

Sunday, August 23, 2015—I Corinthians 1:18: The Preaching of the Cross

### Introduction

- Two weeks ago, in a message titled “Not With Wisdom of Words” we looked at the second half of I Corinthians 1:17. In doing so, we saw that the second half of verse 17 deals with how Paul’s preaching of the gospel was to be conducted. Paul’s preaching of the gospel was not to be done “with wisdom of words.”
- Furthermore, we observed that there are two types of wisdom dealt with in the Bible: 1) the wisdom that belongs to men, and 2) the wisdom that belongs to God.
- Which type of “wisdom” is Paul talking about in verse 17? The wisdom of God or the “wisdom of this world” (I Cor. 1:20)? Well with type of “wisdom” would make the cross of Christ of “none effect?” Obviously, it would be the wisdom of this world.
- Christ did not send Paul to preach the gospel “with wisdom of words” because doing so risked making “the cross of Christ of none effect.” Is Paul worried that the “wisdom of words” will void or cancel out the power of the crosswork of Christ to save men from their sins? No, he is worried that the preaching of the gospel, i.e., the message of the cross would be made of none effect via the “wisdom of words.”
- Our study this morning is going to further elaborate upon why the “wisdom of words” has the capacity to render the cross of Christ of none effect.
- This morning as we look at verse 18, I would like to consider the following three points:
  - The Preaching of the Cross in Paul’s Epistles
  - The Preaching of the Cross in Early Acts
  - The Preaching of the Cross in I Corinthians 1

### I Corinthians 1:18

- **For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.**
- The reason why the “wisdom of words” possess the capacity to make the “cross of Christ of none effect” in verse 17, is because according to verse 18, the gospel Paul was preaching had everything to do with “the preaching of the cross.” The “wisdom of words” could never make of none effect what Christ accomplished on the cross, however, they could make the cross’s message of none effect if they interfere with the simplicity of the cross and its message.

*The Preaching of the Cross in Paul's Epistles*

- In verse 18, Paul calls the gospel that Christ sent him to preach in verse 17 the “preaching of the cross.” Fundamentally, at its most basic level, Paul’s message and ministry extolled the good news of the crosswork of Christ.
  - I Corinthians 1:23—“we preach Christ crucified”
  - I Corinthians 2:2—“. . . save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”
  - Galatians 6:14—“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,”
  - Ephesians 2:16—“And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross,”
    - Ephesians 2:13—“. . . are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”
  - Philippians 2:8—“. . . even the death of the cross.”
  - Colossians 1:20—“And, having made peace through the blood of his cross,”
  - Colossians 2:14—“. . . nailing it to his cross.”
- I Corinthians 1:18—“the preaching of the cross” in Pauline theology is no limited to the justification of sinful men before God. Rather, it encompasses the totality of the revelation of the mystery regarding the Godhead’s plan in forming the body of Christ in the first place.
- I Corinthians 2:7-8—had Satan and his minions known about “the wisdom of God in a mystery” they never would have “crucified the Lord of glory.”
- Colossians 2:15—through the cross, God triumphed over the principalities and powers in the heavenly places thereby making a show of them openly.
- I Corinthians 1:18—the “preaching of the cross” includes everything Paul taught from the simplicity of the gospel, that is God justifying mankind today by grace through faith in the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ up to and including God’s plans and purposes in revealing the mystery and forming the body of Christ.
- Do you get the idea that in Paul’s mind, “the preaching of the cross” is a good thing or a bad thing?

### *The Preaching of the Cross in Early Acts*

- Acts 2:22-23—Peter holds Israel responsible and morally culpable for what transpired on the cross.
- Acts 2:36—“. . . God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”
- Acts 3:12-17—“. . . killed the Prince of life”
- Acts 7:51-53—“. . . betrayers and murderers:”
- Is the preaching of the cross in Peter’s preaching a good thing or a bad thing? It was certainly not something that Peter was glorying in. Rather, it was something for which Israel was called to repent.
  - Acts 2:37-38
  - Acts 3:18-19
- I Corinthians 1:17—did Christ send Paul to preach the gospel, i.e. good news of his crosswork? Did Peter preach the crosswork of Christ as good news for Israel during the early Acts period?
- Galatians 2:7—a consideration of these verses from early Acts proves that Peter and Paul were preaching different gospels. That each of these men possessed a dispensationally specific commissioning, gospel, and apostleship is a fact of history that needs to be understood in order to make sense of the Bible.

### *The Preaching of the Cross in I Corinthians 1*

- I Corinthians 1:18—it clear from verse 18 as well as the context, that in I Corinthians 1 Paul is dealing with some fundamental aspects of the preaching of the cross, i.e., justification or initial salvation.
- The Greek word translated “perish” in verse 18 occurs 92 times in Greek text supporting the King James Bible. It is variously rendered by the translators as: perish 33x, destroy 26x, lose 22x, be lost 5x, and lost 4x.
- According to *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*, the English word “perish” carries the following meanings: 1) To die; to lose life in any manner; applied to animals. Men perish by disease or decay, by the sword, by drowning, by hunger or famine, 2) To die; to wither and decay; applied to plants. 3) To waste away; as, a leg or an arm has perished. 4) To be in a state of decay or passing away. 5) To be destroyed; to come to nothing. 6) To fail entirely or to be extirpated (2 Kings.9). 7) To be burst or ruined; as, the bottles shall perish (Luke 5). 8) To be wasted or rendered useless

(Jer.9). 9) To be injured or tormented (1 Cor.8). 10) To be lost eternally; to be sentenced to endless misery (2 Pet.3).

- Note the 10<sup>th</sup> definition, “to be lost eternally” as well as its accompanying Biblical reference II Peter 3:9.
- I Corinthians 1:18—when Paul speak of “them that perish” he is clearly speaking about lost or unsaved people.
- Please note the following definitions for the English word “foolishness:” 1) Folly; want of understanding. 2) Foolish practice; want of wisdom or good judgment. 3) In a scriptural sense, absurdity; folly. The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. 1Cor. 1. (*Webster’s 1828*)
- The lost, i.e., “them that perish” look at “the preaching of the cross” as being absurd, complete, total, and utter folly, as well as totally bankrupt of wisdom and judgment.
  - Read quotation from William Lane Craig vs. Christopher Hitches Debate from April 4, 2009 at [Biola University](#).
- The word “but” establishes a contrast between “them that perish” and those who “are saved.” For those who “are saved” (not “being saved” as in the NIV) “the preaching of the cross” is the power of God.
- I Corinthians 1:23—the Power of God today is found in “the preaching of the cross.” In terms of man’s wisdom, God takes the most foolish and unwise thing and use that to “save them that believe.”
- Romans 1:16—the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.
- This is the reason that Christ did not send Paul to preach the gospel “with words of wisdom” (I Cor. 1:17). Man’s wisdom causes a power outage in the preaching of the gospel because it confuses the issue and makes men think that they can bring forth something of their own that God will accept. When this happens the cross of Christ is made of none effect because men are getting in their own way in terms of being saved.