

9. WHAT SINNERS WANT AND WHAT PREACHERS MUST DO: 1 Corinthians 1:22-25

by Brett Baggett on Sunday, August 29th, 2021

- **INTRODUCTION: Q. What do you demand from a preacher; what do you seek from a minister?** Do you want your eyes excited and entertained? or maybe you want your mind pleased with something new all the time? Today, there is great debate as to what the job of the preacher is and what it is not. **Our text today settles the question**, it should terrify some of you and comfort others of you tremendously.
- **CONTEXT:** Paul wrote this letter to the church at Corinth to help set them straight. They had many sins they needed to repent of, and the first one Paul addresses is the **DIVISION** that had arisen among them. Part of that division was caused by the Corinthians' pride, which led them to care more about what was flashy or dazzling than the power of God the Holy Spirit. So, Paul reminds them that he does not dazzle them with signs or eloquent speech; rather, he preached the gospel to them plainly. **This whole section has to do with the preaching of the gospel.**
- **BIG IDEA:** What sinners want from a preacher; what preachers must give them; and why.

Q. What do sinners want out of a preacher?

I. SINNERS WANT EITHER A *SHOW* OR *SOMETHING NEW* (v. 22)

1 Corinthians 1:22 "For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,"

EXPLANATION

- **The unbelieving Jews wanted miracles performed in front of them—essentially a show—**and then they would allegedly believe. **On the other hand, the unbelieving Greeks wanted philosophical discourses explained to them—always wanting to hear something new—**and then they would allegedly believe."

CROSS-REFERENCE

- **JEWS DEMAND SIGNS:** **After Jesus miraculously fed five thousand men with five loaves and two fish, the Jews said, in John 6:14,** "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" **Yet the very next day they said in John 6:30,** "what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?" **Sadly, John the Apostle later writes in John 12:37,** "Though [Jesus] had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him." This is why Jesus said, in **Matthew 16:4,** "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah." So he left them and departed."
- **GREEKS SEEK WISDOM:** **In Acts 17:21, Luke writes, about the Greeks** "Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new."
- **This is what it comes down to:** The Jewish sinners wanted something that would excite and entertain their eyes; The Greek sinners wanted something that would pleasure their minds with something new, always new.

IMPLICATION

RQ. Have sinners changed much in the past two thousand years? No!

- I) **Even within the church today, many just want to have their eyes excited and entertained,** rather than hear "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27)!
- II) **Others, even within the church today, just want to have to have their minds pleased with something new,** always new, rather than hear someone "preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:17)!

CHILDREN: The church does not exist to entertain you. It is not the preachers job to always be saying something shiny and new.

Parents what are you teaching your kids?

APPLICATION

Q. What about you? What do you demand from a preacher; what do you seek from a minister? Do you want your eyes excited and entertained? or maybe you want your mind pleased with something new all the time? **If so, you want what sinners want.**

- **Sinners want either a SHOW or SOMETHING NEW!**
- "Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom," to their shame.

TRANSITION: Q. But what do faithful preachers *give* their hearers? Look at the beginning of **verse 23!**

II. FAITHFUL PREACHERS PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED (v. 23a)

1 Corinthians 1:23a "but we preach Christ crucified,"

EXPLANATION

- Paul does not give the people what they want; he obeys God and gives them what they most need.

CROSS-REFERENCE

- **1 Corinthians 9:17** "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"

RQ. What should we learn from this? **A.** At least three things:

IMPLICATION

- I) **The unbeliever does not set the agenda for the faithful preacher.**
- Believers do not either, for that matter! God sets the agenda for the preacher.
- II) **Pastors who tailor their ministry to the felt needs of people rather than what is commanded in Scripture are hirelings at best and wolves at worst.**
- **C.S. LEWIS** "A man who first tried to guess 'what the public wants,' and then preached that as Christianity because the public wants it, would be a pretty mixture of fool and [scoundrel]."

- Charles Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher of the 19th century, said, “A time will come when instead of shepherds feeding the sheep, the church will have clowns entertaining the goats.”

