

2/16/12

**The Mystery of Preaching**  
**1Cor. 2:1-16**

Many are amazed at the preaching of the gospel, in that as far as they are concerned, it is the preaching of foolishness and a waste of time.

\* Yet they can not deny the life-changing affects on the lives of the people who have believed the good news of the gospel through repentance!

Then there are those in every generation, who receive the gospel and are transformed through the gospel, but afterwards they attempt to alter the gospel to make it appealing or even acceptable by the those who are lost in the world.

This can take place through unbelievers or believers, the Corinthians are the classic case in point for this truth, as they attempted to mix human secular knowledge and wisdom, along with the proficiency of oratory, making the gospel powerless and inefficient!

\* This is the problem when people think they can better the gospel, in reality they only dilute and weaken the efficiency of the gospel,

Paul reminded the Corinthians about the gospel he preached to them at Corinth, which was characterized by three things:

- I. The proclamation of the gospel: How he preached. vs. 1-5
- II. The presentation of the gospel: What he preached. vs. 6-9
- III. The illumination of the gospel: How he knew what he preached. vs. 10-16

**I. The proclamation of the gospel: How he preached. vs. 1-5**

A. The apostle Paul preached a gospel pure in content. vs. 1

\* “And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.”

1. Paul came to them to preach the gospel. vs. 1a-c
  - a. He addressed them in the first person singular “I”.
    - 1) Due to the fact that he arrived to Corinth alone.
    - 2) Silas and Timothy were not with him, but still in Macedonia.
    - 3) He will address them in the first person plural to include Silas and Timothy at verse six.
  - b. He called them brethren “adelphos” again, ones born of the same womb and parents, a term of family love.

- 1) This is the fifth time he called the brethren. 1Cor. 1:1:1, 10, 11, 26
- 2) The word will appear 32 more times in the letter.
- c. He came to them at Corinth.
  - 1) A participle aorist active.
  - 2) Literally, “having come to you”.
2. Paul did not preach the gospel with eloquent words. vs. 1d
  - a. The word excellence “huperoche” means rising above, superior or pre-eminence.
    - 1) The word is found only one other time in the New Testament
    - 2) The word is translated “authority”, for those in ruling power. 1Tim. 2:2
  - b. The idea behind the context is words of professional rhetoric “logos”, speech that impresses and affects the hearer by mastery of the language, commanding authority.
    - \* Often lacking sincerity and meaningful content!
3. Paul preached the gospel, not with the wisdom of man.
  - a. The word for wisdom “sophia” means basically broad and full intelligence for decision making, but often used for philosophy.

- 1) He used this word five times in chapter one for human wisdom and three for God’s wisdom. 1Cor. 1:17, 19, 20, 21 (2x’s), 22, 24, 30
- 2) He uses the same word seven times in chapter two, five for human wisdom or philosophy and two times for God’s wisdom. 1Cor. 2:1, 4, 5, 6 (2x’s), 7, 13
- b. The contrast can not be missed.
  - 1) Human natural wisdom, to divine wisdom that is sourced and revealed by God.
  - 2) Paul masterfully and boldly declared the superiority of God’s wisdom over man’s.
    - a) For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.” 1Cor. 1:19
    - b) “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their *own* craftiness”; and again, “The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.” 1Cor. 3:19-20
3. Paul preached the gospel which is the testimony of God. vs. 1d

- a. The word declaring “katagello” means to announce publicly, to publish.
    - 1) Paul used the same word quoting the Lord Jesus, that those who *preach* “katagello” the gospel should live from the gospel. 1Cor. 9:14
    - 2) Paul used the word to indicate that as often as one eats and drinks communion they *proclaim* “Katagello” the Lord’s death till He comes. 1Cor. 11:26
  - b. The word testimony “marturion” means a witness.
    - 1) Paul was simply a herald of what God had done through Christ for the redemption of man.
    - 2) Paul had been given the message as well as the authority to proclaim the good news.
    - 3) The word testimony is synonymous with the wisdom of God by the gospel of Christ in the first two chapters. 1Cor. 1:1:6, 2:1
- B.** The apostle Paul preached a gospel that was Christ centered. vs. 2
- \* “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

