

Series: 1 Corinthians

Title: Why We Preach Christ Crucified

Text: 1 Corinthians 1: 22-24

Date: July 9, 2015

Place: SGBC, New Jersey

As we continue looking at the reasons God chose to save through the preaching of Christ, we come to reason number three.

1 Corinthians 1: 22: For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: 23: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24: But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

God chose the preaching of Christ crucified as the means whereby God makes Christ a savor of death unto some and a savor of life unto those he saves. Paul said, “For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 16: To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?” (2Co 2:15-16)

THREE KINDS OF PEOPLE

There are three kinds of people listed in our text. Everyone falls into one of these three categories.

First, are the Jews—“For the Jews require a sign,...” (1 Cor 1: 22) The Jews represent self-made religious folks in any religion, especially self-made Christianity. In order to authenticate the one sent by God to minister and to authenticate a work of conversion, self-made religion seeks a sign. They seek some unusual occurrence, which, to the flesh, is a sign of God at work.

This is why self-made religion is always preaching man’s works but never only preaching Christ and his works. It is why the Pharisee’s and scribes wore long robes; memorized long passages of scripture; made long prayers, put on a show of great holiness and did alms—all to be seen of men. The Judaizers were the worst; they were like modern day reformers—they put people under grace and works, under Christ and the law of Moses—because they wanted to see a sign in their converts, even if they have to whip them with the law to produce it. This is why the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees came to Christ seeking some other sign, other than Christ himself!

Christ said the reason men seek outward, physical signs is because they do not have inward spiritual discernment to discern the Signs God has given.

Matthew 16:2: [Christ] answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. 3: And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, [actors] ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

We will see in a moment from scripture that “the signs of the times” are Christ and the children God had given him. Though religious, though righteous and moral, the self-made religious man has no spiritual discernment of Christ, so they seek other signs.

Secondly, are the Greeks—“and the Greeks seek after wisdom:” (1Co 1:22) The Greeks represent all those fond of worldly wisdom such as philosophy, astronomy, politics, history, archeology, even religion if intellectual and new.

Acts 17:18: Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered [the apostle Paul] And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. 19: And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, *is*? 20: For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. 21: (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

2 Timothy 3: 7: Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Then we have God’s true church—“But we preach Christ crucified,...” (1 Cor 1: 23) Paul said, “We preach not ourselves but Jesus Christ our Lord.” (2 Cor 4: 5) We are not seeking signs in men’s works nor are we using the wisdom of this world. We preach Christ crucified. Paul said, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” (Gal 6: 14) The true preacher of the gospel does not even preach “a Christ-centered gospel.” Christ *is* our Gospel. We preach Christ crucified all the time. Religion has an evangelical message where they give some lip-service to Christ. Then they have a practical message where they preach man’s works and morality. They claim good preaching is to walk a tight rope between the two. They call it a balanced ministry.

But Christ the Prophet, declares through the Holy Spirit, through the apostle Paul that Christ's preacher proclaims "Christ crucified" only. Whether we are preaching from the gospels or the epistles, in the old testament or the new, our subject is Christ and him crucified only! Paul said, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor 2: 2)

THREE EFFECTS

Next, we see there are three different effects that the preaching of Christ crucified has on these three kinds of people. Remember, these three effects is why God chose to save through the preaching of Christ crucified. This is according to God's purpose.

First, is the effect the preaching of Christ crucified has on the self-made religionist—"We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock,..." (1 Cor 1: 23) Years beforehand, God declared through the prophet Isaiah that this would happen. It was according to God's purpose. Israel is the example. But the same is true of all self-made religionists who God leaves alone to reject the gospel of Christ.

Isaiah 8:14: And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15: And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

God the Father has given Christ the glory of calling his people. God says this to Christ and this is what Christ does through the preaching of Christ crucified.

Isaiah 8: 16: Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

Here is the result in Christ and his people when Christ seals up the gospel in our hearts by calling us through the preaching of Christ crucified. This is what the believer says after having Christ revealed in us.

Isaiah 8: 17: And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

Remember, how Christ told the scribes and Pharisee's that they discerned not the "signs of the times?" Here are "the sign of the times" they did not discern. This is Christ speaking of himself and his people who he has called through the preaching of Christ crucified.

Isaiah 8: 18: Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me *are* for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

You see, Christ and those he calls to faith in him, are "the signs" that self-made religion does not have spiritual discernment to behold. But why is Christ a stumblingblock to the self-made religionist? It is because they seek righteousness by their works—by the works of the law—rather than righteousness through faith in Christ, who is God's Righteousness.