III) All true preachers say along with Paul, “woe to me if I do not preach the gospel.”

ILLUSTRATION

- The King has issued a royal decree to all of His preachers, and it reads like this: “Preach Christ crucified.”
- SPURGEON: “I do believe we slander Christ when we think we are to draw the people by something else but the preaching of Christ crucified.”
- CHILDREN: You do not get to choose what the preacher preaches. You do not get to choose what your parents teach you—God chooses!

Q. So what does this mean for you and I? **A.** It means:

APPLICATION

- I) Woe to *me* if I do not preach Christ crucified!
- II) Woe to *you husbands* if you allow your wife or children to sit under a preaching ministry that does not constantly preach Christ crucified!
- III) Woe to you husbands if you do not preach Christ crucified to your wife!
- IV) Woe to you fathers or single-mothers who do not preach Christ crucified to your children!
- V) Woe to *us all* if we do not preach Christ crucified to a dying world!
- VI) Woe to *you* if you are content with anything other than a constant diet of Christ crucified!

Q. What do you want from a preacher? What do you give to your family, husbands? Mothers? What do you all give to your friends?

TRANSITION: Q. Why do faithful preachers preach Christ crucified? Look at the second part of **verse 23!**

III. FAITHFUL PREACHERS PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED BECAUSE IT GIVES PEOPLE WHAT THEY TRULY NEED (vv. 23b-24)

1 Corinthians 1:23b “a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,”

EXPLANATION

- JOHN TRAPP: “The gospel was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks a laughing-stock. The both stumbled on the bridge, and so fell into the ditch of destruction.”
 - **RQ.** What does Paul mean by saying “Christ crucified” is “a stumbling block to the Jews”?
 - **A.** He means they tripped over it—*they would not accept it*—for at least two reasons:
- I) The Jews stumbled over Christ crucified because they did not want a Savior that allowed Himself to be killed.** They thought this was weak.
- They wanted a Conqueror to defeat their enemies by signs, not a Priest to forgive their iniquities by suffering. That is what is going on in this passage.
- II) The Jews tripped over the message of the cross because they did not want to accept the fact that they were so wicked that Jesus had to die.** They thought they could earn God’s acceptance by their works (Romans 9:30-33).
- **RQ.** What does Paul mean by saying “Christ crucified” is “folly to Gentiles”?
 - **A.** He means it sounded silly to them that God would become a man and die as a substitute for sinners. That is not wise to them, so they rejected it.
 - **Q.** Is this not why many reject the gospel today? Is this not why you used to reject Christ, or maybe you still do?

BUT! There’s a “but” look at verse 24.

1 Corinthians 1:24 “but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

CROSS-REFERENCE

- **Ephesians 2:4-9** “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

POINT

- Faithful preachers preach Christ crucified, even and especially when people do not want to hear it, because that is the precise thing God uses to call dead sinners to life!
- Christ crucified, though it is the last thing sinners care to listen to, is what they most need to hear!

APPLICATION

Q. Do you live like this is true? Do you act as though this is true?

ILLUSTRATION

- **Hear me:** The Lord Jesus does not softly whisper in the hearts of sinners, begging them to believe on Him. When a man preaches Christ crucified, the Holy Spirit...
- **BLASTS A TRUMPET RIGHT NEXT TO THE EAR OF THE DEAF** and they HEAR;
- He **ORDERS DEAD SINNERS TO COME ALIVE** and they BREATHE;
- He **SHINES THE LIGHT OF THE FULL FORCE OF THE SUN RIGHT ONTO THE FACE OF THE BLIND** and they then SEE;

- He COME TO CHRIST; REPENT; TRUST IN HIM” and HIS SHEEP HEAR HIS VOICE AND THEY FOLLOW HIM!

CROSS REFERENCE

- **This is what happened to the Greeks in Athens!**

- **Acts 17:32-34** “Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.” So Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.”

- **This is what happened to the Jews in Corinth!**

- **Acts 18:5-8** “When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.”