- 1. Paul was totally committed to only the gospel entrusted to him by Jesus.
  - a. The word determined “krino”, means to make a judgment.
    - \* He will use the word 17 more times in the letter, translated “judge”.
  - b. The judgment of Paul was that they had nothing that could compare or surpass the testimony regarding the gospel of God.
  - c. The implication being that he did not learn anything from them nor mixed anything with the gospel of God.
- 2. Paul determined to know only Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
  - a. The person was the incarnate God-man. Jn. 1:1, 14
    - 1) Jesus “Iesous” represents His human, the name means Yahweh is salvation, 27 times in the letter, Joshua in Hebrew.
    - 2) Christ “Christos” is His title, the Anointed or Messiah. 66 times in the letter.
  - b. The proclamation was that He died on the cross to forgive man’s sins and redeem him.
    - 1) The most gruesome death a man could die.
    - 2) The Romans would never crucify one of their own, it was for an

example to those who would defy Rome.

\* “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

1Cor. 1:18

C. The apostle Paul preached a gospel not trusting his own personal ability. vs. 3

\* “I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.”

1. Paul was physically weak.

a. The word weakness “astheneia”, means frailty of state or feebleness of health.

1) It is used for Timothy’s sick stomach. 1Tim. 5:23

2) He will used it once more for the frailty of our natural body. 1Cor. 15:43

a. The Scriptures identify two physical infirmities of Paul.

1) Paul had a physical infirmity, a thorn in the flesh, which God uses to keep him from exalting himself, but it is never identified. 2Cor. 12:7

2) Some think it had to do with his eyes, an oozing disease called “alhelmia” from contacting

malaria, from his comment to the Galatians that they would of given him their very eyes. Gal. 4:13-15

3) “For *his* letters,” they say, “*are* weighty and powerful, but *his* bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech contemptible.” 2Cor. 10:10

2. Paul was mentally fearful.

a. The word fear “phobos”, simply means to be in dread or terror from within.

\* We get our word phobia from it.

b. Some have suggest that this fear was due to the little successful Paul had in Athens, but this is speculative and reading too much into it the text.

c. Paul simply knew the evilness of Corinth.

3. Paul was emotionally trembling.

a. The word trembling “tromos”, quaking on the outside.

b. Paul was alone when he arrived at Corinth, Silas and Timothy were still in Macedonia.

c. Paul for reasons that are not disclosed to us was so fearful that the Lord Jesus appeared to him and told him not to be afraid, but to speak for He had many to save in the city and that He would protect him. Acts 18:9-10

- d. Paul as you know was a very educated man, but he did not trust his vast learning to be self-sufficient, only the gospel.
- D.** The apostle Paul preached a gospel void of man's methods. vs. 4-5
1. Paul did not preach with persuasive words of man's wisdom. vs. 4a
    - a. The word persuasive "peithos" means words that have their aim to convince, rather than simply inform, so they could make a choice.
    - b. This is the only appearance, it is believed Paul coined the word.
    - c. The description identifies the wisdom man again, indicating the one of the methods of man.
  2. Paul preached in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. vs. 4b
    - a. The contrast can not be missed between man's way, that of persuasive words and the words and the power of God super-naturally to convicts a person of sin.
    - b. This power is by and through the Holy Spirit, who is mentioned five times. vs. 10-14
      - 1) The word for power is "dunamis", residing power in a thing by virtue of its nature.

- 2) Jesus told His apostles they would receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon them and be witnesses to Him in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts 1:8
  - 3) For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in **power**, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake." 1Thess. 1:5
  - 4) The contrast is persuasiveness of man and God's power to save.
- 3.** Paul preached in this manner with a purpose. vs. 5
- a. That their faith should not be in the wisdom of men, affecting only the intellect and not the heart.
  - b. That their faith should be in the power of God, to make His gospel alive to convict them of sin and see the love of God.
    - \* The word "faith" has a definite article indicating that their belief was based on the benefits of Christ crucified!

