

The Wisdom of God

I Corinthians 1:1-31

4/29/01

Intro

- Men's Retreat this weekend!!

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We begin the first letter of Paul to the church in Corinth. Corinth was a wealthy commercial center on the isthmus connecting the mainland of Greece with the Peloponnesus. Today there is a canal very close to the city connecting the two oceans. It used to be that captains would rather have their ships dragged across the isthmus that go around the treacherous cape.

In our day, the word **Corinthian** means something special. The car has **Corinthian leather** we say with an accent. But in Paul's time, it was a city with a reputation for everything worldly and sinful. In other cities they could use the name like an accusation.

Illus – Mothers could say to their daughters as they were trying to leave the house dressed inappropriately, “You look like some Corinthian hussy.”

Paul started the church on his second missionary journey in about 50AD. He was the first to introduce the gospel, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles (Acts 18:1-11).

There was a letter written before this one which was lost and then this one was written about 5-7 years after the church as started. It was still fairly young at the time and the young Christians were acting in worldly ways.

There is much for us to learn from it, especially living in a country that is similar to it in many ways.

This first chapter begins with Paul confronting them by reminding them that God's wisdom is greater than man's.

They lived in a Greek culture that loved to debate wisdom. There were many philosophers of the day that loved to debate and many factions existed in the city. This tendency toward division was in the church as well as other worldly practices.

Paul's intro ; vs 2; He calls them “saints.” One of the ways that the enemy tries to keep us defeated is to constantly keep us in shame, but Paul calls them saints. One of the most powerful ways to be victorious is to know with certainty the way God looks at us.

Regarding division; vs 10; the reason why **cults** have such an impact today is because of their unity. Disagreement is not tolerated. This is seen very well in Mormonism. Joseph Smith saw that there were many different denominations and that this was a common criticism of the world against Christianity. So he decided to create a religion where there would be complete unity, or else!

- Quarrels and division come from selfish desires. James 4:1-2
- The answer is to keep God's interests ahead of man's. (Jesus said to Peter, “Get behind me...”)
- Spiritual maturity brings humility and unity. Worldly pride brings pride and divisions. Paul calls them back to unity in Christ.
- **This Christian faith is not about man's opinion, it's about God and His wisdom.**

I. God's Wisdom is the Power of God.

Vs 18-21
Col 2:8-10

A. Man's wisdom is empty deception.

- There is no room in God's wisdom for man's effort or wisdom.
- "Just try harder" doesn't work.

B. God's wisdom is the power of God.

Vs

- For salvation.
- For life change.
- **The wisdom of man** sees selfishness, but has no cure for selfishness.
 - It can see that hatred brings destruction, but has no cure for hatred.
 - It can see that man cannot get along with man, but cannot see that the problem is that man cannot get along with God.

Illus- Chuck Smith was visiting in China and the leaders there asked him what made Christianity different.

He said, "The difference is that in Christ there is the power of God, not just for salvation, but to change men's hearts.

Illus- The drivers of the trucks that hauled rice were stopped for inspection, but the Christian drivers were recognized and let through. They knew there were no rocks in the rice.

Why? Because God fills our lives with the fullness of His presence.

II. God's Wisdom is a Paradox.

Vs 25-28

A. God chose the foolish things to shame the wise.

- The things which put us ahead in the eyes of the world; may actually put us behind with God.

B. These are obstacles that must be overcome.

C. Imagine druggies and hippies leading a worldwide move of Christ.

III. God's Wisdom is all about God.

A. So that no man can boast about himself.

- Eph 2:8-9.

B. If we boast, we boast of the Lord.

Illus – There is great joy in telling what the Lord has done.

Conclusion

When we come to Christ, we often want to bring stuff with us from the world. But we must decide to leave the world behind and be changed by the wisdom of God.

At the beginning of his reign, King Solomon prayed one superior gift from God. Not wealth, not long life, but something far more valuable--he asked for "an understanding heart," which translated, a hearing heart. He asked, we say, for wisdom. But the genius of wisdom ... is the ability to open a room in one's heart for the talk--and so for the presence--of another. Wisdom is none other than the ability to listen. Ask God for His wisdom.