

Series: 1 Corinthians

Title: The Wisdom and Pleasure of God

Text: 1 Cor 1: 21

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Our subject is “The Wisdom and Pleasure of God.”

**1 Corinthians 1: 21: For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.**

The first problem in the Corinthian church is that they were trusting in man’s wisdom. They were impressed with preachers educated in man-made schools rather than Christ’s preachers, taught and sent by Christ himself. And they impressed with eloquent preaching rather than preaching which gives Christ all the glory, according to the scriptures, without man’s wisdom of words. Some even said, “We are of Christ. Christ converted us without the preaching of the gospel. So we do not need a preacher.”

Brethren, be fearful of a so-called conversion contrary to the scriptures. God saves exactly how God declares he saves in his holy word. There is no shadow of turning with God. “Let God be true and every man a liar.” (Rom 3: 4) When it comes to us being the liar that includes our feelings or so-called experiences. This doctrine—like all true doctrine—is only offensive to those who trust in a false refuge. If we are God’s, he will destroy every false refuge through this very means. May God do so now.

The Holy Spirit used Paul to declare that God does not use man’s wisdom to save his people, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” (1 Cor 1: 17-18)

Then the Holy Spirit gives reasons why God saves through the preaching of Christ crucified. Last time we looked at verse 19. This time we come to the next reason in verse 21:

**1 Corinthians 1: 21: For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.**

In the eternal wisdom of God, after God proved man’s wisdom foolish, it pleased God to give Christ the glory of sending his preachers, and through them Christ preaches his gospel, through which means Christ saves them that believe.

## **THE WISDOM OF GOD**

First, it is the wisdom of God to save through public preaching which gives Christ all the glory—“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God,…” (1 Cor 1: 21)

There are two things declared here; both true, both apply.

First, for thousands of years, God manifested to men his wisdom, by the things God made, which are clearly seen.

Romans 1: 19:...that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. 20: For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Yet, due to our fall in Adam, by man's own wisdom, not one sinner ever knew God. The wisest heathen never came to true understanding of God.

Romans 1: 22: Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools...25: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Then God created Israel, giving his oracles from Mt. Sinai. Yet, left to themselves, the gospel remained a hidden mystery. But they did the same thing the Gentiles did—they changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped man rather than God. That is what Paul refers to when he wrote,

Romans 2: 3: And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

Even when Wisdom himself walked among us, even seeing Christ in person, we read:

John 1:11: He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

1 Corinthians 2: 8: None of the princes of this world knew: for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

In the history of the world, not one sinner ever taught himself who God is and how God saves sinners! What about us?

Romans 3: 9: What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 10: As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12: They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Also, this phrase in our text means that this was on purpose “in the wisdom of God.” In God's eternal wisdom, he foreordained that after proving man's wisdom to be utterly worthless, Christ would come, establish his kingdom by his work on the cross, equip his preachers, send them forth and from then on his people would be saved only through the preaching of the gospel which gives Christ all the glory.

The Lord Jesus declared that John the Baptist marked the end of the old legal dispensation and the new beginning of this gospel dispensation. Christ said, “The law and the prophets *were* until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.” (Lu 16:16) Christ even rejoiced in God’s wisdom to hide the gospel from some and reveal it to others.

Luke 10: 21: In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. (also see Mat 11: 25)

The Holy Spirit declares through the apostle Paul that God ordained this before the world was made.

1 Corinthians 2: 7: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.

Understand, the public preaching of Christ is not God’s “Plan B” as some erroneously teach. God performs in time what God purposed to perform from eternity past, “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” (Is 46: 10)

So this phrase means, it was according to the wisdom of God, that when God had proven man’s total inability to know God by man’s own wisdom, after that, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

## **THE PLEASURE OF GOD**

Secondly, the Holy Spirit declares this is not only the wisdom of God, it is also God’s pleasure, “after that...it pleased God... by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” (1 Cor 1: 21)

Throughout scripture, we have seen the things that please God? I will declare these things again. God’s elect cannot be saved without all these things coming to pass. So the preaching of the gospel is also necessary because it pleased God the same as all these other things pleased God!

