

Review: From last time...

1 Corinthians is a book that shows us how to deal with problems. One of the key things a church must do if it's going to deal with problems in a God-honoring way is this. It's members must keep their eyes focused in the right place, namely, *on the Cross*.

That's what Paul did. In 1:18 he puts the spotlight on the Cross and addresses a series of related questions. In the past two weeks we've addressed three questions (from ch. 1), and tonight we'll begin to delve into a fourth as we move into chapter 2.

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

A. It's effectual (18).

1. *It's foolishness to some.*
2. *It's the power of God to others.*

B. It's humbling (19).

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

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

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

1. *Man can't reach God through his wisdom.*
2. *God saves those who simply believe.*

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

1. *To the Jews, it's a stumbling block.*
2. *To the Gentiles, it's foolishness.*
3. *To those God calls, it's the power and wisdom of God.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

Following those words Paul makes a transition and becomes very personal in chapter 2. He begins to talk about himself and how these truths affected his ministry (and should affect ours). Which brings us to question #4...

New Material...

Question#4: What difference will this make in how we do ministry (ch. 2)?

Paul explains the significance in two ways in chapter 2, first by explaining the difference it made for him when in Corinth (see the pronouns "I" and "my" in verses 1-

5), and then by addressing the more general implications for ministry everywhere (shift to the plural pronouns “we” and “us” in the next section of chapter 2).

I. Paul explains the implications for his ministry at Corinth (1-5).

A. Here’s what he did NOT do (1).

1. He didn’t use eloquence.

Caution: God is not in favor of shoddy work in any area, that includes preaching. Some of the most beautiful literature to be found anywhere is located in the Bible. For example, Isaiah was a master at using rhetorical devices. Paul is not promoting a monotone, dry, boring presentation or sermon.

Q: What does Paul mean by “eloquence?” The KJV says, “Excellency of speech.” A lit. reading would be “excellence of word.”

Give an example of “eloquence” in preaching.

See: Moses’ call to ministry

Ex 4:10 “Moses said to the LORD, “O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.”

2. He didn’t use superior wisdom.

Again, Paul isn’t anti-intellectual. What’s his point?

Note: Later Paul responded to a criticism leveled against him by some in Corinth as follows... 2 Cor 10:10 “For some say, “His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing.”

B. Here’s what he did (2-5).

1. He emphasized Christ and His crucifixion (2).

Note he says, “I resolved to no *nothing* while I was with you except...”

Q: Why did he make this resolve?

2. He came in personal weakness (3).

Q: What do you think Paul was like as a preacher? Why do you think he said he came “trembling?”

3. He depended upon a demonstration of the Spirit’s power in his preaching (4).

Q: What kind of demonstration of the Spirit’s power?

See: John 16:8-15; Rom 15:17-20; 1 Thes 1:5

4. He desired to see faith that depended on God’s power, not man’s wisdom (5).

It’s possible to produce “results” in ministry apart from the Spirit. How so? And what type of results are produced?

See: Jeremiah’s call to ministry—he felt inadequate...

Jer 1:7-10 “But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a child.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. ⁸ Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD. ⁹ Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “Now, I have

put my words in your mouth. ¹⁰ See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”

II. Paul explains the implications for ministry everywhere (6-16).

God gives us two things that make ministry possible. Paul addresses those two subjects in this section. We should strive to have ministries characterized by these two things.

A. Our ministry should be characterized by God’s wisdom (6-10a).

What’s true of God’s wisdom?

1. *God’s wisdom isn’t like the world’s (6).*

We don’t speak “the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age.” What would that be?

2. *God’s wisdom is secret (7).*

It’s a “mystery,” as the KJV puts it. It’s something that we could never “figure out” on our own. To grasp God’s wisdom takes special revelation.

3. *God’s wisdom has been hidden (7b).*

You can’t find it on your own.

4. *God destined His wisdom for our glory (7c).*

Q: When did He do so?

Key: According to 1 Cor 1:30, who or what is the “wisdom of God?” Christ is. That’s critical to understand.

Who understands God’s wisdom?

5. *The rulers of this age don’t (8-9).*

Q: If they had, they wouldn’t have done what? Why not?

6. *Only God’s people do (10).*

We have so much for which to be thankful. We understand God’s wisdom, that is, we understand the significance of who *Christ* is and what the *cross* means. But why do we understand it when others don’t? Is it because we’re smarter? More persistent? Because we figured it out? No. We understand it for two reasons....

⇒ We understand it because God revealed it.

God initiated this act of revealing. And how did He do it?

⇒ God revealed it by His Spirit.

That’s the Holy Spirit. And Paul will elaborate on this in the next section.

B. Our ministry should be characterized by God’s Spirit (10b-16).

Implications: How should what we’ve just studied affect the way...

--A Pastor or Sunday School teacher prepares a sermon or lesson?

--You seek to reach your unsaved neighbor or work associate?