"HOW TO TELL THE GOSPEL"

I Corinthians 1:17-25

1-22-2023

INTRODUCTION:

***Let God give you true wisdom about how to share the Gospel with unsaved people!**

Tell the Gospel. . .

I. <u>SIMPLY</u>, Not worrying about <u>big vocabulary</u> or <u>clever, human arguments</u> (v. 17)

Tell the Gospel. . .

II. <u>COURAGEOUSLY</u>, not worrying about being considered <u>foolish</u> (v. 18-20)

Tell the Gospel. . .

III. <u>CONFIDENTLY</u>, not worrying about the <u>results</u> (v. 21-25)

A. Be confident that you are fulfilling <u>God's plan</u> (method) for <u>saving</u> people (v. 21)

B. Be confident that you are telling them what they <u>need</u> <u>to hear</u>, rather than what they want to hear (v. 22-23)

C. Be confident that you will see <u>God's power</u> and <u>wisdom</u> manifested in the fruit of your labor (v. 24-25)

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A. Be confident that you are fulfilling _____ (method) for _____ people (v. 21)

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INTRODUCTION:

"There is ever the danger of men being carried away by the personality of the speaker and missing the message entirely" (DeHaan, p. 21).

"A story is told of two men who visited London one Lord's day during the days of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. In the morning they visited a London church to hear a renowned gospel preacher. As they left the church one was heard to say, 'What a great and wonderful preacher this man is.' However, in the evening they went to hear Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and as they left the tabernacle they were heard to remark, 'What wonderful Christ that man has preached.' In the morning they saw a man, and in the evening they say the Man, The Lord Jesus Christ. That is the difference Paul is seeking to emphasize here." (DeHaan, *Studies in I Corinthians, Zondervan* p. 21-22).

The church of Corinth was divided over personalities (1:12).

Some were exclusively loyal:

> --to Paul (no doubt because he planted their church and was a theological genius)
>
> --Others to Apollos (because he had great oratory skill, a stunning pulpiteer; a master of the Greek language, a homoletical genius - Acts 18:24)
>
> --Others to Cephas (Peter) (because he was an apostle of notoriety, who was of the inner circle [Peter, James, John] who walked with Jesus; he was a big-name apostle)

To humble the Corinthians, Paul glorifies the power of the Gospel and downplays and disregards man's proud wisdom.

***Let God give you true wisdom about how to share the Gospel with unsaved people!**

Tell the Gospel. . .

I. <u>SIMPLY</u>, Not worrying about <u>big vocabulary</u> or <u>clever, human arguments</u> (v. 17)

"Christ sent me not to baptize" - Paul would delegate this step of obedience to others while he concentrated on evangelizing the lost.

"Preach the Gospel" - to announce good news

The Good News (Gospel) that Paul proclaimed is outlined in I Cor. 15:1-3 -

1. Christ's substitutionary death
2. Christ's bodily resurrection--all based on the Scriptures

"Wisdom of words" - i.e. not a speech with worldly wisdom or human wisdom

Paul didn't speak to <u>impress</u>, but he spoke to <u>communicate</u>!

(ILLUS: how many pseudo-intellectuals will purposely use enormous, ten-syllable words, high tech language, impressive vocabulary in order to show how smart they are.)

We need to concentrate more on speaking <u>right</u> than speaking well, on being <u>accurate</u> than being eloquent, on <u>rightly dividing</u> the Word of Truth rather than impressing with words of the learned.

If politicians always concentrated more on being <u>right</u> (truthful) than being popular (diplomatic), our country would gain a healing.

When told to go lead Israel out of Egypt (Exod. 3:10), Moses gave the excuse, *"I am not eloquent...I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue"* (Exod. 4:10). *"And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth...have not I the Lord? Now therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say"* (Exod. 4:11-12).

If you hang your participles, pluralize words that should be singular, disconnect your conjunctions, etc. and "slaughter the king's English," but yet you sincerely and simply communicate the great work Christ accomplished on the cross, you are a success in God's eyes, and God will use you (even in your weakness) to demonstrate His power (SEE: I Cor. 2:1-5)

Don't worry about whether or not you can answer every philosophical question or even every Bible question someone might ask; just tell what Christ did at Calvary.

You get better at witnessing, the more you do it. The more you share the Gospel, the more Bible verses you will memorize and the smoother your witness will go.

God is not against true wisdom (He's the Author of it - Prov. 2:6). What He is against is *"the wisdom of this world"* (v. 20).

"The cross of Christ" - The death of Christ for sinners was the theme (main topic) of Paul's preaching.

The ***"cross of Christ"*** is the heart and soul of the Gospel. It is the sum total of the salvation message.

To preach that men are sinners, that hell awaits them, that they must repent of sin -- is <u>not</u> to preach the whole Gospel (EX: hyper-Calvinism). --You must tell them what was accomplished on the cross.