Romans 9: 31: But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. 32: Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; 33: As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Yet, we see from Isaiah, this was God's purpose for those who would not believe on Christ through the preaching of Christ. God justly appointed them to reprobation. Peter said, "Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builder disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner. And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed." (1 Pet 2: 7-8)

Next, we see the effect the preaching of Christ crucified has on the worldly wise—"and unto the Greeks foolishness;..." (1 Cor 1: 23) This too is appointed by God. Paul says, "And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." (1 Cor 1: 28) But why do the self-wise consider the gospel of Christ foolishness? If they are seeking wisdom why is Christ not Wisdom to them? "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor 2: 14)

Then our text declares the effect the preaching of Christ crucified has on God's true church—"But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor 1: 24) The difference is the grace of God; the difference is God's effectual call. God calls his people out from among the Jews and the Greeks. He calls some out of false religion and some out of the vain wisdom of this world. Brethren, as offensive as self-made religion and worldly men can be, remember, it takes God calling us before we can believe. As much as possible, live peaceably with all men, declaring Christ to them. Let them shut the door. Christ has a people he will yet call.

And to all those Christ calls through the preaching of Christ crucified, Christ is made the Power and Wisdom of God—to us who once sought signs in ourselves and wisdom in ourselves—Christ is made unto us the Power and Wisdom of God.

THE WISDOM AND POWER OF GOD PERSONALLY

How is Christ, as well as, the preaching of Christ crucified, the Power and Wisdom of God to us who are called?

First, Christ is Power and Wisdom Personally, in Himself. We could look at this many ways beginning in eternity. Christ is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Rev 13: 8) “All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” (Jn 1: 3) We could even look at the physical miracles Christ performed when he walked this earth. He said, “But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.” (Lu 11: 20) But let’s look at Christ Personally as the Power and Wisdom of God by how Christ came in human flesh.

Remember, through Isaiah, God also said, “The LORD himself shall give you a sign.” (Is 7: 14) The Sign—the Power and Wisdom of God—is the LORD himself. It is God with us in the person of his Son, the GodMan, Christ Jesus.

God said, “Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” (Is 7: 14) When the virgin conceived, it was God himself giving the sign, that Christ is the Seed of Woman who God promised in the garden. Christ is the Power and Wisdom of God to crush the devil’s head. (Gen 3: 15; Jer 31: 22; Mt 1: 18-20)

When Christ was conceived of the Holy Ghost rather of sinful man, God declared Christ is the Sign—the only holy Man—the last Adam—who was fit to lay down his life in place of his people on the cross. He is the Power and Wisdom of Holy Human Flesh, the Spotless Lamb of God. (Lu 1: 35; Heb 2: 14)

When God commanded his name be called Immanuel, God declared Christ is the Sign who is God with us; God providing himself a lamb. Christ is the Power and Wisdom of God to accomplish eternal redemption for his people himself. (Gen 22: 8; 2 Cor 5: 19)

Then as a young child, Christ showed he is the Wisdom and Power of God by confounding the wisest men of this world. “They found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.” (Lu 2: 46-47) The religious men of the day sent officers out to arrest Christ. But they returned without Christ. “The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.” (Jn 7: 46)

On the cross, we especially see the Power and Wisdom of God to declare his Righteousness. (Rom 3: 26) Christ declared God just. Christ is the Power and Wisdom of God to satisfy his own justice himself. No man establishes righteousness. Christ alone fulfilled the law for his people. Christ also declared God the Justifier. In Christ, God justified all his people himself. No sinner has ever justified himself. “By Christ, all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.” (Acts 13: 39)

Then by Christ ascending after three days and three nights in the earth, Christ is the Sign of God’s Power and Wisdom.

Matthew 12: 38: Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. 39: But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 40: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Mt 12:38-40)

Christ’s resurrection is God giving the sign that Christ is the Power and Wisdom whereby God is satisfied toward his people. (Mt 12: 19-40) “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” (Rom 4: 25)

Now, Christ in heaven is the Sign that Christ is personally the LIVING Power and Wisdom of God with all power in heaven and earth.

WISDOM AND POWER OF HIS PREACHERS

That leads us to this point, God chose to save through the preaching of the gospel, to give Christ the glory of being our Wisdom and Power, which the Father promised the Son before the world was made. We see Christ’s Power and Wisdom in the preached gospel, by whom Christ chooses to preach and what he does through their preaching.

He does not send forth wise men after the flesh, not learned men, not warriors. He send unlearned men with no power in ourselves. He chose fisherman. His preachers do not use carnal weapons or convert men by force like Mohamed's ISIS! Christ's preachers simply preach the gospel of Christ crucified, without wisdom of words.

