

1 Corinthians Series #6

"The Mind of Christ" - 1 Cor. 2:1-5

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Context

1. Paul knew about the problems in Corinth
2. His chief concern was the many divisions and great disunity of the church there
 - a. these were due to arguments over personalities
 - b. and competing philosophies
3. Paul contrasts the wisdom of man and the wisdom of God
4. He shows how we are called in unity to the wisdom of God
5. In Ch. 2 he reminds them of the message he preached when he first came to them

B. Paul's Method

1. Paul often reminded his readers of how God first met them
 - a. he often reminded people how and what they heard
 - b. also reminded them of the power of God that was demonstrated when they first came to faith
2. We see this in several of his letters;
 - a. Galatians
 - b. Thessalonians
 - c. Philippians
 - d. Timothy, and Titus
3. As we live in this world, it easy to be influenced by the world
 - a. subtly, we are numbed to the reality of the spiritual realm
 - b. we are pressed in to the way and mold of the world
4. Remembering our roots in Christ is an important part of keeping us growing in Him.
5. That is why Jesus said regarding Communion, "Do this is remembrance of Me."
6. So, Paul thinks back to the time he first came to Corinth and the message he preached to them . . .

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 1-5

1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.

2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.

4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human

**wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.**

1. From the Book of Acts and the writings of Paul, we can safely say that he was anything ***BUT*** timid and fearful.
2. And as far as eloquence is concerned, there have been few people in history who could match Paul's eloquence
3. Why then did he come in fear and simplicity to Corinth?
4. Some see what Paul says here as the result of his failure in Athens.
 - a. Acts 17
 - 1) in Athens, called to the Areopagus
 - 2) he had heard of these guys
 - 3) he had grown up in Tarsus; well known University there
 - 4) great philosophers there
 - 5) Paul's big chance to win them
 - 6) Acts 17 = the message he preached: Brilliant!
 - 7) some came to the faith, but most thought he was a babbling idiot.
 - b. some commentators say that Paul felt like a failure because of the poor response he had from the Areopagus
 - c. his next stop was Corinth
 - 1) these commentators think that as he traveled to Corinth, he thought about the failure
 - 2) and decided not to repeat it in Corinth
 - 3) which was just as enamored with philosophy as Athens (maybe more so)
 - d. there may be some merit to this view, but I wonder if there is something else Paul is driving at in these verses
5. Paul well knew the reputation of Corinth
 - a. it was a moral cesspool
 - b. he was going in to a city wholly devoted to immorality and sin.
 - c. what would your state of mind be if you were given the task of being the first person to take the gospel to and plant a church in, Las Vegas.
 - d. Corinth was like Las Vegas and San Francisco all rolled into one.
6. As he approached the city, he thought about what way to minister to them
7. His conclusion = He would preach one thing; Jesus Christ, and specifically, the Cross of Christ.
8. Paul's method when ministering to people was to speak to them where they were at . . .

- a. 1 Corinthians 9:19-22 For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those *who are* under the law, as under the law, that I might win those *who are* under the law; to those *who are* without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those *who are* without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some.
 - b. when in Athens, at the Areopagus, he had spoken to those who were the intellectually elite in terms they would listen to. It wasn't until he mentioned the resurrection that they guffawed and turned away
 - c. Paul did not fail there - a small group did believe, including two of the philosophers: Dionysius and Damaris.
9. Paul was all things to all people so that he could win them to Christ.
10. But as he came to Corinth, he was faced with a dilemma
11. How could he be all things to them?
- a. they were a pack of degenerate sinners
 - b. what was to be his method with them seeing that he could not sink to their level of immorality
12. His conclusion = he would preach the simple, straightforward, blunt message of the Cross.
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13. There is an important lesson here for us.
- a. when dealing with people whose lives are immersed in sin, the best message is the simple message of the Cross
 - b. forget the arguing and the cut to the chase; bring them to the reality of the man who was crucified for sinners
 - c. there is power in the simple declaration of the fact of the Cross
 - d. why? Because those who are deep in sin usually know it and don't deny it
 - e. they are often more open and ready for the gospel and don't need as much convincing
 - f. we see this in the life of Christ:
 - 1) who demonstrated a greater readiness to respond to and believe in Him, the religious people or the sinners?
 - 2) the Pharisees or the tax-collectors and prostitutes?
14. So Paul came to Corinth determined to preach one message

- the Cross.

