

## I Cor. 2:6-13

Dear Fellow Redeemed by the blood of God's own Son,

Next week you will be getting another "preacher." He won't be like Joel Osteen, the popular preacher of the "prosperity gospel." Thank God for that! Your new preacher will be like those who have served you in the past. Just regular guys – no popular TV personalities, no limos, no fancy duds or mansions, and no best-selling books.

Yet our CLC preachers are not all the same. Our CLC preacher-guys *do* come in every shape and size, with different talents and styles. We need to remember that a well-prepared beef roast tastes just as good and is just as healthy, whether served on a polished silver dish, an old wooden platter, or a paper plate.

Every church needs *great preaching* – the kind that Paul speaks about in our text. There were divisions in the Christian congregation in the Greek city of Corinth. Some of this division was caused by the fact that one group liked the preaching style of Apollos better than Paul's, while others preferred to hear Peter.

Yet, in the verses before our text Paul says that when he came to Corinth he was *not* an eloquent speaker. Neither did he come with superior human wisdom and a persuasive manner to impress the average person. Paul's manner and the externals of his preaching were simply not impressive by human standards. **"However,"** he writes, **"We DO speak wisdom among those who are mature."**

In order to emphasize the content of the message rather than the preacher, Paul placed the Greek word, "*sophia*" (*wisdom*) first in the Greek sentence. Then he used the simple Greek verb for "*speak*" to describe what he did. True preachers of the gospel are merely ***voices that speak the wisdom of God.*** So, if it is *not* the preacher's wisdom or his style,

### WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES GREAT PREACHING?

#### I.

***Great preaching begins with a message received through the Spirit of God.*** It's the message, *not* the man! After a polished and eloquent missionary had finished preaching to a gathering of American Indians, he greeted them at the door of the tent as they were leaving. Upon asking one of the worshipers, what he thought of the message, one Indian replied: ***"Heap big thunder, no rain!"***

Paul says that our message should not be confused with **"the wisdom of this age, nor the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing."** All the wisdom of this world and its rulers is said to be *"of this age."* It is *passing, and "coming to nothing."* *It's being abolished!* Nearly 3,000 years ago, Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived said that **"there is nothing new under the sun."** All human wisdom by whatever name has been tried again and again. All has proven to be completely useless in delivering mankind from the misery of his separation from God. But the **"wisdom of God"** is different, the very opposite of worldly wisdom.

**First: *The wisdom of God is in connection with a "mystery"*** – a hidden wisdom that God had to reveal to man in order for man to know it. This wisdom doesn't come from the people of our perishing age. As Proverbs 8:23 says: **Wisdom "was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began."** God had already declared this divine

wisdom before the ages. The perishable wisdom of this world has always been debatable; but the wisdom of God has never changed or been debated in heaven. It's God's *mystery* – continually new to man, never out of touch with our greatest needs. It cannot be replaced, but it is hidden and must be revealed by God.

**Second: This wisdom is for “our eternal glory”!** The wisdom of this world seeks the passing glory of money, property, honor, and pleasure. But the divine wisdom was established to seek our *eternal glory* with God, that we might be brought safely into His glorious and eternal presence.

**Third: The very words of this divine wisdom, spoken by the apostles, are not from men, but given by the Holy Spirit!** Feast your eyes on v. 13: **“These things we also speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual (words).”** Many religious leaders and philosophers have tried to convince people that *their wisdom* is from some higher being. But Paul says: **“no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.”** (V. 11) It's the **Spirit of God “who searches all things, even the DEEP things of God.”**

In 2Peter 1:21, Peter agrees with Paul. **“Holy men of God spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit,”** Peter wrote. The *spiritual words of those who recorded God’s Word are an exact fit* to the deep spiritual things they express, because both the things and the words are from God’s Spirit.

The doctrine of *“the verbal” – word for word – inspiration* of Scripture is of great importance to us! Great preaching is not about articulate men telling others what *they think* they know about God and truth. Great preaching tells others *the hidden things about God* that have been received by the writers of Holy Scripture through the Spirit of God – word for word!

## II.

But **how does it happen that** a man may faithfully preach the Gospel of forgiveness in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, and clearly present the message he has received through the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, and *still people may complain about his preaching?* Remember: the question is NOT what makes great *preachers*. The question is about great *preaching*. It's all about the **message**, not the messenger. **The message received through the Spirit of God, must also be believed through the Spirit of God.** The Holy Spirit must *make* great preaching by the working of faith in the gospel message that is preached.

Paul writes in vs. 9-10 that while no one can know by nature **“the things which God has prepared for those who love Him, . . . God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.”** And again in v. 12, Paul says of the Apostles and all true Christians: **“We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.”**

In v. 14, Paul continues to point out how man is a *physical and material* person, concerned about the things of this world. He cannot by nature understand God's ways or words. **“They are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are (only) spiritually recognizable.”** The difference between the Christian and the unbeliever is like night and day, life and death – between *having* the Spirit of God and *not having* the Spirit of God!

Later on Paul says that **“no one can say that Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.”**

(1Cor. 12:3) Because a Christian has received the Holy Spirit through the message, he can see things as they really are. The true Christ-believer recognizes great preaching when he hears it, because the Holy Spirit has caused him to believe what he cannot understand, and to accept what the world will not accept.

**Take some examples.** Does the man of the world know what sin and guilt are? Does he know the depth of the wickedness of his own heart, or the depths of God's forgiving grace? Why is there sickness and suffering in this world? Why will there always be crime and war? What is the true value of earthly possessions? Why does Death rule, and how is it defeated? What is in the hereafter? Who is God?

If you know the answers to these questions, then you have experienced the great preaching Paul is talking about! The message of the verbally inspired Word of God, received and recorded by men *through the Spirit of God*, has been believed by you also *through the Spirit of God*. Great preaching is the work of the Spirit of God from beginning to end!

When eating at a restaurant, have you ever noticed the delicious, deep colors of the entrees pictured on the menu? Have you ordered a ripe red tomato, only to find a hard, orange tomato on your plate? The filtered and touched-up photos make the food more appealing for the customer. But great preaching makes no attempt to "dress up" the saving mystery-message of our God with human skill and eloquence, as if the Gospel *needs* more color from the preacher to make it more palatable in order to do the work God intends.

Your new preacher will confess with that "old" preacher Paul, who wrote: **"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power (literally: "dynamite") of God unto salvation to every one who believes!"** (Rom. 1:16) Our message has power **built into it** because it comes from Almighty God! it's the unchanging, revelation of God's saving *"wisdom," received through God's own Spirit and believed by sinners through the same Spirit!* May the Lord, our God, continue to bless His Church and this congregation with great preaching of "God's wisdom" through nothing but His Spirit for the salvation and eternal glory of all who believe it! Amen.