

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 4/13/11 Wednesday Evening
1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Review: From last time...

Paul addressed the problem of divisions and schisms in the Corinthian assembly.
See: Transp

Paul made a key statement in verse 17. “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross be emptied of its power.”

As a church we battle a couple of powerful temptations when it comes to reaching lost people. One is to promote the messenger—to make Christianity “attractive” to lost people by making ourselves look impressive as messengers. The other is to adjust the message—to try and make it more appealing, to tell people things their self-focused hearts want to hear to get them interested.

Paul did neither. He didn’t speak with words of wisdom—he wasn’t interested in making himself look good. He simply presented the message of the cross. He believed that the truth of the cross possessed inherent power.

1 Corinthians is a book that shows us how to deal with problems...

How does the apostle do this? We can learn from him. In dealing with problems, we must do two things as he did...

1. Put the focus on God, not ourselves (as in 1:4-9).

2. Put the focus on the Cross, not some peripheral issue (as in 1:18ff.). We’ll see how Paul did this in our study tonight.

We might well entitle this study, “It’s All about the Cross.” Beginning in verse 18, Paul answers three questions for us. At first this discussion might seem to be unrelated to the problem of divisions he began to address in 1:10. Actually, it’s *very* related as we’ll see...

I. What’s true of our message (18-19)?

Two things...

A. It’s effectual (18).

Read v 18.

Q: What kind of effect does the message of the cross have?

1. *It’s foolishness to some.*

Q: To whom?

2. *It’s the power of God to others.*

Q: To whom?

Notice, there are only two options. Either a person is “perishing” or “being saved.”

Follow-up: What does the term “being” indicate here? We don’t often think about the progressive nature of our salvation...

B. It’s humbling (19).

Read v 19, a quotation of Isaiah 29:14.

Q: What's humbling about our message?

II. What's true of God's messengers (20-25)?

Paul next clarifies three things about the messengers God uses...

A. God doesn't use impressive people (20).

Paul asks four rhetorical questions...

Note: God isn't anti-intellectual. He gave us our brains. This isn't a call for ignorance. The point Paul seems to be making is this. When it comes to the messengers God uses, He doesn't enlist the kinds of people Wall Street looks for, or Harvard looks for, or Microsoft looks for, when they recruit leaders. He doesn't look for the person with savvy, instincts, and smarts. He's not interested in finding innovators, but in enlisting preachers.

Quite frankly, He's looking for people who won't "mess up" the beauty of the message He's already put together! His messengers don't invent the message. They just preach it!

B. God uses a "foolish" message (21).

Q: Why does Paul use the term "foolishness" to refer to the message?

1. *Man can't reach God through his wisdom.*

Does man believe that? No. What's the view of the average man on the street concerning how to reach God?

2. *God saves those who simply believe.*

Q: Believe what? Just anything?

C. God uses people who preach Christ crucified (22-24).

Q: What kind of response can we anticipate as we preach?

1. *To the Jews, it's a stumbling block.*

Q: Why so?

2. *To the Gentiles, it's foolishness.*

Q: Who so?

3. *To those God calls, it's the power and wisdom of God.*

Don't miss this. What must occur before a person will accept the message we preach? God must *call* them. In fact, Christians are those whom God has "called." (see 1:2)

See also:

Rom 8:28

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

According to verse 13, what does Paul say God had done for the Thessalonian Christians? "From the beginning He has _____ you to salvation..."

According to verse 14, what else did God do for those He chose from the beginning? "He _____ you by our gospel."

Note: This is an important passage for the call of God mentioned here not only makes salvation *possible* (the General call), but *actual* (the Effectual call) in the lives of those whom God chose from eternity past.

Romans 1:6 What phrase does Paul use to describe the Roman Christians here? “To all in Rome who are loved by God and _____ to be saints.”

“But why?” you ask. “Why does God initiate salvation?” Here’s why...

D. By doing it this way, God exalts Himself (25).

He exalts His wisdom and strength. We’ll see more in a moment.

III. What was true of us before God called us (26-31)?

Notice the first word of v 26, “Brothers.” When you see a word like that, it indicates Paul is about to do what? Make it personal.

A. We’re reminded of what we weren’t (26).

Notice the continued emphasis on God’s “call” here.

1. *We weren’t wise.*
2. *We weren’t influential.*
3. *We weren’t noble.*

Discuss: Why isn’t the church full of such type of people?

B. We’re reminded of what God did (27-28a).

Notice the emphasis on God’s work in our salvation. Three times Paul says, “God chose.”

1. *God chose foolish things.*
2. *God chose weak things.*
3. *God chose lowly and despised things.*

Discuss: What effect should this have on us?

C. We’re reminded of why God did it (28b-31).

1. *He doesn’t want people who boast about themselves (29).*
2. *He wants people who boast about His Son (30-31).*

⇒Christ is our wisdom.

⇒Christ is our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

Discuss: What do verses 18-31 have to do with the problem of divisions in the Corinthian church?

IV. What difference will this make in how we do ministry (ch. 2)?

Let’s discuss some implications: According to 1 Cor 1, why is it important to have a proper view of God in the church? What can we do to develop a high view of God in the church?