God.

Redeemed from the curse

But Paul turned the shame of the cross on its head. He pointed out that Jesus Christ took the curse we incurred from breaking God's spiritual law and placed it on his own head. We had been the slaves — to sin. But Jesus freed us by becoming a crucified slave in our place.

Jesus, thus, transformed the curse. He made the crucifixion a vehicle for freeing all humanity from the grasp of sin and death. Paul wrote, "**Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us**" ([Galatians 3:13](#)).

Paul saw Jesus as one who endured death on the cross humbly, obediently and voluntarily ([Philippians 2:5-8](#)). God in the flesh had taken on the nature or form of a human — a servant — to accomplish his mission (**verse 7**).

As Christians, we should not hide from the shameful nature of Christ's death. We instead should wonder at the mystery of it all. Why would God, the Creator and Sustainer of all, empty himself of divine power, live as a human and die the shameful death of a slave?

Yes, why would God care? Simply, because he loves us. Paul wrote, "**God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us**" ([Romans 5:8](#)).

The cross and you

Jesus' shameful death should inspire us to ever-greater love and Christian works. As the author of the book of Hebrews told Christians of his day: "**Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God**" ([Hebrews 12:2](#)).

What about those who have not yet accepted the cross of Christ as an atonement? The truth of the matter is that without Jesus and the cross, we remain sinners — cut off from God's grace. We need the forgiveness — the reconciliation — the new life in Christ — that the cross makes possible. God is willing to apply the cross to us, and make us one with him upon our repentance. Can we be convicted? Those who heard Peter preach Christ crucified were convicted?

Peter's sermon made it evident to them that they needed Jesus' sacrifice. They then asked, "**What shall we do?**" ([Acts 2:37](#)). The answer from Peter was: "**Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**" (**verse 38**). That's the challenge to us and to all people. Will we rise to it?



Randy Bloom
GCI Elder

LISTEN

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ([John 10:27-29](#))

We live in a culture of hyper-communication. We are bombarded incessantly with verbiage (written and spoken). There are "news" channels, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram – and much more. Everyone is an expert. Everyone knows what is right. Those who get or take the most "air time" (speaking the loudest, the most frequently, or most "cleverly") capture the minds and hearts of multitudes. And what is the result of this cacophony of voices? Greater confusion, unrest, and

disunity. Anything but a sense of hope, security, and peace – all of which are promised by Jesus, in whatever circumstance we find ourselves.

In this and the previous passage, Jesus clearly expresses his love for us. He shares his life, and all it entails, with us.

Peace, security, and stability are ours in him. But we need to listen to him. He needs to be the one we pay the most attention to. His is the voice we need to seek. His is the voice we need to believe. His is the voice we can trust to know the truth, which begins with knowing him, who is the eternal embodiment of truth.

Important questions we must ask ourselves, especially at a time when so many voices are calling, no, shouting, out to us, are: "Whose voice am I listening to? Whose voice am I seeking out? Whose voice am I relying on?" The answer to these questions can determine whether we will experience peace, safety, and even joy as we navigate life's challenges.

Dear Lord, help us hear your voice. Help us yearn for it; keep our ears attuned to it and follow it with faith, hope and courage, wherever it leads us. For we know we can trust you to be with us at all times and in all things. Amen.

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For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace, and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. Contact Information: Pastor's contact information: email—evautour47@outlook.com