First, it pleased God to chose whom he would making his elect to be his people, “For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name’s sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.” (1 Sam 12: 22) Can one be saved except they be chosen of God? Can one of God’s elect ever be forsaken by God? Not one! Because it pleased the LORD to make you his people. Likewise, not one sinner can be saved apart from the preaching of the gospel, because it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

Also, it pleased God to bruise Christ our Substitute in place of his people, to satisfy his divine justice and justify us from our sins. “It pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.” (Is 53: 10-11) Can even one sinner be saved any other way than by God’s Righteous Servant justifying us

by bearing our iniquities on the cross? Neither can one be saved without the preaching of the gospel because both are the pleasure of the LORD.

Then we read that it pleased God that all fullness dwell in Christ. “He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. 19: For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” (Col 1: 18-19) God foreordained that Christ would usher in a new beginning—this gospel age. Can a single sinner be saved without receiving all fullness from Christ? No, because it pleased God. Therefore, in this gospel age, not one sinner shall be saved apart from the preaching of the gospel because it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe—it gives Christ all preeminence!

Remember, the works of Christ include Christ’s works as the risen Head over his church, the same as they do his works on the cross. They include Christ’s work of sending his preacher with his gospel; his work of sending his Spirit to quicken his people; and his work of revealing the truth in our hearts. It is for Christ’s glory as our risen Head that it pleased God to save by the public preaching of Christ.

Furthermore, it pleased God to reveal his Son in the hearts of his people at the time he predestinated. The apostle Paul said, “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me.” (Gal 1: 15-16)

Included in this inward work accomplished in his people, it pleased God that each of his elect shall come to him through God-given faith in Christ. “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Heb 11: 6)

In addition, it pleased God to make known to his people the mystery of his will and his will is his pleasure. “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.” (Eph 1: 9-10)

Therefore, in the end, it pleased God to give each of his elect the kingdom of God. Christ said, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Lu 12: 32)

Now here is the question. Can one of these things which please God fail to come to pass? Neither can this: “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” Was God sovereign enough to do all of these things which please him? So he is sovereign to send his gospel preacher to his child and save us through the preaching which glorifies Christ.

## **WHAT IS TRUE PREACHING?**

Lastly, what does our text mean when it speaks of preaching? What is true preaching which Christ sends and blesses to the hearts of his people? We must answer this question because our text says, “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” (1 Cor 1: 20)

True “preaching” includes literal public preaching, as well as, the subject, which is Christ.

True preaching declares Christ is the Son of God. Christ was chosen of God the Father and entrusted by God with his chosen elect people. He was sent of God. Christ is the GodMan—the Son of God and the Son of Man. He came to declare God’s righteousness that God might be just and the Justifier of the believer. (Rom 3: 26)

True preaching declares Christ finished this work of redemption for his particular people alone. The prophet Daniel declares what Christ accomplished and is accomplishing, “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.” (Dan 9: 24)

Did you notice that Christ came to seal up the vision and prophecy? All prophecy must be fulfilled by Christ Jesus. Therefore, this is so important. True preaching also declares Christ is the risen Head of his church. Christ receives the glory for the means, as well as the subject preached, as well as the glory for giving life and being the Life given.

We just read in Daniel that all prophecy must be fulfilled by Christ. Also we saw that God promised through the prophet Isaiah “the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in [Christ’s] hand.” (Is 53: 10) Christ accomplishes everything that pleases God, both by his work for his people, as well as his work in his people, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Php 2: 13)

Remember the word of the Lord delivered through the prophet Jeremiah, declaring, “I will give you preachers according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” (Jer 3: 15) That prophecy, like all others, must be fulfilled by Christ. Christ must receive all glory for fulfilling this prophecy.

So Christ’s true preachers are sent only by Christ himself! While Christ walked this earth, Christ personally called his apostles. He called the apostle Paul after arising. Christ sent them forth with the charge to preach the gospel of Christ, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect Likewise, Christ continues to send his preachers with his gospel.

Eph 4: 10: He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11: And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12: For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God,...

