

TITLE: THE WISDOM OF PAUL'S PREACHING (A "DEEP" SERMON!)

TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 2

INTRO: Ch. 1-4 –leader affiliation. It doesn't matter who baptized you; Christianity is *God's* wisdom, not man's. In 1:18-31–God's message (Christ, the church, salvation, preaching) has its source in God, and not in man's wisdom, so "*no flesh should glory in His presence*" (**1:29**). In chapter 2, Paul makes this more personal for the Corinthians & the source of their faith (v. 5).

I. A WISDOM FOUNDED IN GOD (v. 1-5):

- A. **The proclamation (v. 1-2).** I declared unto you the testimony (evidence) of God, but not with great oratory skills and eloquent speech. *I determined* (decided) *not to know anything...except Jesus Christ, and him crucified*. Nothing else is needed. Plus this message separates the men from the boys (those who *want* to know from those who do not want to know), since it's foolishness to those who are perishing (1:18). Christ crucified – this is the superior message, and what people must believe!
- B. **The proof (v. 3-4)**
- (v. 3) *I was with you in weakness, fear, & much trembling* (quaking w/fear). Was Paul nervous? Apparently so! Amazing, since prior to Corinth, Paul had already worked in Damascus, Arabia, Jerusalem, Antioch, Cyprus, P.A., Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Philippi, Thess, Berea, & Athens. So you're not the only one who gets nervous talking to others about Christ!
 - (v. 4a) *My speech and preaching weren't with persuasive words of man's wisdom*. For so many, this is the deciding factor on where they will attend – how well does the preacher preach?! People hear an eloquent "sermon," and instead of searching the scriptures to see if these things are so, they are easily influenced by good stories, clever sayings, and smooth presentations. E.g., "If you want to know the Book of God, you must first know the God of the Book!" This sounds nice, but it's a false doctrine packaged in attractive words, and emotion! (Knowing His book is *how* we know Him!)
 - (v. 4b) *But (my speech was) in demonstration of the Spirit and of power!* This was the real evidence of the truth of Paul's message. He didn't need all that flowery presentation because he had the gospel – the power of God to save. **AND**, he had the *demonstration of the Spirit & power!* Excellent application of **Mk 16:20** – miracles were to confirm the word!
 - Great speaking ability is not wrong, but it is **not** the evidence of a good preacher and a good message!
- C. **The purpose (v. 5).** *That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*. Otherwise, you can be easily converted to false doctrine just as soon as a better preacher comes along!

II. A WISDOM UNKNOWN TO MAN (v. 6-9):

- A. (v. 6) *We* (change from "I" to "we" – representing those inspired) *speak wisdom among them that are perfect* (complete, mature in their understanding; i.e., those who recognize this message (Christ crucified - v.2) as the power & wisdom of God – **1:24**). We don't use the wisdom of the world – not even the wisdom of princes (the highest recognized human wisdom)!
- B. (v. 7-8) We speak God's hidden wisdom. Context – human wisdom vs. God's wisdom – God's wisdom brought the P.O.S. by the crucifixion of Christ. Nobody could've known this without God's revelation – it would still be a mystery. But these inspired men were speaking this mystery (making it known). Even princes didn't know, otherwise they wouldn't have crucified Christ!
- C. (v. 9) Quote of **Isa 64:4** – *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man....* God's ways are simple (foolishness to arrogant man–**1:18**), yet too complex for man to ever come up with on his own. God had to reveal it!

III. A WISDOM REVEALED BY GOD (v. 10-16):

- A. **Revealed to inspired men (v. 10-11).** *God revealed them unto us* (apostles/inspired men) *by His Spirit* (source). Did the Spirit reveal just a few things? Or could the Spirit reveal to them *all things* (**2 Pet 1:3**)? Answer (v.10b-11): The Spirit knows the deep things (depth, mystery) of God (e.g., only the spirit of a man knows the deepest thing about that man – only **you** know **yourself**).
- B. **Revealed by inspired men (v. 12-13)** And we have received this Spirit, in order that we might know the things freely given to us by God (Christ, the free gift–**Rom 6:23b**; salvation). (v. 13) *We also speak* (teach what we've learned by the HS), *not in the words of man's wisdom* (as has been the topic), *but...of the HS, comparing...* (compare, contrast, Strong's – "combine spiritual ideas with appropriate expressions"). This is about translation. Spiritual thoughts (from the HS) were put into words (not man's words, but God's). This is verbal inspiration, not thought inspiration.
- C. **Received by the "spiritual" man, and not the "natural man (v. 14-16)** Who is the natural man? Who is the spiritual man?
- False ideas regarding these three verses when taken out of their context:
 - The "spiritual" man has the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, while the "natural" man does not.
 - The direct operation of the Holy Spirit is necessary in order to understand the word (v. 14).
 - The HS will give a special illumination to those He chooses. This is the D.O., which will allow him to understand.
 - The truth – remember the context! In v. 14-16, the topic has shifted to the **recipients** (from teaching to receiving)!
 - The context: Ch.1–man's wisdom cannot show us God (v. 21); it took **God's** wisdom. Ch. 2–God revealed His wisdom to man (through the apostles). Even from the beginning, man knew **nothing** of God's will until God *revealed* it!
 - (v. 14) *The natural* ("breath") *man* (opposite of the spiritual man – of the spirit) *receives* (accepts) *not...* His actions define who this "natural man" is – he is the man who won't accept the "things of God" (Christ & Him crucified) because they are foolishness to him (**1:18**–to the one perishing).
 - (v. 15) *A spiritual man judges* (investigate, discern) *all things* (context: Christ crucified, P.O.S.), *yet he is judged of no man* – because he follows God's spiritual ways, which aren't subject to man's wisdom and judgment (as seen in v. 16)
 - (v. 16) *For who has known the mind of the Lord...instruct him?* The spiritual man isn't judged...who may instruct God?

CONCLUSION: Who is the natural man? The contrast all along (1:18-31) has been man's/God's wisdom. Following God's wisdom makes one a spiritual man. The natural man follows worldly wisdom, which makes God's ways seem foolish. The message is "don't rely on human wisdom." God's ways are perfect; they need no alterations, additions, subtractions. The church needs to remember this as lately many want to change God's ways of worship, church leadership, evangelism, etc. This is reliance on one's own ways, not God's! We must rely only on God!