

Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

This is Paul's message and our's as well.

Acts 4:12 *There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

Paul did not come to them with eloquent speech, elegant manner, enticing words, finely crafted arguments, spectator appeal, entertainment, skits, banter, renown soloists, etc. Not Paul! Some of them preferred Apollos, for he was eloquent (not a fault) as well as earnest and convincing, Acts 18:24, 27. Both only preached Christ, and Him crucified.

3. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. When reading the messages the Holy Spirit moved various servants of the Lord to bring, one is struck with their utter simplicity, directness and genuine feeling. God is pleased to draw his elect to Christ through preaching. He uses preaching to a group or word of mouth one on one. That preaching is not to depend upon our inborn natural abilities but to be as moved by the Holy Spirit. Even Jesus did this. We read in the Gospel:

Matthew 5:2 *And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying...*

See Also Acts 8:35 (Philip) and Acts 10:34 (Peter).

Like Him, and Philip and Peter, we open our mouths and hearts to those before us and speak as the Lord fills us. We cannot persuade anyone of their lostness or to come to the Savior in our own power, no matter how successful a salesman we might be naturally. Nor can we win them by wonderful sermons or reasonings.

Now they were disparaging Paul's evident lack of eloquence. He refers to this again in his second letter.

2Corinthians 10:1 *Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you*

7 *Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?*

10 *For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.*

We may tremble when speaking to another or speaking publically. This may be detected too. Yet that should not deter us. Paul went ahead in conscious dependance upon the Lord and this was the source of his power in ministry. Another thing. We should beware of not respectfully listening carefully to anyone speaking before us. No, they may not be particularly gifted or well liked, but they may have a message from God. Listen hard if it is hard listening. And weigh what you hear against scripture, not personality or speaking ability. Preach Christ. Don't hold back because you are timid or frightened. But be sure to let Him fill your mouth.

Paul preached Jesus Christ, and him crucified. We do not bring people to Christ promising to improve

their lives. Souls are not saved by asking that Jesus' perfect life being imputed to them. (Like asking Jesus into my heart.) WE were dead in trespasses and sins. Souls are saved through trusting that His death on the cross paid for their sins. This message does not appeal to the flesh which doesn't really want to admit its utter depravity and lost condition. "Oh, a little reform should be enough for me to get to heaven." Don't cater to that kind of thinking.

6. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world... We weren't saved through the use of wisdom or the persuasive reasoning of men. However saved God opens out His wisdom to His own. Once having believed the gospel by faith we receive eternal life. We receive a new, born again nature. We receive the Holy Spirit, who indwells us forever. And we are thereby enabled to receive and begin to enter into the depths and heights of God's wisdom hidden from us while we were in our lost condition.

7. The wisdom of God in a mystery. The old, old story is so wonderful. No mere man could ever have dreamed it up. Even Satan has been "blindsided" by it. It was a mystery, secret until now. But now God has been seen of men and angels and Christ the Son of God has died and risen again, and ascended to God's right hand..

1Tim 3:16 *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*

7. God ordained before the world unto our glory.

And it is an old story established in the councils of God before the creation. Just think, the Eternal God had our blessing and glorification in mind before He created anything. All that was created was created with this in mind..

8. Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. What grace we find in this statement. It attributes the wanton crucifixion of the one and only Son of God to ignorance of God's Plan. No, NO ONE guessed it. Even though it was written throughout the Old Testament scriptures in countless direct prophecies, not to mention the graphic types and shadows found in the lives of the Old Testament believers, and in the Tabernacle, the various offerings, rituals and feasts, etc. set up in the Law of Moses. Some obviously grasped some of it by faith, but God's great Plan and His great INTENT was not evident to even the religious, if unbelieving, man. They wouldn't have Him, so God let them crucify His Son after years of testimony both seen in His faultless life and His faithful and true witness, not to mention the many, many signs and miracles He did.

Acts 2:23 *Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:*

Paul is making a statement similar to Peter's statement shortly after the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit sent from heaven fell upon the believers in Jerusalem.

Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. 14 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; 15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. 16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. 17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. 18 But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. 19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,

God would not condemn the Jewish people and their rulers at that time. He even gives them 40 years before He allows the Romans to destroy their temple (AD 70) as forecast by Jesus in Luke. And He will yet restore Israel nationally to Himself as repeatedly prophesied in the Old Testament, promised by Jesus and declared by Paul (Romans chapters 9-11). And He does not condemn the Gentile rulers, the Romans, either. Amazing! This leaves the door open for salvation of the Gentiles. Paul had been commissioned apostle to the Gentiles and had visited Corinth with the gospel while in Europe. They had believed, but somehow had begun to act like they had deserved to be saved, had earned it,

or had received Christ because of their superior wisdom or ability to reason. NOT! Paul puts us in our place. Human reasoning has no place in the plan of God. Neither in reception of the gospel or in discerning truth or His will afterward. It is pure grace. We were totally incapable of reasoning out the way to please God and reach heaven before we were saved and we are no more capable of reasoning Him out now. We take by faith what He has revealed and believing rejoice and thrive on it, on Him.

9. ... Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. All of us, having read this statement, have bowed the knee (at least in our hearts) and shivered with joy and anticipation at the prospect of what it will be like when we finally see and hear Him, and lie in His arms, enjoying the infinite, everlasting blessings God has prepared for us that love Him. But too many of us stop with verse 9 and try to imagine the glory that shines before us. Paul doesn't stop with verse 9. Reading further we see those wonderful words again...

BUT GOD...

Yes. He isn't waiting for a future date to begin to reveal and share those things He has prepared for them that love Him. Read ahead and find out **WHAT** he is doing **NOW** and **HOW**. And **REJOICE** and **ENJOY**!

By Ron Canner, October 23, 2002.