



1 Corinthians 1:17-18_The Preaching of the Cross!

June 23, 2013

Text: 1 Cor 1:17-18

1Co 1:17-18 (KJV) - For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. (18) For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

Some context from last week:

- One of the major issues facing this church was division among the members.
- We've discovered as a church that it's hard to overemphasize the need for unity. Satan is always seeking to "divide and conquer:" *If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. (25) And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. (Mar 3:24-25 ESV)*
- But we know that:
 1. The gates of hell cannot destroy the church (Matt 16:18)
 2. Cultural forces cannot destroy the church (1 John 2:17)
 3. If we allow either of these things IN . . . we can degrade the effectiveness of church from inside!
- Biblical unity is two-fold: agreeing with God (His Word), THEN one-another. Agreeing with one another is not enough. Many people are "in agreement" around abominable things!
- One of the challenges of 1 Corinthians for the modern church is to know and walk in the full effect of being unified, but around Christ (v13) and His Word, not around error and **unrighteousness!**

Setting the Stage for Today's Thought

- Still addressing the issue of unity, the apostle is about to discuss the issue of so-called worldly wisdom versus true wisdom; that which comes from below compared to that which comes from above. James makes a similar comparison:
- *Jas 3:13-18 ESV Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. (14) But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. (15) This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. (16) For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. (17) But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. (18) *And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.**
- People thinking they are smarter than God is still a huge issue!

The Big Point!

1. We said last week that "Christian unity has **teeth.**" In other words, we are unified AROUND something--or more accurately, SOMEONE, because Christ is NOT DIVIDED.
2. I believe one can actually approach the entire epistle of 1 Corinthians properly, if one anchors on the point of these two verses of our Text: **THE GOSPEL!**
3. In other Words, **Christ and His glorious Gospel is too big, too huge, too great, too wonderful, too magnificent, too awe-inspiring, too incomparable, and too splendiferous to be fussing about who baptized who!!!! ☺**
4. AND . . . as Paul deals with divisions, wisdom, immorality, legal ethics, marriage and singles, idolatry, order in the church, etc., undergirding his instruction to this church (in sin city Corinth) is the gospel of Christ!

5. Friends, when we lose sight of the Gospel, something will take its place. When we cannot see Christ in all of Scripture, not-so-importance nuances become too important. When our vision isn't filled with the CROSS, it tends to get filled with **US!**

Verses 17 and 18

1. It's not about dramatic words, so let's not get all caught up in oratory or so-called "pulpiterring" or clever anecdotes.
 - "The art of rhetorical persuasion was highly valued in the Greco-Roman world, and professional orators frequented large cities like Corinth, giving impressive displays of their ability to entertain and instruct. Paul's proclamation of the gospel failed to measure up to these standards. This failure, however, served to place the spotlight on the power of the message itself." (ESV Study Bible)
2. It's about Christ's cross and God's **power!**
 - A.W. Tozer said, "The Christian minister, as someone has pointed out, is a descendant not of the Greek orator but of the Hebrew prophet. The differences between the orator and the prophet are many and radical, the chief being that the orator speaks for himself while the prophet speaks for God. The orator originates his message and is responsible to himself for its content. The prophet originates nothing but delivers the message he has received from God who alone is responsible for it, the prophet being responsible to God for its delivery only. The prophet must hear the message clearly and deliver it faithfully, and that is indeed a grave responsibility; but it is to God alone, not to men."
3. In fact, the more we rely on man's ingenuity in the preaching of the cross, apparently, the less power there is! This is great news! You don't have to take a homiletics class to do this! 😊
4. This is critical because the cross is already "folly" or **foolishness** to the darkened mind.
 - Amazingly, those who are headed for hell's gate, dying of the terminal disease of sin, look upon the eternal antidote as silly or irrational or senseless!
 - But for the grace of God, go!! 😊
5. This is why the power of God through the **simple** preaching of the cross is so needed!
 - Those of us who are "being saved" understand. It wasn't the preacher or the baptizer or the church or the program or the music or anything else . . . it was the power of God!

