

### Preaching of the Cross

#### 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:13

Within five years of Paul forming the church at Corinth, the church had divided into many smaller factions. Instead of following the doctrine that Paul had taught them, they began following different men. It became personalities over content. Paul admonished them in verse 10 to be of one mind, to speak the same thing, to be perfectly joined together. Paul was telling them to unite over the doctrine that they were taught by him and not to accept any other doctrine.

One issue that divided them was baptism. Paul had baptized some who were in the assembly five years before writing 1 Corinthians. But things were changing, and now he states that he was actually glad that he didn't baptize any more people than he did. This was because the Lord had since revealed to him that baptism was not to be a part of the Dispensation of Grace. Baptism had now become an activity that was divisive. It was something done by Israel in past times, but now had no place in this new dispensation. Keeping baptism actually makes the cross of Christ of none effect because it belongs to Israel under Law. The preaching of the cross is all about our liberty in this Dispensation of Grace.

#### **Foolishness and wisdom** (verses 1:18–30)

Paul continues speaking to the Corinthian church about their many internal contentions, which relate back to them accepting the foolishness of man as their source of wisdom. Mankind has always had a high view of himself, and therefore he tends to accept human wisdom while rejecting God's wisdom. We see religious leaders today accepting man's wisdom in songs like *Reckless Love*, or in popular religious books such as *The Shack*, or *Jesus Calling* (1 Timothy 4:1). These Christian-like things tickle the ears and puff people up while leading people away from truly knowing Christ and understanding how to live for Him (Colossians 1:9–10). The Corinthian church was no different. They were following charismatic teachers at the expense of proper, dispensationally correct knowledge. Paul even chides them for following Christ because it was now no longer proper (dispensationally) to teach what He had taught Israel. In doing this, they were no longer following what Jesus Christ revealed to Paul, the preaching of the cross.

When Paul speaks of the preaching of the cross, he is referencing the whole body of doctrine which he had preached and taught them. It was not just the gospel message of Christ's death. The Corinthians were no longer perfectly joined together or united in the preaching of the cross, but had split into groups who were following the wisdom of men.

The preaching of the cross, which is the doctrine of Grace that was revealed to Paul by Jesus Christ, is called the wisdom and power of God. The wisdom of God is found in Scripture, and can only be understood by a person indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:13–15). The power of God is demonstrated in Christ's resurrection following the crucifixion (Romans 1:4; 1 Corinthians 6:14; Philippians 3:10), and in His ability to change lives (Romans 1:16; Ephesians 3:20). The world is incapable of understanding the things that have been opened up to us. To them, it is all foolish.

#### **Power of God working in Paul** (verses 2:1–5)

Paul demonstrates how God's power is working through him. He didn't come as a great orator or charismatic leader, he came to the Corinthians in fear and trembling. He only came as the bearer of the Gospel of Grace, specifically, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It was through his weakness that God's power could be made known. He encouraged them to quit following individual Christian leaders and to go back to the doctrine that they had originally heard from him.

The Corinthians were smitten by powerful men, but Paul came to them as weak so that the power of God could be demonstrated through him (2 Corinthians 4:6–7).

### **Princes who crucified the Lord** (verses 2:6–8)

Many people insert the work of Satan into this passage making him the one who put Christ on the cross. People seem drawn to interject supernatural explanations instead of going with a more natural one. Since Paul has been comparing God’s wisdom with man’s wisdom in previous verses, it makes sense that Paul is continuing with this line of reasoning.

There are some translations that use the word *princes* in verse 8, which leads to the comparison of Satan being the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2 also see Matthew 9:34). However, there is no real biblical support that princes (plural) refers to Satan and presumably his minions. Satan is called a prince, but 1 Corinthians 2 is addressing the work of princes.

It helps to understanding that the word *prince* is translated from the Greek word *archon* and means ruler. This same Greek word is used to refer to the leaders of Israel putting Christ to death.

**Luke 24:20** and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

**Acts 13:17** And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did* also your rulers.

Interjecting this knowledge into 1 Corinthians 2:6–8 should help lead one to understand that the leaders of Israel are the ones who are being blamed for the death of Christ. This lines up with Peter’s accusation to the leaders of Israel (Acts 2:22–23; 3:13–15; 4:8–9).

This passage is a continuation of Paul’s thought about the wisdom of man. Man’s wisdom impelled the leaders of Israel to put Christ to death. 15 years later, these leaders are now passing away (verse 6). Man’s wisdom is contrasted with God’s wisdom contained in the revelation of the Mystery given to Paul. This wisdom was hidden until a predetermined time when it was revealed (verse 7). This wisdom was not, and could not be known by the rulers of this age, the ones who put Christ to death. If they had understood what was later revealed to Paul, they would not have put Christ to death (verse 8).

In all of this, Paul is showing the Corinthians that human wisdom (killing Christ) is total foolishness in light of the now revealed wisdom of God contained in the Gospel of Grace.

### **Another misapplied verse** (2:9–13)

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” How many times have we heard this verse being applied to heaven? This is the problem with picking one verse out of the middle of a passage and trying to understand what it is saying. This verse needs to be read in light of what Paul was saying previously, that the wisdom of God is wrapped up in the Mystery. The things that God revealed to Paul are so overwhelmingly wonderful that it is impossible for anyone to even think God would do this for us. We don’t have to wait to go to heaven to understand these things because they have now been revealed to us by the apostle Paul, and we were given the Holy Spirit to help us understand these deep things of God. Again, if these leaders of Israel had any idea what the cross would accomplish, they would not have put Christ to death.

Notice in verse 7 that this wisdom was all planned out before the beginning of creation, and it was done unto our glory. This is brought out in Ephesians where we discover that the Body of Christ was all preplanned before creation and that we would be blessed with every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3–4). God’s grace is being lavished upon us in ways that mankind could never even think on their own (Ephesians 1:8–11). It would be worthwhile at this point to read through the book of Ephesians to help get the full impact of everything God did for the members of the Body of Christ.

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