- **They stumbled and they thought the cross was foolishness, but then God called them to Himself. This is what happened to the Athenians and the Corinthians! *And this is what has happened to you, dear saint.***

APPLICATION (saints)

I) You, Christian, once thought Christ crucified was offensive or foolishness!

II) You, saint, once thought you were righteous enough to stand before God or that you were wiser than Him!

III) But then God came to you, and as you heard or read the gospel, the Holy Spirit caused you to be born again!

- He breathed life into your dead soul and you lived! He said, “Sinner, come forth!” and you walked out of your tomb as a saint!

IV) This is the only reason that what you once saw as weak and foolish, you now see as powerful and wise! “Christ the wisdom of God and the power of God.”

- Jesus, who once was a rock of offense to you, you now see for what it is; the most precious jewel the world has ever seen!

- Christ was once just a silly stone in a useless field to you, but now you see Him as the pearl of great price whom you would sell everything to have!

- The Lord Jesus was once a weak beggar to you, but now you see Him as the strong man that binds your enemy and plunders his house!

- The Lord Jesus was once a homeless man to you, but now you see Him as the mighty God who can carry your sins into the sea and lifts you up to heaven!

CHILDREN: Jesus is more beautiful than the biggest diamond you have ever seen! Jesus is more powerful than the loudest storm you have ever witnessed!

CLARIFICATION

I) **Faithful preachers preach Christ crucified because this is how God gives sinners the gifts of repentance and faith!**

II) **Faithful preachers preach Christ crucified because this is how God reminds His people that the sins they still battle are truly forgiven for Christ’s sake!**

III) **Faithful preachers preach Christ crucified because this is how God continually works a hatred for sin and desire for holiness in believers!**

IV) **Faithful preachers preach Christ crucified because this is how God assures His saints of His big-hearted love for them!**

V) **Faithful preachers preach Christ crucified because in this message God strengthens believers in the fact that He has paid far too high a price for them to ever kick them out of His family!**

VI) **Faithful preachers preach Christ crucified because this is how God comforts His people by reminding them that just as He forgave them by Christ’s death, He will also raise them to eternal life in glory through His resurrection!**

IV. FAITHFUL SAINTS NOW SEE CHRIST CRUCIFIED AS THE WISDOM OF GOD AND THE POWER OF GOD (v. 24b-25)

1 Corinthians 1:24b-25 “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. **25** For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

OH THINK OF THE WISDOM AND POWER OF GOD IN SAVING SINNERS BY CHRIST CRUCIFIED!

- **What foolishness it must seem to ordinary men** to think that God Himself would become a man in Jesus Christ and be liable to temptations, suffering, and even death! What a foolish risk it seems the Father sent His only Son into!

- Yet this is the wisdom of God in saving sinners; only a perfect representative could live without sin for His people’s righteousness.

- **What weakness it must seem as well for natural man to think that Christ Himself willingly suffered and died on a cross!**

- Yet in this we truly see the power of God; Christ Jesus died the death we deserved to die, taking the judgement of God that we were owed, so that He could rise from the dead and forgive all the believing from their sins.

- **Behold, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God!**

Q. Do you see God’s wisdom in the cross? Do you see His power?

Q. Where would you be if God had not called you to salvation?

- Man could never dream up something so wise and strong, but God did. And He did it for you, believer. He *planned* it before the ages began and He *accomplished* it for His glory and your good!

Q. Why would we ever want to hear anything but Christ crucified?

CONCLUSION

EXHORTATION (sinners)

- You who still reject Christ, you need something to happen to you that you cannot control! Cry out to God and ask Him to call you to Himself. Then trust in Christ crucified and you will be saved!

EXHORTATION (saints)

You who are “the called”—who embrace Christ crucified through faith,

- I) Worship God as you consider His wisdom and power in saving you!
- II) Fill your thoughts with Christ Jesus and Him crucified and you will be assured of His tender love and affection for you!
- III) Thank the Holy Spirit who caused even you to be born again to a living hope!
- IV) Depend on the same Spirit that brought you to life to strengthen your life to serve and obey the Lord!
- V) Make it your aim in all of your life to say with Paul, “We preach Christ crucified!”