To preach that you need Jesus in your heart, accept Him, believe in Him, etc., is <u>not</u> to preach the complete Gospel (EX: Easy believism). -- You must explain the substitutionary, vicarious, complete work of Christ on Calvary's cross.

"None effect" - to be void, empty, vain ("*emptied of its power"* NIV)

To be more concerned about tickling itching ears (II Tim. 4:3) than accurately communicating the news of what Christ accomplished on the cross is to distract from the Gospel.

Tell the Gospel. . .

II. <u>COURAGEOUSLY</u>, not worrying about being considered <u>foolish</u> (v. 18-20)

V. 18

"Preaching" = <u>not</u> *kerux*, but *logos*. "The <u>word</u> of the cross" - i.e. "the <u>word about the cross</u>" (which can be shared by any Christian - not necessarily a preacher).

"To them that perish" - lit. to the ones who are perishing (pres. mid. part.). The lost are <u>already</u> in a state of destruction. They are already on the road to perdition. God's wrath already abides on them (Jn. 3:36).

Paul uses the present tense (<u>are</u> perishing) rather than the future tense (<u>will</u> perish) because the condition, destiny, and eternity of the lost can be altered in this life if God reaches their heart via the Gospel, and they respond in belief (v. 21).

(ILLUS: I once viewed Bible Christianity as a foolish waste of time, until God changed my mind and life).

"Foolishness" - folly, nonsense

When people mock or make fun of your message, don't be offended.

--Realize they are <u>blind</u> (Eph. 4:18)
--Realize they are <u>spiritually dead</u> (Eph. 2:1)
--Realize they are <u>ignorant</u> (I Pet. 1:14)

It is foolishness to their minds because it conflicts with their own proud ideas and thinking. (people attempt to lower God's ways so as to elevate their own).

If you view the *"preaching of the cross"* as foolishness, it is because you are on the path of destruction, you are in a state of ruin.
"Us which are saved" - "Us which are (presently) being saved (passive)"

--The present tense shows that people are being saved right now (the salvation of sinners occurs <u>not</u> in their past but in their present life)

--The passive voice shows that salvation is a work of God, not of human works or effort. God does the saving.

"The power of God" - What energy, strength, or power does God use to save sinners? Answer: The power of the message of Calvary.

They can call you a "fool" and your message "foolish," but you have experienced a life-changing <u>power</u> that the world knows nothing about.

Are we the fools who have come to trust in Christ's finished work?
Or are the fools the ones attempting to work their way into God's favor and kingdom?

Are we the fools who have available to us the *"power and wisdom of God"* (v. 24)...

...To have answers to life's greatest questions

...To have personal lives that have been miraculously transformed

...To have the knowledge how to have marriages that last through thick and thin

Or are the fools the ones who hop from school of thought to school of thought. . .from book to book. . . from class to class. . . and still lack solutions to the moral, ethical, social, and spiritual problems we see every day.

You can judge a person's relationship to God on how he views the *"preaching of the cross."*

V. 19

In Isaiah 29:14, it is written that God will one day destroy the worldly viewpoints of the supposed worldly wiseman. He will throw aside the pseudo-intellectualism of the anti-Bible, anti-Christ intelligencia.

One day those who were so confident in their own ideas, so smug in their own philosophies, so reliant on their own plans, schemes, etc., will have a rude awakening after death. They will then be in the torment and anguish their own sinful, unbelieving heart deserves. They will forever regret: "I was wrong!" "I am the fool!"

--The theory of evolution will one day come crashing down.

--The thoughts that the Bible is not God's inspired, infallible, inerrant Word will be corrected.

--The disbelief in the miracles of the Bible (EX: Red Sea, Jonah, Jesus' miracles, etc.) will one day be straightened out.

V. 20
Compared to God's wisdom, ***"Where is the wise?"***
Compared to God's scholarship, ***"Where is the scribe?"***
Compared to God's ability to debate, ***"Where is the disputer of this world?"***

"Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" - To those who know the mystery of the Gospel, they can see through the foolish deception and lies of this world. The world may view our Gospel as foolish, but we can take courage in the

fact that they are the real fools.

ILLUS: A man used to walk the streets of Manhattan with a sign over his chest and one over his back. On the front if said, "I'M A FOOL FOR JESUS!" On the back it read, "WHOSE FOOL ARE YOU?"

Tell the Gospel. . .

III. CONFIDENTLY, not worrying about the results (v. 21-25)

A. Be confident that you are fulfilling God's plan (method) for saving people (v. 21)

"The world by wisdom knew not God" - We live in a technologically-advanced society today, with men increasingly making new discoveries and new advances; yet in all of man's learning, he has not made any strides in terms of knowing the God who created it all.

