

Called to the Gospel 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5

Embrace the gospel of a crucified and resurrected Savior! It is madness to the world, but power and wisdom and truth from God.

Life principle: to do something well, you have to remain focused. Recent studies have demonstrated that success in life most strongly correlated not to intelligence, but to focus and being able to remain focused for a long period of time.

Problem in Corinth – they had lost focus on the gospel. Gospel was not the central controlling truth in each of their lives. Actually, lots of problems in Corinth. Fundamental issue – caught up in the current of culture, swept along; had taken eyes off of the gospel. Paul begins and ends this letter with the gospel.

READ 1 Cor 1:10-13, 17

I. The Gospel Unifies

- Among the many Corinthian problems, division was the first that Paul chose to address. If he could help them restore unity, they could tackle the rest of their issues together. Why had disunity become a problem?
 - Corinthian culture division/discord was a way of life. One of the organizing principles of life was status; aligning, climbing, politicking
 - Result: factions; conflict in community and church – 1:12-13
 - Solution: Christians, refocus on the gospel; you never outgrow the gospel
- We see division in THE Church today
 - Theological division: Sovereignty v. free will v. both; premillennial, amillennial, postmillennial; tongues; old earth v. young earth
 - Worship style – hymns, praise, blended
 - Denominations – Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian
 - Church v. para-church; Cru, Navigators, InterVarsity, sororities, fraternities
 - Belonging to a particular group is not necessarily bad. Always have theological differences – Bible inerrant, but interpreters are not
 - Single group/single church can't reach everyone in community
 - Not a building large enough for all Christians to worship together
 - Division over non-essentials, harshness in addressing differences and competitive spirit destroys witness of Church.
 - Concerned about rise of denominations in the church, John Wesley tells of a dream he had. In dream, he was ushered to the gates of Hell. There he asked, "Are there any Presbyterians here?" "Yes!", came the answer. Then he asked, "Are there any Baptists? Any Episcopalians? Any Methodists?" The answer was Yes! each time. Much distressed, Wesley was then ushered to the gates of Heaven. There he asked the same question, and the answer was No! "No?" To this, Wesley asked, "Who then is inside?" The answer came back, "There are only Christians here."
 - Solution: focus on the gospel

READ 1 Cor 1:17-18

II. The Gospel Divides

- Before meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul recognized just two kinds of people in the world – Jews and non-Jews. After meeting Jesus he realized that a new age had come, but there were still just two kinds of people in the world – those who embraced the gospel and those who rejected the gospel.
- Luke 12:51-53. Jesus: I will put brother against brother
- ***It is so clear to us. Why is it so difficult for others?***
- 1 Cor 1:19-21. God declared from the beginning, “I’m going to save you My way, not your way.”
- 1 Cor 1:22-23
- Jew hears gospel and says, ***“Where is the power?”***
 - God had given them “signs” and acted with power in the past
 - Messiah = anointed one, king, ruler. Messiah is POWER
 - Jews demanded “signs” of power from Jesus
 - If you are “messiah,” prove it. On cross, “Prove it!”
 - Jew: Crucified Messiah was an oxymoron. “Iced Hot Chocolate”
 - Crucifixion proved cursed by God, and guilty before Rome
 - Embrace the gospel and lose your Jewish identity. No conquering of enemies; no reclaiming of land; no worldly glory for Israel
- Greek hears gospel and says, ***“Where is the wisdom?”***
 - Greeks introduced the world to philosophy (love of wisdom)
 - Logic, rhetoric, reason. Human wisdom became an idol.
 - How can a man come back to life? Never happened before
 - Paul in Athens: assumed “resurrection” was name of a new god
 - Pliny the Younger. Christianity is “a perverse, extravagant superstition.”
- Consistent with how people think today. We have been formed in the Greek worldview
 - Trust in reason, education, science, technology
 - Professors: Embrace the gospel and lose your worldly status
 - ***Where is the intellect?*** We are too advanced to believe superstition
 - ***Where is the grace?*** Your gospel is judgmental
 - ***Where is the tolerance?*** Your gospel is too exclusive
 - ***Where is the effort and challenge?*** Your gospel is too easy. God helps those who help themselves.
- ***Why does it make sense to us and not to others?***
- They won’t believe, so they can’t believe – 1 Cor 2:14
 - Man, without God’s Spirit, can’t get it.
 - Romans 1:18-24. Blinded by sin
 - 2 Cor 4:3-4. Blinded by Satan
 - Satan doesn’t have power to drag someone to hell. Takes advantage of a hardened heart.
 - Mt 23:37. I would have gathered you together...but you would not
 - Mysterious intersection of power, authority, knowledge of God and responsibility of mankind
 - All that we see, and all that we have to work with is the human side of this equation.
 - “Do the work of an evangelist!”
- Remember, it’s not just about logic, reason but HEART. PRAY!

- The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only source of hope for the world
- If we are unwilling to share gospel, we are telling world, "Go to hell."
- **Penn Jillette of "Penn and Teller."** *"If you believe there is a heaven and hell and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life and you think, It's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward... How much must you have to hate somebody to believe that eternal life is possible and not tell them that?"*

Paul was deeply concerned about division in the church because they had taken their eyes off of the gospel, the one source of hope for the world.

However, he acknowledged that there are two reasons that Christians should divide from other Christians

- Unrepentant sin – 1 Cor 11:18-19
- Distortion of the fundamentals of our faith – Galatians 1:7-8
- If the gospel is our unifying truth; if the gospel is the only hope for the world; then we have to get the gospel right

III. The Gospel Reveals – 1:23-25

- Wisdom from God
 - Paul is not down on wisdom, reason, education. Wisdom without God
 - How does the gospel of a crucified Savior reflect the wisdom of God?
 - Mankind has two fundamental, interrelated problems – sin and death. Debt of sin and the consequence of that debt, which is death.
 - God is perfectly just, so payment must be made
 - God is also loving
 - How can He deal with our sins in both justice and love?
 - Sin paid for at the cross
 - Efficient
 - Christ did not have to die often, for each individual
 - 1 Peter 3:18; Hebrews 10:10
- Power from God
 - News junkie. Need a break because it's depressing. Wars in Middle East, recession in Europe, poverty in Africa, diseases running rampant.
 - All solutions deal only with the symptoms, not heart of matter
 - Gospel removes fear of death – 1 Cor 15:54b-55
 - *Engaging our world with God's transforming grace*
 - Gospel supplies power to love – 1 Thess 2:8
- Truth from God – 1 Cor 15:3-8
 - "gospel" = "good news"
 - Good news because it is so simple, and the work has been done for us
 - 1 Cor 15:3-4. Information: Death, burial, resurrection
 - Consistent with previous biblical revelation
 - Witnessed by many
 - Invitation. Acts 16:30-31. John 1:12
 - Billions believe in a historical event. A man named Jesus was crucified around 33 AD by the Roman governing authorities in Palestine.
 - Don't understand the significance

- Have never personally appropriated this truth for themselves

Application

Do you believe? What's holding you back?

Will you share this message with others?

- Choose 1 person to pray for and share with this week.

Meditation

- 1) Is God calling you to believe?
- 2) Is God calling you to courageously share the gospel