



First Corinthians 1:12 - 22

Verse 11 – (From Last Week's Study)

There is nothing worse than being in a church where there are **contentions** (heated disagreements). In Corinth, there is trouble in the family of God.

Paul just besought the church to be perfectly joined together, now he lets the cat out of the bag that he knows there are some problems. He has received a report from **Chloe's house**. It is from more than one person. Literally it reads "*by those of Chloe.*" **Chloe** perhaps had a church meeting in her home? There may have been multiple house churches. Paul writes this letter and it is to be read to all the **Brethren**--there's a problem in the church meeting at Chloe's. Paul knows if it's happening there, it may well be happening in other house churches.

And notice that the accusation is not anonymous. It has a name attached to it. Anonymous complaints carry no credibility.

Verses 12-17 –

There is division in the church over loyalties to men based on who baptized whom; **Paul, Apollos, Cephas...Is Christ divided?** Paul started the church in Corinth by baptizing **Crispus** (Acts 18:8), **Gaius** (Acts 19:29), and **Stephanas' household** (1 Corinthians 16:15). He may have baptized others, but he doesn't recall as he penned this letter.

Crispus was the chief ruler of the synagogue (succeeded Sosthenes? vs. 1). He was not the rabbi. His job was to select the readers and teachers in the synagogue and to ensure the traditions were being upheld. Through Paul's ministry in Corinth, **Crispus** and his entire household became believers in Jesus.

Assuming he is the same **Gaius**, he is mentioned as a traveling companion of Paul and later in Romans 16:23 as Paul's host which we may assume could indicate he had the church of Rome meeting in his home.

Stephanas' household is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:15 as being the firstfruits of Achaia, that is, some of the first believers. It would hold then that Paul baptized the household of Stephanas first, and yet in verse 16 he mentions them sort of as an afterthought, deemphasizing the importance of baptism.

Nonetheless, the church members in Corinth were boasting about who baptized them! Paul is straightening them out, **I thank God that I baptized none of you** except... He is not against baptizing others, he simply didn't want anyone attaching his name to their baptism, **Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.**

What does Paul mean by, **For Christ sent me not to baptize...**? This creates a dilemma since Jesus said clearly, "*Go and make disciples...baptizing them...*" (Matthew 28:19)

- John came baptizing (John 1:31,33).
- The twelve were commissioned to go and baptize (Matthew 28:19).
- But, Paul was not sent to baptize (1 Corinthians 1:17).

How do we solve this dilemma? The solution is that there has been a change in dispensations. The dispensation of grace has alleviated the ordinance (Law) of baptism. Baptism is good to do, but it may be that churches today, in the age of grace, put too much emphasis on baptism, at least for the wrong reasons.

This is why we get confused with passages like Mark 16:16 where it says, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*" In the dispensation of the Law, which preceded grace, that was certainly the case. Repentance, Jewish baptism, etc, were all part of the Law that had to be obeyed. But in the dispensation of grace, baptism and evangelism do not go hand in hand.

Baptism has a different role in the dispensation of grace, as it can be a wonderful testimony of a believer's desire to show his friends, family, and his church that he wants to live his life for Christ, but is not commanded for the believer today. Salvation is by grace through faith alone.

Neither is baptism commanded in any of the apostle Paul's writings for our sanctification. The claim has often been made that baptism is the first step of discipleship, but this does not necessarily hold true in the dispensation of grace. In reality, the first step of discipleship is to believe in Jesus Christ.

In a sense Paul is saying **preach the gospel** don't worry about baptism. In other words, evangelism and baptism do not go together.

Christ sent me not to baptize >< Christ sent me to preach the gospel.

The important thing is the gospel. Yet we are not to preach the gospel in our own wisdom, **not with wisdom of words**. We need to use words in order to preach the gospel, but they must not be manipulative words--they must be the word of the Lord and they must not water down the **cross of Christ** (it cannot be an emotional appeal) because once the emotion is gone our message will be powerless, **of none effect**.

This division over baptism has been ongoing for 2,000 years and continues to this day.