Yet, through preaching, multitudes have repented and believed on Christ. Men who once called the gospel of Christ foolishness bow to Christ owning him and his gospel as the only true Wisdom there is. We have sons and daughters who have experienced it, and we, ourselves, have experienced Christ the Power and Wisdom of God.

By this foolish means, using these foolish men, Christ is the Wisdom and Power to send his gospel and call all his elect, in every generation, no matter where they are in this world. That shows us that Christ is the Power and Wisdom of God whom God glorifies by using this means of gospel preaching to save his people.

WISDOM AND POWER OF GOD'S PROMISES

Also, Christ shows that he is the Power and Wisdom of gospel preaching because of what the true gospel promises and yet still accomplishes in sinners.

The gospel does not promise health and wealth in this world like the world's vain message. Christ promises "In this world ye shall have tribulation." (Jn 16: 33) Believers are promised more tribulation because we believe on Christ. We have tribulation both from our sinful flesh, as well as from those in your own household. (Rom 7: 14-25; Mt 10: 36)

Not only this the gospel does not promise freedom to live in sinful rebellion against God. But the gospel promises freedom to serve God in newness of spirit, rather than the oldness of the letter. That is not something the carnal flesh desires.

Yet, through this preaching, multitudes have turned from their legal show of works, lived holy quiet unnoticed lives, and suffered unto death for Christ's sake. How so? Because to them who are called, Christ is the Power and Wisdom of God. He constrains us by his love for us!

WISDOM AND POWER TO PROVIDE PASTORS

Furthermore, Christ shows he is the Power and Wisdom of the gospel we preach because the gospel has continued to be preached in every age, in every place.

This will encourage us especially in the age in which we live! It looks like much persecution is on the horizon, does it not? But look at the persecution Christ's church has faced through the ages. The devil and this world have tried to stop the gospel and kill Christ's saints from the beginning. Often persecution comes from within the visible church, from false preachers and people.

In addition to these obstacles, God has scattered his people over all the four corners of this globe. Think of how remote is Papua New Guinea and the jungles of Mexico. We visited a village in Mexico two years ago who for the first time got a well of water in the center of town. That is remote!

Yet, all of this is according to God's purpose to show that Christ is the Wisdom and Power of God. Christ rules over all persecution. In every generation, he faithfully continues to send forth his weak, powerless earthen vessels. And no matter how remote the place, he continues to bring the gospel and call out his lost sheep. It shows us Christ is the Power and Wisdom of God to provide pastors and call his people through his gospel.

WISDOM AND POWER IN OUR HEARTS

One more thing, the reason God chose the foolishness of preaching to save his people and the reason sinners believe on Christ, and suffer for him and persevere in him is because through gospel preaching, Christ is made Power and Wisdom within the hearts of his people.

When Christ is formed in the heart then we know Christ himself. Then we, who thought we had power to effect some sign of conversion, behold Christ, THE POWER of God; we, who thought we were wise, behold Christ, THE WISDOM of God.

Then and only then will we need no other sign, no other Wisdom and no other Power, but Christ through the preaching of Christ crucified! It is because when Christ enters into us in Spirit then we are given faith to believe on him. Beholding Christ through faith we see the only Sign, the Power and Wisdom of God, the evidence of things not seen.

Looking to my flesh, I do not see a sign of wisdom. But through faith, Christ is my Wisdom; looking to my flesh I see no sign of righteousness in me. But through faith, Christ is my Righteousness; looking to my flesh I see no sign of holiness in me. But through faith, Christ is my Holiness; the sign I see in my flesh is that I am

brought into captivity to sin which is in my members. But through faith, Christ is my Redemption and if Christ shall set you free you shall be free indeed. (Jn 8: 36)

Do you see? Faith beholds Christ the Sign—the Power and Wisdom of God. Therefore faith has all the evidence, the Sign which no carnal eye can see, Christ the Power and Wisdom of God. Paul said of our carnal senses “But as it is written, 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. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (1Co 2:9-10)

Now, brethren, by experiencing this call through the preaching of Christ crucified, Christ is the Power and Wisdom who makes us flock together, to deny ourselves so we can support the preaching of his gospel, both here and abroad. It is because now we know, this is how he calls us and makes Christ the Power and Wisdom of God in the hearts of his people; it is because now we know, through the preaching of Christ crucified, Christ will continue to save us from those who hate his gospel; it is because now we know that through the preaching of Christ crucified, Christ will continue to save us till he brings us home.

Amen!