### **Illustration**

Robert Hume, the Scottish philosopher and skeptic, would walk many miles on the Lord's Day

to hear John Brown of Haddington preach. Asked why he did it, Hume said, “I go to hear him because he always preaches as though Jesus Christ is at his elbow.” #4723

### **Application**

1. Today there are many that are mixing the wisdom and words of this world with the gospel and thereby preaching a powerless gospel that is evident in the lives of people.

\* “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.” Col. 2:8

2. There is a self-esteem gospel that is being passed off as gospel, but there are two problems, it is neither God’s good news nor is it Christ centered but man-centered.

\* “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?” Gal. 3:1

3. The Emergent Church and Seeker Friendly church movements is another gospel.

a. One of the prominent voices of the “Emerging Church Movement” Brian McLaren said, “We are emerging into a new era of Christian faith as a “living color” global community. ...It is immediately clear that this kind of emergence must lead

to a convergence... a kind of relationship that has never before existed.” (Faith Undone:224)

b. Vocabulary such as, “Generous orthodoxy”, “a New Reformation”.

\* “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.” Gal. 1:8

4. The witness of men and women from all walks of life, who were and have been transformed throughout the centuries is the greatest testimony of the Gospel.

\* Newton the slave trader.

***The proclamation of the gospel was unadulterated in the power of God!***

## **II. The presentation of the gospel: What he preached. vs. 6-9**

A. The apostle Paul preached the wisdom of God not of this world. vs. 6

1. Paul and the other apostles spoke the wisdom of God as those who were mature believers. vs. 6a-b

\* “However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature.”

a. Paul using the plural pronoun “we” is saying that he and those who were

preaching Christ were aged believers and grown up in their faith.

- b.** Paul is referring directly to himself and the two other men chosen to divide the church into parties, Paul, Apollos, Cephas.
  - c.** The Corinthians in contrasts were acting as mere infants in Christ in view of their division and quarrels. 1Cor. 3:1-3
- 2.** Paul did not speak the wisdom of this sinful world and ruler which are temporal. vs. 6c-e
- \* “yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.”
  - a.** The word age “aion” means the fallen world wisdom, which is ever changing, updated, corrected and today’s wisdom is tomorrow’s stupidity. vs. 6c
    - 1)** “Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.” 1Cor. 3:18
    - 2)** The message of wisdom he was proclaiming was from heaven.
  - b.** The rulers were the men who were in the positions of authority and influence, who set the standard of

truth and wisdom by their institutions of higher learning. vs. 6d

- 1)** The rulers who thought the message of Jesus to be foolish instead of wisdom were Pilate, Herod and Caiaphas to mention a few.
  - 2)** The ultimate rulers who are in control are the principalities, powers, rulers of darkness of this age, the spiritual hosts of wickedness of Satan domain. Eph. 6:12
  - 3)** Satan is called the god of this world. 2Cor. 4:4
- c.** The wisdom and rulers of the age are passing away. vs. 6e
- 1)** The word coming to nothing “katargeo”, means to cause to cease or be put to an end.
  - 2)** A participle present passive, it is in the process.
- B.** The apostle Paul preached the wisdom of God prepared from eternity. vs. 7
- \* “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory.”
  - 1.** Paul declared the gospel was a mystery, the hidden wisdom of God. vs. 7a

- a. The word mystery “musterion” does not mean the same as a novel mystery, but it means something previously hidden but made known.
  - b. The wisdom God hidden in times past and made known now in the age of grace was the gospel of Christ.
  - c. This mystery that was kept secret was that both Jew and Gentile were to be one in Christ. Rom. 16:25, Eph. 3:3-6, Col. 1:26-27  
 \* When the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman under the Law. Ga. 4:4
2. Paul declared the gospel mystery was ordained before the ages for our glory. vs. 7b
- a. God in His infinite knowledge, knowing the end from the beginning was fully aware of the fall of Adam, it did not take Him by surprise.
  - b. God also prepared the redemption of man before all the ages of man by the substitutionary death of Jesus who was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, then man took Him, crucified and slew Him. Acts 2:23
  - c. Paul declared the reason was that man might respond to God’s mystery made known and see it as wisdom from

heaven, as our benefit to be saved and glorified.

