

The Foolishness Of The Cross (I Cor. 1:10-25) Pleasant Plains 4-2-2017AM NICK ANGEL

- ***Read I Corinthians 1:10-25/Prayer*** The church in Corinth was certainly a church that had its fair share of issues. Even at our worst, I would have a hard time thinking that any church we know could find itself in the same boat as these guys. Division, sexual sins, marriage issues, head coverings, Lord's Supper issues, miraculous gifts, and arrogance are just a few of the issues we can find within the book. How would you think that Paul would approach his teachings on such subject? Well obviously, he's going to talk about Jesus. Paul opens this letter by giving great emphasis to Jesus at least 9 times. If we were to get even more specific, though, we would recognize that Paul focuses primarily on the cross of Jesus...His death, burial, and resurrection.
- With all of these issues, why would Paul see it necessary to give first importance to the cross of Jesus? Even more, why would Paul give such great emphasis to something that he actually refers to as foolishness? These are certainly worthy questions to be asked, and we are going to spend our times this morning pursuing the wisdom of God by considering the foolishness of the cross of Christ.
- The truth is that the cross is the focal point of God's plan for man's salvation, yet man continuously fails to appreciate and understand the cross for what it truly is. Men are often guilty of thinking of the cross in different terms than what the inspired Apostle Paul understood the cross to mean. So this morning, we are going to compare what Paul understood the cross to mean and how men often just get it wrong.

I. The Cross Unifies (vv.10-16)

- A. One of the first issues in Corinth that continues to be an issue even until today is the problem of divisions among those who claim to be of Christ. Man's wisdom says that it is perfectly reasonable to have those who claim Christ be as divided as the Christian community is today because why shouldn't people be able to do things as they desire as long as they all claim Christ? Some might even try to say that the differences among local churches of Christ are no different than the denomination world.
- B. However, differences in worship times, building types, annual themes and the like are nothing but freedoms afforded to each group through church autonomy. These differences compare in no way to the issues that we see in denominationalism and then what we find in Corinth. The differences amongst denominations aren't simply disagreements on concerning opinions, but they are foundational differences concerning the nature of God, salvation, worship and the like. Man's wisdom says that this is still perfectly acceptable, but this wisdom of men is truly foolish.
- C. This is exactly what we see here in Corinth. These people should have been unified in the name of Jesus, but instead they were not identifying as those of Jesus or Christians, but they were claiming the name of a simple fallible man. How similar is that to what we have in the religious world today? There aren't simply Christians... but there are so many churches and Christians who wear the name of something other than Christ.
- D. If Paul was alive today, I have no doubt that he would be all over the place preaching this message of unity through the cross, and he would probably also sprinkle in a good bit of what he says in **Ephesians 4:1-6**. He would be appalled by the amount of division that exists, and he would demand that all people claiming Christ would recognize His Lordship and that He on the cross made it possible for them to even bear His name and receive His blessings. **(v.13)**
- E. God's wisdom in unifying disciples in the name of the cross and having them all hold to the same standard greatly aids Christians in avoiding pitfalls such as divisions, arrogance, and different standards. The unity of the cross simply shows the wisdom of God.

II. The Cross Is Simple (v.17)

- A. Notice **v.17**, Paul wasn't sent to simply get people wet, he wasn't sent in hopes of gaining a following for himself, but he was sent to preach the Gospel. He further emphasized that this preaching of the message of the cross was done simply and wasn't complicated. This very much goes against man's thinking that the most amazing things are complex and academic.
- B. Think about what man elevates as being great. Man emphasizes academia, science, and philosophy. If you want to be known as great then you are expected to have a large number of letters following your name. In fact, a person is often not taken seriously if they haven't earned so many number of degrees from some great institutions. This type of mindset has trickled its way into religious settings where many people think that it takes so many years of academic study to truly understand God's will and how men can be what God wants them to be.
- C. This just simply isn't the case. The cross isn't a complicated issue in all reality. It might be an issue of the greatest importance...it might be an issue of eternal consequence...it might be straight from the mind of God... yet the message of the cross is quite simple. Simply put, the message of the cross is love and devotion. God loved us enough and is devoted to man enough that He was willing to give His Son on the cross. He was willing to raise Him from the dead and set the precedent for man to follow. If we are willing to love God and devote ourselves fully to God, then we can be with Him for all eternity.