The Preaching of the Cross

(If this sounds redundant, GOOD! It's always the same wonderful message! The Christian should know this almost by heart! 😊)

1. The Problem the Cross Addresses: **Sin**
 - From the Garden of Eden, man has had the problem of all problems: **sin**. It is such a problem because God is both infinitely loving AND infinitely just. Therefore, sin must be punished because God requires justice.
2. The Condemnation of all men without the Gospel: The **Law**
 - From the Garden of Eden in the fullness of time, God showed us more of the holiness of His nature by revealing His **perfect** moral standard to Moses. We call them The Ten Commandments: *Exodus 20:3-17 ESV*
 - I. You shall have no other gods before me.
 - II. You shall not make for yourself a carved image.

- III. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.
- IV. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
- V. Honor your father and your mother.
- VI. You shall not murder.
- VII. You shall not commit adultery.
- VIII. You shall not steal.
- IX. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- X. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

- Have you ever lied? Stolen? Murdered through hating another (1 Jn 3:15)? Committed adultery either physically or through your eyes (this would include fornication, Matt 5:27-28)? Put anything or anyone above God? Failed to give Him one day out of seven as His own special day set aside for worship? Failed to give proper honor to your parents? Wanted something or someone that belonged to another? Used His Name as a cuss word?
- Remember, *"The Law of the Lord is perfect, reviving (or converting) the soul"* (Ps 19:7). The Law is *holy, righteous, and good!* (Rom 7:12)
- And it is the Law that holds the whole world **accountable**: *"Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God."* (Rom 3:19 ESV)
- If God judged you by this Holy standard, would you be innocent or guilty?

3. Understanding the Purpose of the Law

- The moral laws of God reveal sin (Rom 7:7), shows us that sin to God is sinful beyond measure (Rom 7:13), stops every **mouth** (Rom 3:19), condemns man in his wickedness (Rom 7:9), and mercifully, points us to Christ.
- *"So then, the law was our guardian (schoolmaster, KJV) until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith."* (Gal 3:24 ESV)
- So the law doesn't save, but it points us to our NEED for a Savior! The Law doesn't give us grace . . . it kills us at the foot of Mount Sinai. It destroys all self-righteousness. It places us into the hands of an angry God who hates sin that we might cry out for forgiveness.

4. The Destination of all Lawbreakers: **Hell**

- **The legitimate reasons for fleeing to the Savior are brokenness over one's sin and a fleeing from the wrath to come! It has nothing at all to do with feeling good about life or oneself.**
- *2Th 1:9 ESV They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,*
- *2Pe 3:7 ESV But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*
- *Rev 21:6-8 ESV And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. (7) The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. (8) But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually*

immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

5. The Solution to Man's sin crisis: **Grace!**

- Now we can be blown away by the extreme, powerful, high, deep, and wide love of God in Christ and His glorious Gospel!
- *Joh 3:16-18 ESV "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (17) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (18) Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.*
- God so loved us that He poured out His hatred of sin on His own Son! (v16, Rom 1:18, 8:32)
- God's intent in Christ was and is to save! Jesus came to seek and save the lost! (Lk 19:10) Whoever believes in Christ is NOT condemned! (v18) But this is key . . . whoever DOES NOT believe IS condemned, and will be judged according the Law on the Day of Judgment. (v18-19)

The Gospel . . . the Preaching of the Cross!

"Jesus Christ, the Son of God and God the Son, came to this earth through the virgin Mary, revealed the truths of God, lived the perfect life in our place, died on the cross to pay the penalty of sin that we might be restored to relationship with God, rose again on the third day, and gives eternal life to those He has called who believe in Him by His grace and through faith. Those who reject Him will spend eternity apart from Him in Hell. At a future date, He will return to complete the restoration of God's creation."

So what must one do to be saved? Again . . .

1. **Repent** (Remember, you have broken God's Laws.)
 - *Act 17:30-31 KJV And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: (31) Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*
2. **Believe** the Gospel (Put your trust in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus for the forgiveness of sin)
 - *Rom 10:9-10 ESV because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (10) For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*
 - *Eph 2:8 ESV For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God...*

Preach the Word of the Cross, dear friends. It's a major piece of our unity and the source of why the world increasingly hates the church. Preach it simply and trust in God's power to convert the soul.

Amen.