- C. The apostle Paul preached the wisdom of God that could not be understood by man. vs. 8-9
- 1. The evidence that this gospel has been revealed, but still can not be understood by man’s wisdom is epitomized in the fact that the rulers of the day crucified the Lord of glory, Jesus Christ. vs. 8  
 \* “which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”
    - a. The message was foolishness to them. 1Cor. 1:18
    - b. The foolishness of the message preached was God’s way to save man. 1Cor. 1:21
  - 2. The reason was that they were spiritually dead. vs. 9  
 \* “But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”
    - a. The quotation is from Isaiah declaring that no man has ever seen, heard or thought and known God or the things of God unless He revealed



Himself or things about Himself. Is. 64:4, 65:17

- b. These three senses sight, hearing and thought are the ways man learns many things, but not the things of God.
- c. But God can open the eyes, ears and thoughts of man to reveal Himself through the openness to the gospel message of salvation.
- d. The verse is usually taken to mean future things in heaven, but the context is for the one who opens his or her heart to be saved.
  - 1) God reveals the things of redemption He has prepared for those who love Him, by responding to the gospel and repenting of their sins.
  - 2) God reveals His will and purposes for the believer throughout life as he or she walks with God.

### **Illustration**

The minister of the gospel must not be afraid of conflict with the wisdom of the world. Gregory the Great said, "God first gathered the unlearned, afterwards philosophers, nor has He taught fishermen by orators, but has subdued orators by fishermen. (Green:174)

### **Application**

1. Have you ever share the gospel with some of your friends or love ones only to have them think that you have lost it?
  - \* Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," 1Pet. 2:7
2. Next time someone tells you that the gospel is foolishness remind them of the latest wisdom of man; to legalize marijuana, to kill babies in partial abortion, to keep people from knowing when someone has AIDS and jeopardizing their life.
  - \* "There is a **way** that seems **right** to a man, But its end is the **way** of death." Prov. 16:25
3. The intellectual ability of a man has nothing to do with his or her ability to understand, it has everything to do with the illuminating work of the glorious gospel by the Holy Spirit, in order to remove spiritual blindness. 2Cor. 4:4
  - \* "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." Tit. 3:5

*The presentation of the gospel was by the wisdom of God!*

**III. The illumination of the gospel: How he knew what he preached. vs. 10-16**

- A.** The apostle Paul declared the Holy Spirit revealed to him the things of God. vs. 10-12  
 \* “But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit.”
1. God had revealed through the Spirit to Paul and the other “us”, including every believer, the things He had prepared for those who love Him, beginning with salvation. vs. 10a
  2. The Spirit searches all the things of God. vs. 10b  
 \* “For the Spirit searches all things.”
    - a. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity.
    - b. The Holy Spirit searches “ereunao” which means to examine into all the things of God, due to the fact that He is God, all knowing.
  3. The Spirit searches the profound things of God. vs. 10c-d  
 \* “yes, the deep things of God.”
    - a. His plans, purposes and His will.
    - b. His searching out is not to know, but to reveal, for He is all knowing as the third person of the trinity.
  4. The apostle Paul illustrates that point that only God can reveal Himself and the things of God. vs. 11  
 \* “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one

- knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.”
- a. Paul declared that only another man can reveal the things of man, due to the fact that all men have the same fallen nature. vs. 11a
  - b. Paul immediately makes the contrasting comparison, even so no one can reveal the things of God except for the Spirit of God, for He is God. vs. 11b
5. The apostle Paul makes the personal application to himself and the other apostles. vs. 12  
 \* “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.”
- a. They had not received the spirit of the world to know the things of God. vs. 12a
  - b. But rather the Spirit from God to know the things that have been freely given to them by God. vs. 12b
- B.** The apostle Paul declared the Holy Spirit was speaking through Paul the things of God. vs. 13-14
1. The words Paul and the others were speaking were not taught to them by

man's wisdom, but by the Holy Spirit.  
vs. 13a-b

- \* "These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual."
- a. That is why Paul and the apostles were speaking wisdom among those who were mature spiritually through the same Spirit. vs. 13a-b, 6a-b
- b. The Holy Spirit is the teacher of man pertaining to the things of God. vs. 13b-c
- c. The Holy Spirit teaches by comparing spiritual things with spiritual. vs. 13c
  - 1) This means that He being God and knowing the mind of God, makes the word of God alive by His illumination.
    - a) The word compare "sugkrino" means to joined together to compare and interpret.
    - b) The Spirit of God was joining the Old Testament Scriptures to the New Testament revelation and interpreting their fulfillment and confirmation.
  - 2) This means the Holy Spirit of God verifies and confirms His word in harmony with his plan of salvation

and the whole council of God without confusion or contradiction.

- \* The Holy Spirit was the other comforter just like Jesus sent from the Father by Jesus. Jn. 14:16
- 3) This is a basic principle for the believe to learn, to compare the word of God with the declared meaning by man, to see if the teaching is false or not.
- 2. The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. vs. 14
  - \* "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned."
    - a. The natural man is the unsaved person, the things of the Spirit are foolishness to him. vs. 14a-b
    - b. They are not understood by him, being spiritually dead. vs. 14c
    - c. They are spiritually discerned. vs. 14d
      - 1) The word discerned "anakrino" means to investigate or scrutinize.
      - 2) The natural man can not because he or she has not the Spirit of God.
- C. The apostle Paul declared the Holy Spirit was illuminating him the things of God. vs. 15-16

1. Paul was a spiritual man, judging all things to God's word, the gospel, divine wisdom. vs. 15a
  - \* "But he who is spiritual judges all things."
2. Paul's preaching could not be judged by the natural man for he could not know them. vs. 15b
  - \* "yet he himself is *rightly* judged by no one."
    - a. The word judges is the same as discerned in the previous verse and it means to investigate in a forensic way, as a judge would investigate.
    - b. The word is used of the Bereans, the spiritual man is constantly investigating and examining to see if what he hears is the truth of the word of God or not. Acts 17:11
    - c. The word is used by as the Corinthians were judging him. 1Cor. 4:3, 4, 9:3
4. Paul concludes that no one has ever known the mind of the Lord in order to instruct Him, but he certainly can receive from Him, for the believer has the mind of Christ. vs. 16
  - a. The quotation is from Isaiah. Is. 40:13
    - \* "Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or *as* His counselor has taught Him?"

- b. The amazing miracle, "But we have the mind of Christ."
  - \* We need to grow in knowledge and wisdom and put on the mind of Christ! Phil. 2:5

### **Illustration**

D. L. Moody said, "The bible without the Holy Spirit is sun-dial by moonlight." (Green: 202)

### **Application**

1. The Comforter is the Holy Spirit that teaches the believer all things as well as bringing to our remembrance all the things Jesus has said. Jn. 14:26
2. The men of old spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit to insure the inerrancy of God's word, as well as the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. 2Pet. 1:20-21
3. The prayer of Paul for the Ephesians was that the eyes of their understanding be enlightened; might know what was the hope of His calling, what were the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints and what was the exceeding greatness of His power toward those who believe, according to the working of His mighty power. Eph. 1:18-19

***The illumination of the gospel was through the Holy Spirit of God!***

**Conclusion**

Paul reminded the Corinthians about the gospel he preached to them at Corinth:

- I.** The proclamation of the gospel was unadulterated in the power of God!
- II.** The presentation of the gospel was by the wisdom of God!
- III.** The illumination of the gospel was through the Holy Spirit of God!