

Session 3: 1 Corinthians, Chapter 2

Question:

What influenced you when you came to Christ? Was it the words of wisdom of the preacher...or, was it the power of God spoken through the mouth of a willing servant?

1 Corinthians 2:1-5, "And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. ² For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. ⁴ My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power."

THE PROCLAMATION AND THE POWER

Paul remembers back to the first time he came to Corinth.

Three (3) things stand out:

1. He came speaking in simplicity.

Note that Paul had come to Corinth from Athens. It was at Athens that, for the only time in his Christian life, as far as we know, he had attempted to state Christianity in philosophic terms. There, on Mars Hill, he had met the philosophers and had tried to speak in their own language (Acts 17:22—31); and it was there that he had one of his very few failures.

His sermon in terms of philosophy had very little effect (Acts 17:32—34). It seems that Paul said to himself, "Never again! From now on I will tell the story of Jesus in utter simplicity. I will never again try to wrap it up in human categories. I will know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him upon his Cross."

The truth is that....the sheer unadorned story of the life of Jesus has in it a unique power to move the hearts of men.

2. He came speaking in fear.

Not fear for his own safety; nor fear or the shame of the gospel he was preaching.

It was "the trembling anxiety to perform a duty."

The man who has no nervousness, no tension, in any task, may give an efficient performance; but it is the man who has this trembling anxiety who can produce an effect which artistry alone can never achieve.

3. He came with results and not with words alone.

The result of Paul's preaching was that things happened.

He says that his preaching was unanswerably demonstrated to be true by the Spirit and by Power.

The word he uses is the word for the most stringent possible proof...the kind which there can be not argument.

What was it? It was the proof of changed lives.

Something re-creating had entered into the polluted society of Corinth.

Story: A man who had been a reprobate and a drunkard was captured by Christ. His co-workers used to try to shake him and say, "Surely a sensible man like you cannot believe in the miracles that the Bible tells about. You cannot, for instance, believe that this Jesus of yours turned water into wine."

"Whether He turned water into wine or not," said the man, "I do not know; but in my own house I have seen Him turn beer into furniture."

No one can argue against the proof of a changed life.

It is our weakness that too often we have tried to talk men into Christianity...instead of, in our own lives, showing them Christ.

"A saint," as someone said, "is someone in whom Christ lives again."

Paul said, "Our lives should reflect that of Christ!"

What is he saying?

As we look in the mirror of life (how we live) we should be looking like Christ Jesus. His demeanor, his character, his joy, his willingness to say, "Get thee behind me Satan" in the times we are tempted.

Can you do that?

What makes you different than Jesus besides His divinity? What makes you different than Jesus as far as character?

1 Corinthians 2:6-9, *"We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ However, as it is written: 'What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived'—the things God has prepared for those who love him."*

What is this wisdom of God in which Paul speaks?

Wisdom = dictionary: (1) Scientific or philosophical knowledge; learning; scholarly (erudition).

(2) Quality of being wise; ability to judge soundly and deal sagaciously with facts (especially as they relate to life and conduct); discernment and judgment; discretion.

Sagacious=keen in sense perception; shrewd.

God's Wisdom = a special teaching that is not the product of the intellectual activity of men; it is the gift of God and came into the world with Jesus Christ. All our discoveries are not so much what our minds have found out as what God has revealed to us.

Only the student who works can make himself fit to receive the real riches of the mind of a great teacher.

**It is so with us and God. The more we strive to understand, the more God can tell us; and there is no limit to this process, because the riches of God are unsearchable...not unobtainable...but humanly unsearchable. Only the person who has already given his heart to Christ can understand.
Heart = mind, will, emotions.**

This passage introduces us to a distinction between:

- **Different kinds of Christian Instruction**
- **Different stages of the Christian Life**

Two (2) different kinds of instruction in the early Christian Church:

1. **"Kerygma" (Greek)...means herald's announcement from a king which was the plain announcement of the basic facts of Christianity, the announcement of the facts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and His coming again.**
2. **"Didache" (Greek)...means teaching; this was the explanation of the meaning of the facts which had already been announced (obviously a 2nd stage for those who have already received "kerygma.")**

Paul is trying to get this over to the Corinthian believers.

So far...Paul had been talking about Jesus Christ and Him crucified; that was the basic announcement of Christianity; but.....Paul does not stop there; Christian instruction goes on to teach not only the facts but the meaning of the facts.

Stages of the Christian Life

Elementary...the facts of life (Jesus died, buried, rose again...and will be coming back for His own).

Next stages are progressive (not a bad word)....deeper teaching about what these basic facts mean.

Tragedy is that many people are content to remain at the elementary stage when they should be going on strenuously to think things out for themselves through a deeper study with God...and His Word. You do this by bathing your study in prayer...letting God teach you...use you...grow you...mature you.

Wisdom of God...which is a mystery that can only be penetrated by the mind that seeks God...and His ways.

1 Corinthians 2:10-16, "...these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. ¹³ This is what we speak, not in words

taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.¹⁴ The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.¹⁵ The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments,¹⁶ for, “Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.”

Basic things in this passage:

- **Paul lays down that the only person who can tell us about God is the Spirit of God.**

The Carnal Man—has feelings which are so personal and private...and experiences which are so intimate that no one knows them except a man's own spirit.

God's revelation—He has deep and intimate things in Him which only His Spirit knows; and that Spirit is the only person who can lead us into really intimate knowledge of God.

- **Paul speaks about interpreting spiritual things to spiritual people (not every man can understand these things).**

Two kinds of people:

(1) Those who are *psuchikos*—*Psuche* (Greek) principle of physical life; everything which is alive has *Psuche* (dog, cat, any animal). But it does not have *Pneuma*. *Psuche* is that physical life which a man shares with every living thing.

(2) Those who are *Pneumatikoi*—*Pneuma* is the word for Spirit. A person who is *Pneumatikos* is the person who is sensitive to the Spirit and whose life is guided by the Spirit. *Pneuma* is that which makes a person different from the rest of creation and kin to God.

Verse 14 speaks of the person who is *psuchikos*. He is the man who lives as if there was nothing beyond physical life and there were no needs other than material needs, whose values are all physical and material.....A man like that cannot understand spiritual things. It is easy to become so involved in the world that there exists nothing beyond it.

We must pray to have the mind of Christ (vs. 16), for only when He dwells within us are we safe from the encroaching invasion of the demands of material things.

Do you know some of those people who value things more than God.....and thinks anything spiritual is a waste of time (mere foolishness)?

Know Christ and desire to pursue His attributes, His attitude, and His awareness of Godly wisdom!