- D. Besides the obviously, do you want to know what is best about this message? The best thing about this message is that any man of sound mind can understand and obey this message. This is a message for the common man. It's a message that the common man can learn, obey, and even teach others. Many of the earliest disciples were not well educated men. In fact, the Jewish leadership recognized Peter and John as uneducated men, yet they were proclaiming the Risen Savior to the world. **(Acts 4:13)** Thank God for His wisdom in delivering this message of love and devotion to the simple minded of this world.

III. The Cross Is Salvation (vv.18,21)

- A. Back to the previous statement I made about Paul saying that the cross is foolishness. True he did say this, but he said that in reference to those who are perishing. Truly, those who are being saved by what happened on the cross recognize the power of God in it, but those who fail to take advantage of the message...they see no value or wisdom in the cross because to them it represents nothing but condemnation and embarrassment.
- B. Those who refuse the cross would question why any so called "God" would sacrifice himself for mere humans. Men would think that this shows weakness and not strength. They would only see the cross as condemnation, weakness, and embarrassment. However, we know that this is simply not the case. The cross and the subsequent resurrection...they show God's power over death. Men would think it foolishness to say that death could bring life, but that is exactly what Jesus's death and our spiritual death to sin do...they bring forth life in God. **(Rom. 6:7-11)**
- C. Then the ultimate salvation of the cross will be seen in the last day when death is eternally defeated by all of the faithful through the power of God. The final victory will be delivered to the faith through the wisdom and power of God. **(I Cor. 15:54-57)**
- D. The cross might mean death and condemnation to the wise and clever man, but his wisdom can't compare with the foolishness of God, and it certainly doesn't compare with the cross because it is the height of God's wisdom.

IV. The Cross Is The Wisdom Of God (vv.19,20,22-25)

- A. As a means of putting a nice finish on these thoughts, of what the cross is...we really could simplify it all by simply acknowledging as Paul does that the cross...what men see as foolishness is actually the perfect illustration of God's wisdom. Men for so long have given great efforts to try to understand the mind of God and figure out what He will do next and how He will accomplish His will. How often do men concoct these extravagant plans, yet God just keeps it simple and things work out perfectly?
- B. But men are just so often not satisfied with the simple wisdom of God. Instead, Paul makes the note that the cross and its salvation and wisdom are actually stumbling blocks to the Jews and the Gentiles. We know well what many of the Jews were expecting when it came to their Savior. They expected some strong military man who would restore their land and kick out their enemies. **(Psalm 89:1-4)** Is that what God saw as wise? Absolutely not. Instead, His Savior was born of a normal family and wasn't anything special to the eyes. He was normal as far as most people could see at first glance. Yet, God used this normal man to show His power through miracles and His resurrection.
- C. The Gentiles, again, just couldn't fathom the thought of God giving of Himself in order for His creation to benefit when it was man's fault for this current predicament. But it was God who gave Himself for us, even when we were yet still sinners. **(Rom. 5:8)** The wisdom of God in the cross is truly seen when we consider that love is perfectly exemplified in the cross. We all know **John 3:16** and we know pretty well **I John 4:9-12**. John knew the importance of God's wisdom being seen in the cross. What better way to prove to man that He loves us than to give Himself for us. "No greater love is there than for man to lay down his life for a friend." How much more ought that statement impact us when we change it up to include the fact that it is God who gave laid down His life for enemies!
- D. Surely, we recognize the profound wisdom of God thing through what He did on the cross for a men who are anything but worthy of such an act of love.

Truly, God has silenced the wisdom of man and shown the foolishness of those who think they are clever. God, through His divine wisdom, knew what was needed for man to know God's love for us. The cross, while being a symbol of death, just as accurately shows the wisdom of God in the fact that he would use a thing in order to show his love and desire for man to come back to Him. May we truly recognize and appreciate the foolishness of the cross. It is foolishness to those who are dying, but it is hope and salvation to those who are willing to pick up theirs for Christ. May God bless us to seek His wisdom, the wisdom from above that seeks the salvation of mankind.