Yes, through creation man can know about God (Rom. 1:20; Ps. 19:1), but man cannot know God personally without a clear presentation of the Gospel (cp. Acts 8:31). People may have Ph.D's, more degrees than a thermometer, yet be ignorant when it comes to knowing God.

The lost world of humanity could never come to know who God was and what He did without God revealing Himself in special revelation. If it weren't for the Scriptures, no one could ever know God's plan of salvation.

God is ***"pleased"*** when we convey His gospel to a lost and dying world. Are you bringing pleasure to the heart of God by your faithfulness to proclaiming the Gospel?

"The foolishness of preaching" - i.e. *"the foolishness of the message preached"* (NASV). The phrase describes not merely the method of delivery but the content of the message delivered.

"To save them that believe" - God saves those who believe (Acts 16:31). Belief is a prerequisite to God's saving a person. No one is saved prior to belief.

It builds confidence to know that when we lovingly, graciously and truthfully proclaim the gospel, we are fulfilling God's plan for drawing people to Himself.

God could use any other means to convey His gospel.
He could write it across the sky.
He could subliminally insert it into a person's mind when they are asleep.
He could send angels down with the message.

Yet His only plan (a plan which He is very pleased with) is to utilize His people to herald His truth.

B. Be confident that you are telling them what they need to hear, rather than what they want to hear (v. 22-23)

V. 22

A ***"sign" -*** to appeal to one's senses
"Wisdom" - to appeal to one's intellect

A ***"sign" -*** to move a person by means of an experience
"Wisdom" - to move a person by means of reasoning

Although God is able, He is not saving people today by means of signs, nor by means of human reasoning (although the gospel does produce an "experience" and it is "reasonable", God doesn't want us to base our faith completely on either).

--Many today refuse to believe in Christ unless He first does some existential, experiential, sensational miracle or sign for them.

> ILLUS: The rich man in hell erroneously thought that a visit of a dead man to his five brothers' home would convince them of God's plan of salvation (Lk. 16).

--Others refuse to believe in His deity because it defies human logic (EX: Jehovah's Witnesses)

V. 23
Paul's focus was not on signs and wonders, nor was it on impressive philosophical arguments; it was on preaching the simple Gospel story.

The Jews stumbled over Christ because He didn't prove Himself to them at their bidding (at their request).

The Greeks view His message as foolish because it was too simplistic, too easy. The gospel didn't blow their minds philosophically.

The Jews wanted powerful signs, yet Paul preached One who died a shameful, humble death on a cross.

The Greeks wanted some deep philosophical discourse, yet Paul gave a clean-cut, simple message of Christ's payment for man's sins.

C. Be confident that you will see God's power and wisdom manifested in the fruit of your labor (v. 24-25)

V. 24

"Called" - This word can refer to a general invitation (Mt. 22:14) or to an invitation to which people responded and thus were saved (Rom. 8:28). Here Paul is using the term in reference to saved people.

Everyone (whether Jew or Gentile) who is saved knows Christ's mighty power to save and the marvelous wisdom that exists in His salvation plan.

As the hymnwriter said: *"I need no other argument, I need no other plea, it is enough that Jesus died and that He died for me."*

V. 25

God really has no foolishness or weakness.

Yet for sake of comparison with mortal man, the perceived most foolish thing God would do is still "light years" ahead of the sum total of man's wisdom, and the perceived most weak thing God would do is more mighty than the combined efforts of all humanity.

CONCLUSION:

Why is the way to God exclusively through Jesus Christ?
Why is Christ's Work on the Cross the only way to our attaining forgiveness of sins and eternal life?

Couldn't God have devised another means of Salvation?
Couldn't there be an easier way? A less offensive way? Couldn't any road be the right road to Heaven?

- ***Christ's payment for sin at the Cross is the only payment God accepts.***

Why is the Cross the only way?
Why is Jesus the only way to Heaven?

Because God is God, and Heaven is His Heaven, He deserves the right to determine the means by which anyone enters His Heaven! If He requires Faith in His Son, He has the right to do so.

In order for Salvation to be made possible, the following had to be accomplished:

1. Sin had to be paid for
2. Forgiveness had to be granted
3. Righteousness had to be imputed

1. **God's <u>nature</u> demands a salvation plan which would be <u>consistent</u> with <u>His character</u>.** (Romans 3:26)

2. **God's <u>justice</u> demands that <u>sin be paid for</u>.** (1 Peter 3:18)

3. **Sin's infinite <u>price</u> demands an <u>infinite payment</u>.** (2 Corinthians 1:10)

4. **God's <u>holiness</u> demands a <u>perfect sacrifice for sin</u>.** (Hebrews 9-10)

5. **God's <u>Son</u> is the only one who could <u>qualify to pay</u> sin's penalty.** (Hebrews 7:27)

6. **God's <u>glory</u> demands a salvation plan which would give Him the <u>highest credit, honor, and praise</u>.** (Isaiah 42:8; Isaiah 43:10-12)