

no other message. The essence of preaching is Christ crucified. Never forget that!

3. The Cross PROCLAIMS GOD. vv. 24, 25.

a. His power.

The term used here notes His power as omnipotence. It is the Greek term from which the word, "dynamite" is derived. This is God's answer to the Jew's desire for an outward manifestation!

b. His wisdom.

The word employed here means philosophy and His systematic approach to the problem of sin. This is the ultimate of His omniscience. This is the answer to the Greek's quest for intangible evidence.

c. His foolishness.

Here is the morphology of God. The abstract neuter singular with the definite article means, the "foolish act of God" as seen by the Greeks. It is, in fact, wiser than the wisdom of men!

d. His weakness.

The same idiom here, as above, hence, "the weak act of God." The Cross seemed defeat, but it conquered sin and turned out to be the mightiest force on earth.

Conclusion: The bare, naked Roman gibbet upon which our Lord died was insignificant, but He was! He is! God help us never to dilute our message from HIM. To those who are in the way of perishing (by use of the present participle) this whole matter of the Cross is foolishness (v. 18). To those saved, it is the power of God (v. 18). To those whom God has called, it is power, wisdom, and strength (vv. 24, 25). The Cross still divides men. It did 1900 years ago; it does today. What will YOU do with Christ, the Christ of the Cross? Amen.

BOOK OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

"The Cross of Christ"

I Corinthians 1:18-25

Introduction

1. Nothing is able to replace the CROSS in the message of the Gospel. The preaching of that Cross is central to any ministry which lays claim to a call of God (I Cor.1:17).

2. What's more--the Cross must be preached! It is not the finely-spun theorems or carefully systemized schemes which are important. The fact of the Cross is essential! This is so important because of what is conveyed by that Cross.

3. As one examines the characteristics of the Cross-message, he is made aware that here is a fact of the Word of God which cannot be diluted in any sense or form. What sort of character is the Cross? Examine the following statements and make your conclusion:

1. The Cross JUSTIFIES SCRIPTURE. vv. 19-21.

a. By quotation. v. 19.

Israel had intended to gain help from Egypt against Assyria rather than take trust in the Lord. This is worldly statesmanship! The quote is from Isa. 29:14 and points to the fact that God has already (in the O. T.) judged human wisdom. Paul warns the Corinthians against the worldly wisdom by appealing to the Word, which they claimed to believe! Two statements are made: 1) I will perish the wisdom of the worldly-wise ones and 2) I will set aside the discernment of the worldly-discerners.

b. By question. v. 20.

Here are some rhetorical questions. The quotations are from Isa. 19:12 and 33:18. Mark the four questions:

1) Where is the wise? The answer is not expressed but is intimated to be that human wisdom no longer stands where the Cross is preached! Reference is to Gentiles.

2) Where is the scribe? The thought here is that the Jewish scribe has also been swept aside. He had the knowledge of the Scripture, but he used it to defend his own wisdom!

3) Where is the disputer of this world? This seems to combine both Gentile and Jew as coming under the judgment of God's wisdom. The "disputer" is one who examines accurately and disputes thereafter. But he is a debater of this age (world). The term employed for "world" connotes the world as it exists in time, that is, the world in motion!

4) Hath not God made foolish? Here is the key to the whole matter. By using the word, "kosmos" for world, Paul interjects a marvelous thought. Even the world at rest and in order, God has made its wisdom foolish! God shows "wisdom" to actually be "foolishness" in bringing about what its "wisdom" was unable to accomplish. He has proved it to be practical folly. How? By the Cross!

c. By dereliction. v. 21

The thought here is a powerful one. The wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world are contrasted. Worldly wisdom gains nothing. The use of the Greek verb, "know" shows a solemn dirge of doom on both the Greeks and Jews in their theology. Romans gives a complete picture of the failure here (chapter 1). Godless human theology of today is no better than in Paul's day.

d. By salvation. v. 21

Whereas man's wisdom failed, God's succeeds. The "wisdom of God" is not the idea of creation, but salvation! The actual message is emphasized here, for the Greek term, "preaching" means that. Hence, the substance of the preaching is what is noted. This IS God's wisdom and good pleasure. The world condemns the preaching of the Cross and yet only that folly which stirs up the wisdom of man can save! Note that God does this through faith only. Here again the world refuses to subject itself to God. Faith beholds wisdom where the world only sees foolishness. The world doesn't get beyond the negative, but the believer gets salvation! Hallelujah.

2. The Cross MANIFESTS GROUPS. vv. 22, 23.

The groups listed are patent because of the Cross. It brings them into focus (cf. I Cor. 10:32).

a. The Jews.

This group asked for a "sign." They sought for the divine in external prodigies. They wanted manifestations of His omnipotence on their terms! They wanted something in the tangible sphere.

b. The Greeks.

The second group listed looked for evidence in the intangible sphere. They claimed to be seekers of the truth (cf. Acts 17:23). The thought here is philosophy and, possibly rhetoric, but in either case it leaves no room for the wisdom of God.

c. The Christians.

The "we" is a reference to Paul and the Corinthians and, by extension, to all who believe. The Cross is exalted. For the Jews, this is a stumblingblock or something worse than a noose. It tripped the Jews and landed them in a snare. The Greeks considered it ignorance and folly. But true Christians have