

1Corinthians – Week 6

I. Review: 1Cor. 1:17-20

A. Paul, as an apostle...

- i. Was sent, by Christ, to preach the gospel
- ii. It was not imperative for him to baptize all who believed, that task was left for others to do, like his traveling companions
- iii. His preaching to the Corinthians resulted in many baptisms (Acts 18:8) but he, himself, only baptized a few of them (1Cor. 1:14-16).

B. Paul then introduces two worldviews:

- i. The secular view which sees the message of the cross as foolishness
 1. The secular worldview excludes Christ from their thinking.
 - a. They see the world's problems being solved by human wisdom.
 - b. To them, right and wrong is determined by human consensus.
 - c. And the idea of a crucified Savior is foolishness, especially to many of the Greeks of Paul's day (cf. Acts 17:18-32).
 - ii. The Christ-centered or Biblical worldview sees the message of the cross as the power of God!
 1. The gospel is the power of God to save those who believe (Romans 1:16)
 - iii. Paul then asks three rhetorical questions to make the point that human wisdom is powerless...
 1. Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater?
 - a. Their "wisdom" has not solved the world's spiritual problem!

II. Continuation

A. Paul continues to prove that human wisdom is powerless to solve spiritual problems...

- i. 1Corinthians 1:21 (ESV), "*For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.*"
 1. Let's examine the phrase "*the world did not know God through wisdom*"
 - a. NIV words it, "*the world through its wisdom did not know him*"
 - b. Paul's epistle to the Romans demonstrates the ineffectiveness of human wisdom in a pre-Christian Gentile world (cf. Romans 1:18ff).
 - i. The Gentiles, turning to their own "wisdom," produced a lifestyle plagued with shameful acts.
 2. Therefore, verse 21 is implying that...
 - a. Man's wisdom not only leads to ignorance of God, it leads to sinful acts.
 - i. We see this in the Corinthian church (quarrels, divisions, immorality, lawsuits, lack of love, etc.)
 - b. But the Gospel message (called "*folly*" by some), by faith, leads to the knowledge of God and salvation.
 - c. But those who are perishing might say, "*What? You expected me to believe your message? I need observable evidence before I believe!*"
 - d. For this reason, Paul said...
- ii. 1Corinthians 1:22 (ESV), "*For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom*"
 1. The Jews demanded miraculous signs before believing the message of Christ
 - a. John 6:30 (ESV), "*So they said to him, 'Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?'*"
 - b. The Jesus that was preached to them did not fit their expectations of what Messiah ought to be!
 - c. The Jewish dilemma is seen today in the world:
 - i. Many people refuse to believe unless a miraculous sign is performed by the messenger!

2. The Greeks sought understanding before accepting a message.
 - a. If something didn't make sense to them, they regarded it as stupidity!
 - b. To the Greeks, the message of the cross did not ring as "*words of eloquent wisdom*" but rather, as words of sheer foolishness!
 - c. The Greek dilemma is seen today in the world, too:
 - i. People are quick to embrace "human wisdom" over something they deem as "unscientific," "narrow-minded," and/or "unreasonable" like the message of the cross!
 - ii. Actually, it takes more faith to believe that from goo came you than to believe that God created you, yet people are quick to place their faith in men's "*words of eloquent wisdom*" than God's word!
3. Therefore, preaching the gospel and calling men to accept it by faith and not by signs or human understanding is, well, as Paul puts it in the next verse...
 - a. 1Corinthians 1:23 (ESV), "*but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles*"
 - i. How is "Christ crucified" a stumbling block to the Jews?
 1. To the Jews, Messiah was a Person who had God's blessing to the greatest degree (Isa. 11:2).
 2. However, Jesus, powerless to save himself, his executioners hung him on a tree, showing proof that God had cursed Him (Deut. 21:23; Ga1. 3:13).
 3. Not to mention, it offended the Jews to hear that one some called "Messiah" died, leaving them still in bondage to the Romans. Messiah was to deliver them from these uncircumcised pagans!
 - ii. How is "Christ crucified" folly to the Gentiles?
 1. Well, preaching about a God who got Himself killed by mortals seemed rather unreasonable and stupid to them!
4. But for those Jews and Greeks who believe, Paul says...
 - a. 1Corinthians 1:24 (ESV), "*but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God*"
 - i. Christ, the power of God: Through Him are the controlling forces of evil destroyed! (cf. 1John 3:8)
 1. The gospel is the power of God to save! (Romans 1:16)
 - ii. Christ, the wisdom of God: Through Him can a man come to know God!
 1. Paul defines God's wisdom as righteousness, sanctification and redemption in verse 30.
 2. We will cover that, Lord willing, in the next class.
 - iii. 1Corinthians 1:25 (ESV), "*For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*"
 1. In other words...
 - a. The message of the cross (i.e., the foolishness of God) can accomplish that which human wisdom cannot accomplish!
 - i. Did human wisdom save Judah from falling into the hands of Assyria? (cf. Isa. 29:14; 1Cor. 1:19)
 - ii. No, but the message of the cross can save us from spiritual condemnation!
 - b. Christ crucified (i.e., the weakness of God) can accomplish that which human strength, cannot accomplish!
 - i. Can human strength destroy the work of the devil?
 - ii. No, but Christ's death did!