Please understand what the Holy Spirit is teaching in our text. Some in Corinth were saying “We are of Christ.” They were saying, “We searched the word without a preacher. It was Christ who revealed himself to us. But we were saved without preacher. Therefore, we are of Christ.” The Holy Spirit is asking the question through Paul, “Could Christ do that yet not send you the preaching of the gospel as he said he would?”

Of course Christ can send a preacher. He promised it in the prophets and Christ must be glorified for fulfilling all prophecy. As sovereignly and successfully as Christ accomplished eternal redemption for his people, Christ sovereignly and successfully sends his preacher with his gospel, and Christ sovereignly, successfully sends his Spirit, quickening, teaching and converting his child.

Before any professing believer uses his own experience to justify his claims of being converted apart from gospel preaching, we would do well to search God's word. In the New Testament scriptures, in this gospel age after God proved man's wisdom utterly foolish, every sinner God saved was saved through the preaching of Christ. The apostle Paul is the only exception but he was an apostle who had to be called directly by Christ. But even with the apostle Paul, Christ sent Ananias to him, though it was Christ who taught Paul personally.

You see, not only does true preaching declare Christ is the Righteousness of God for his people, it also glorifies Christ for sending us his preacher with his gospel.

Romans 10: 14: How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

Not only does Christ send his preacher to preach the gospel in truth, Christ also sends forth the Holy Spirit, revealing himself in us. Indeed, as scriptures declare, Christ "filleth all in all." Paul said,

Romans 1: 16: For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it—

"It" is the public preaching which gives Christ all the glory.

Romans 1: 16:...it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17: For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith:

Christ our Righteousness is revealed from Christ the Faithful to the believer in whom he has given faith to receive it. This too is prophecy Christ must fulfill. That is what is meant by the next phrase.

Romans 1: 17:...as it is written, The just...

Those justified by Christ our Righteousness.

Romans 1: 17...shall live...

They shall each be quickened to life by Christ the Life so that from then on...

Romans 1: 17:...the just shall live by faith. (Ro 1:16-17)

Oh, the wisdom of God! In the wisdom and pleasure of God, God designed it so that his sheep are made to flock together until the end. It is because by having experience Christ, the Power and

Wisdom of God, through the preaching of the gospel, we now know we are saved through the preaching of the gospel, not one-time, but from the first hour to the last hour. The just live by having Christ the Faithful preach to our heart of faith through public preaching. Christ said,

John 6: 57: As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. 63: It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.

As real as Christ preached the gospel to Simon Peter and his true disciples, Christ preaches his words to us through the preaching of the gospel. So we say with Peter, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Jn 6: 68-69)

What would make some in Corinth profess to believe on Christ in truth yet deny this truth, contending they were saved contrary to God’s word? Well, what would make a person reject any of the things that please God? The deceiving, wicked heart! Preaching—like every other aspect of Christ’s work—is only foolish to those who profess they were saved some other way. But when you take sides with God against yourself, bowing to God, bowing to his word. Then not one aspect of truth is offensive.

### **THREE IMPORTANT LESSONS TO LEARN**

After hearing this gospel according to God’s word here are three important lessons we need the Holy Spirit to teach us in our hearts.

One, be fearful of claiming we were saved in any way contrary to the word of God. “Let God be true and every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightiest be justified in they sayings, and mightiest overcome when thou art judged.” (Rom 3: 4) We can learn much true doctrine through our study. God may use those things and many other things to draw us to hear Christ proclaimed by a Christ-sent preacher. But God has declared that it pleased him to make the person of Christ, himself, to be our all through the public preaching of the gospel which glorifies Christ. Bow to God, to his word and drop everything else. When Christ sends his gospel and makes us hear and believe, we shall.

Secondly, remember, it is Christ working in you—in his church—through the preaching of the gospel. Christ is effectually working his will in his people. If a problem arises, the solution is to preach Christ and wait on Christ to work in the heart of his people.

Thirdly, never for any reason, take yourself out from under the preaching of the gospel which gives Christ all the glory. If he saves you and continues to save you, it will be through the preaching of Christ. Hold fast the profession of faith trusting God who is faithful. As the Hebrew writer said,

Hebrews 10: 25: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. 26: For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,...

**Amen!**