

1Corinthians – Week 5

I. Review: 1Cor. 1:14-17

A. Since Paul wanted to keep Christ central in his ministry...

- i. He thanked God that he did not baptize these believers so that none of them could say “Hey, I was baptized by Paul! Therefore, I follow him!”

B. In verse 17, he reminds the Corinthians that his primary purpose is to preach the gospel, not to baptize.

- i. Many in the evangelical world take vs. 17 as saying baptism is not essential to salvation.
 1. However, it is unthinkable that Paul is contradicting Jesus in Mark 16:16
 2. The context of this passage has to do with the problem of “*preacher-itis*” in the Church.
 - a. Some claimed to be disciples of those who personally baptized them.
 - b. Therefore, Paul was grateful he had not baptized those in Corinth who were boasting in men.
 3. To be called after Paul (or any other man), two things were necessary:
 - a. Paul had to be crucified
 - b. One would have to be baptized in the name of Paul
 - c. Since neither happened, therefore, none of them should be saying “I follow Paul” (or any other man).
 4. To be called after Christ, two things were necessary:
 - a. Christ had to be crucified
 - b. One would have to be baptized in the name of Christ
 - c. Since both happened, the members of the Corinthian Church should be saying, “I follow Christ.”
 5. In verses 14-16, Paul implies the essentialness of baptism by stating that crucifixion and baptism are necessary to be called after another person, namely, Jesus Christ!

II. Continuation

A. A deeper look at 1Cor. 1:17 (ESV), “*For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*”

i. Paul, as an apostle, was sent by Christ to preach to the Gentiles

1. Eph. 3:8 (ESV), “*To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*”
2. Though His preaching at Corinth resulted in many baptisms (cf. Acts 18:8), it was not imperative that he should do the baptizing.
 - a. Apparently, Paul’s traveling companions did most of the baptizing at Corinth, while he only baptized a few (cf. 1Cor. 1:14-16)

ii. Paul is saying, “The power is found in Christ, not men!”

1. This is why he said, “*not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power*”
 - a. The gospel alone has the power to save! (Romans 1:16)

B. The Word of the Cross vs. The Wisdom of the World

i. In verses 10-17, we saw how the Corinthians were boasting in human wisdom.

1. They misunderstood the nature of the gospel and were quarreling over “*words of eloquence wisdom.*”
2. So now Paul is going to explain the difference between human and divine wisdom...

- ii. 1Corinthians 1:18 (ESV), *“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*
 - 1. Paul introduces two worldviews: the secular worldview and the Christ-centered worldview
 - a. The secular worldview excludes Christ from their thinking.
 - i. They see the world’s problems being solved by human wisdom!
 - ii. To them, right and wrong is determined by the consensus of the people.
 - iii. And the idea of a crucified Savior, dying for the sins of the world and rising up again on the third day, is foolishness!
 - 1. The Greek word for folly is *“moria,”* from which we get the word *“moron.”*
 - 2. To the perishing, the idea of a man crucified and resurrected is moronic!
 - 3. An example of this is found in Acts 17:18ff, where Paul spoke of Jesus and the resurrection to a group of Greek philosophers, in which some sneered.
 - iv. Ever tried to share the gospel with a person who is self-sufficient, successful and has an impressive record of achievements?
 - 1. Such persons get offended when told that *“the word of the cross”* makes all our human efforts, wisdom and skills useless.
 - 2. But to those with a Christ-centered worldview, the *“word of the cross”* is powerful!
 - a. It saves lives! It transforms lives! It gives purpose! It gives hope! It teaches how to live rightly! It teaches how to love rightly!
- iii. 1Corinthians 1:19 (ESV), *“For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.’”*
 - 1. Paul quotes Isaiah 29:14
 - a. The historical context for Isaiah 29 is the time when Judah was under siege by Assyria
 - i. The king of Judah called his advisors and he, along with the people, accepted the wisdom of men: Let’s form an alliance with Egypt!
 - ii. In this passage, God told them that human wisdom has no power to save them:
 - 1. And what God said was true!
 - 2. Their *“wise counsel”* had no power to save them from Assyria!
 - b. In the context of Corinthians, human wisdom will not accomplish what the gospel accomplishes!

- iv. 1Corinthians 1:20 (ESV), *“Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”*
 - 1. He asks three rhetorical questions (again), suggesting that worldly wisdom has no divine power!
 - a. Where is the one who is wise?
 - i. To the Greeks: *“the one who is wise”* would be any one who had all the answers to life’s problems.
 - b. Where is the scribe?
 - i. To the Jews: *“the scribe”* would be those whom we call today as “researches” and “scholars.”
 - c. Where is the debater of this age?
 - i. To the Greeks: *“the debater”* would be those who present ideas that they believed would solve all society’s problems.
 - ii. Today, we call these “commentators,” “specialists,” “social critics”
 - 2. Remember, the Greeks loved intellectualism.
 - a. They would gather and discuss philosophical ideas in the public square (cf. Acts 17:21)
 - 3. Paul, by asking these three questions, is basically saying, *“Where has the wisdom of men gotten you? You still haven’t solved life’s problems! In fact, look what this human wisdom has produced in you: quarreling, division, immaturity! Human wisdom has no divine power to save nor to transform!”*
 - 4. The Christians at Corinth thought that they could add this “worldly wisdom” to the message of the cross!
 - 5. They didn’t understand that the only wisdom that is valuable is cross-centered!
 - a. The world’s problems can only be solved through the message of the cross!
 - 6. The wisdom of the world has no power to solve spiritual problems!
 - a. Truthfully, human wisdom is “folly!”
 - b. That’s why Paul says *“Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”*

III. Closing Passage:

- A. Col. 2:8 (ESV), *“See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”*