- a. and he was not going to cloud the message with fancy words or eloquence
- b. he was going to preach it in simplicity
- c. a certain church had a beautiful stained-glass window just behind the pulpit. It depicted Jesus Christ on the cross. One Sunday there was a guest minister who was much smaller than the regular pastor, a man who was well known for his eloquence and oratory prowess. A little girl listened to the guest for a time, then turned to her mother and asked, "were is the man who usually stands there so we can't see Jesus?"
- d. some men are great speakers
 - 1) they are eloquent and mighty in speech
 - 2) people listen and go away remarking what a remarkable preacher he is
- e. other men are not so eloquent but so glorify the Lord and His cross
 - 1) when they go away, they do not remark on their eloquence
 - 2) but on how much better they know Jesus

15. Friends, this is the theme of this pulpit!

2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

- a. that is what this pulpit is consecrated to
- b. it is not a platform for political action
- c. it is not a dais for moral realignment
- d. it is not a booth for the dispensing of the psychological palliatives of this age
- e. it is for the proclamation of the Person and work of Jesus Christ

B. V. 3

3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.

1. Whence this weakness, fear and trembling
 - a. first of all, not a fear for safety - he never feared for that!
 - b. nor was he ashamed of the gospel
 - c. the words he uses here he uses in other places to describe the sober sense of handling something that is precious

- d. it means to be concerned to show something the dignity and reverence due it
- e. Paul was anxious to be faithful to God by accurately proclaiming the message of the cross
- f. he was well aware of what happens to God's servants when they misrepresent Him.
 - 1) Moses was barred from entering the Promised land
 - 2) David brought a plague on Israel
- 2. I can relate to his fear and trembling: Not a time goes by to teach that I don't tremble and grow anxious just before sharing God's word.

C. Vs. 4-5

**4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.**

- 1. There was a saying at that time that went, "He speaks in Corinthians words."
 - a. meant a person who was so eloquent it was entertaining just listening to them speak.
 - b. a Hungarian opera singer was touring the US and was given a huge and glamorous dinner party.
 - 1) there were many dignitaries present
 - 2) following dinner, as dessert was being served
 - 3) the hostess asked the opera star to share something inspiring, but to speak in Hungarian
 - 4) the diva rose and began to speak, at first quietly, then swelling with eloquence
 - 5) more and more passion entered her voice and as she concluded, not a dry eye could be found at the table.
 - 6) when she finally sat down, the woman next to her leaned over and asked, "Was that a famous Hungarian poem or historical speech?"
 - 7) the star simply said, "No. I just counted to 100."
- 2. It's easy to move people with an impassioned oration.
 - a. crowds can often be gathered and whipped into a frenzy by an eloquent orator
 - b. but the results are short lived and empty
- 3. Paul was determined to avoid speaking in "Corinthians words."
- 4. He wasn't there to gain a following or to entertain
- 5. He was there as an ambassador to proclaim the Good News

of the Kingdom of God

- a. he knew that eloquence does not make Christians
 - b. only the Spirit of God working through the Word of God can bring a person to faith
6. And that is what happened at Corinth
- a. Paul preached the Cross
 - b. people were saved
 - c. their lives were changed
 - d. that is what he means by, the "*demonstration of the Spirit and of power.*"
 - e. "demonstrate" - a strong word
 - 1) irrefutable proof
 - 2) an unanswerable argument
 - f. the demonstration of the power of God at work in the gospel was changed lives.
 - g. A man who had been horrible, fall down drunk was won to Christ.
 - 1) his work mates tried to shake him and said,
 - 2) "Surely a sensible man like you cannot believe in the miracles that the bible tells about.
 - 3) "You cannot, for instance, believe this Jesus of yours turned water into wine."
 - 4) Said the man, "I do not know, but in my own house I have seen him turn beer into furniture."

III. CONCLUSION

- A. What Do These Things Say To Us?
1. Paul reminded them of how he came to them
 - a. the message he preached
 - b. it's result among them
 2. That message = The Cross of Jesus Christ
 3. The result = changed lives
 4. What wins people today?
 - a. not eloquence
 - b. the Cross!
 5. You don't have to be eloquent to see others saved
 6. You simply need to share the simple message of the Cross = Jesus died and rose
 - a. share it is word
 - b. share it in the way you live
- B. We Have The Cure
1. There is a terrible plague that is destroying lives today
 2. It attacks the immune system and slowly but surely kills the person infected by it
 3. Not A-I-D-S

4. S - I - N
5. We have no cure for AIDS, but we do for sin
6. The Cross
7. Believers are the ones who have the medicine
8. What would you think of the doctor who discovered the cure for AIDS but kept it to himself because he was afraid people might make fun of him for saying he had discovered it?