When we read the Bible dispensationally, it all begins to make more sense.

Verse 18 –

For the preaching. The Greek word translated here as **preaching** should be familiar--it is the word, Logos. It is not a verb in the Greek, but a noun. When we speak the Scripture (or *graphe*) we do it with logos (words).

Of the cross. The word of Scripture or our message, is **the cross**. The phrase literally reads, *For the word of the cross*. We should not think of this word "preaching" as a pastor or preacher standing up in front of a church. The word of the cross is a message everyone needs to present; to neighbors, coworkers, bosses, bankers, grocers, mail-carriers, family, friends, truly anyone we come in contact with. The word of the cross is life-changing for eternity.

But when the word of the cross is presented get ready for opposition because, **it is to them that perish foolishness.** Perish means lost. Those who are eternally lost; to them it is foolishness. Can a person who is lost be saved? Yes, God has not chosen some and damned others. As long as a person has breath he can be saved. Whosoever will may come. But unless a person believes, he is lost and the gospel will fall on deaf ears. We need to pray for our lost acquaintances and family members.

Unto us which are saved it is the power of God. Once a person believes he is saved. The words **which are saved** carry the idea of those who are *being saved* (Young's Literal Translation). The cross is no longer foolishness because the one saved realizes what has happened. Belief has provided him with everlasting life. It is the mighty work of the cross. The cross of Jesus Saves. There is no other power for salvation.

Verse 19 –

For it is written. This phrase always refers back to an Old Testament passage. If you are using a Bible with cross-references, Isaiah 29:14 is referenced.

"Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."

Without Paul including this quote we would not know Isaiah was prophesying about the cross.

Paul is reaffirming his point in verse 18. Who are the **wise**? The Greek word is *sophos* (σοφός). You might see the word **sophisticated**. It means the cultivated or learned ones; Greek philosophers and orators, even Jewish theologians. Great learning will not lead a person to the cross.

The cross is foolishness to unbelievers, no matter how wise or intelligent they may be. And according to Isaiah, the cross is a wonder. In other words, *how could someone dying on a cross possible save anyone?*

Verse 20 –

Paul asks the question, **hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?** His question references verse 18 which says *the word of the cross is foolishness to them that are perishing*. Worldly wisdom can get in the way of believing the truth. Through the cross, God shatters worldly wisdom.

How will the world come to know God? Not by worldly wisdom but only by the word of foolishness.

All worldly wisdom,

The wise (Greek: *sophos*). That is, the sophisticated one.

The scribe (Greek: *grammateus*) The one who wrangles with letters of a document.

The disputer (Greek: *suzetetes*) The debater. Notice the word *tete*? It means face. (We use a phrase *tete-a-tete* meaning a face-to-face meeting.) So, one who gets in a person's face!

All of these have been made foolish by God. Worldly wisdom may be good for worldly knowledge, but for supernatural knowledge it falls flat. The illiterate, unsophisticated, introverted babbler can come to the cross, for its power saves, not man's power.

Verses 21,22 –

How is a person saved? Not by **signs** or **wisdom**, but by the **foolishness of preaching**. Here the word **preaching** is the Greek word, *kerygma* which is *that which is proclaimed by a public crier*. In this case the proclamation is the *cross of Christ* (1:17).

The Gospel must be proclaimed! Man is saved by the clear revelation of God through the Gospel.

The Jews require a sign...Greeks seek after wisdom. People seek after signs today. Many churches work hard to appeal to emotionalism; even by using lighting in a church to help *set the mood* so people can be more easily *manipulated*. These are signs people seek today. Some large churches do more to produce a Broadway show than they do preaching the Gospel. These "Broadway producers" say,

The Gospel is too simplistic--people won't come back if that's all we teach! We must give them signs!

Churches today also try to provide wisdom: Financial seminars, how to lose weight classes, aerobics, on and on, trying to give their people wisdom. Often it is just the same wisdom of the world that can be found by *Googling* the subject. Everything is being taught *but* the Gospel.

Neither **signs** or **wisdom** will save.