

Prayer Meeting Address
by Mr J H Gosden
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
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1 CORINTHIANS 1 V 18 - 31

In these verses is contained the mystery of godly experience, the painful crucifixion of the flesh, the solemn and yet blessed power of grace in its effect in the heart, bringing a proud, independent man to be willing to depend utterly for everything upon another. There is one point that every child of God, sooner or later, by the instruction of the Spirit comes to, whether he be a very infant or whether he is a father, whatever his position in life may be, sooner or later this is the point he is brought to by the stern, solemn, blessed teaching of God; it is this, "Give me Christ or else I die". A point, to bring one to which, needs divine, almighty grace, the stern hand of God, the gracious, powerful, efficacious work of the Holy Ghost. The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. God did not create man a foolish being, but a responsible one. Natural intellect, a creation of God, is beautiful. Man is made higher than all other creatures and is set over the works of God's hands, but "After that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God". This fine creature man, through the temptation of the serpent, the devil, fell, and destroyed himself and destroyed his knowledge of God. Death came by sin; wisdom was lost. Solomon searched, the wisest man the world has ever known except Jesus Christ, searched to find out wisdom and it was far from him. He sought in all travail into all the comforts and pleasures of an affluent life. He went into the depths and searched to find wisdom, and found it not, and he came to this conclusion at the finish of his Spirit inspired enquiry, that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God, which all men are void of by nature. And it is the fear of God, planted by the gracious Spirit in the hearts of men that brings them to realise that they are fools, that they cannot find out the Almighty; brings them to realise that they are not only fools, but sinners and rebels against God. O the discoveries that the Spirit makes by His light in the hearts of the people of God of their lost

condition, and it is this that fits them to come to receive, when it is brought to them, the testimony of the Person, the gift and the cross of Christ. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock....." A stumblingblock to them because they had so many obediences by which they thought to palliate their consciences, by which they sought to obtain the favour of God. They trusted to Moses and to a literal fulfilment of the ceremonial law. "And unto the Greeks foolishness"; who were learned men and could not conceive, as no man can by nature, how that another can, by His life and death, obtain for another person the favour of God. "And unto the Greeks foolishness". It is folly to nature, to polished human nature, to think of a Man being crucified to be the Saviour of the world; that God should be in Christ, that the weak Man crucified on Calvary's cross should be the Son of God. This cannot be received by nature. "But unto them which are called", called effectually by the Spirit out of nature's darkness to see their condition and what they are before God, and how alienated they are from Him by wicked works, and how that His law is against them and they are shut up to that law with respect to all their natural powers, unto them which are thus called, "both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God". That is, Christ is preached to such as have in themselves nothing but ruin, nothing but unrighteousness, nothing but weakness and ignorance, and darkness. He is preached to them as the power of God, the expression of God's power, the manifestation of the wisdom of God; Christ the Son of God made Man, an exhibition of the power of Almighty God, to come into the breach; the power of God to do that which no power of man could do, and the wisdom of God to devise that which no wisdom of man could ever think of; Christ in His person is this. What power could have constituted the God Man Mediator but divine power. The power of the Highest came upon Mary and the Holy thing that was born of her was called the Son of God. What an exhibition, the exhibition of the power of God there is in the Person of Emmanuel. His power is seen in creation, but O what comfort is that to a lost sinner? His power is seen in the elements, in His solemn judgments and dealings with men and with nations, but what shelter, what hope can that be to a poor sinful man who fears the

vengeance of God? But Christ, the power of God, is the power of God to deal with the enemies of the soul; the power of God to deal with hell; the power of God to deal with infinite justice. This is the power of God in Christ crucified that is preached to poor, powerless souls. "And the wisdom of God"; that in this Person there should be all the attributes and perfections of Deity, of the eternal God, all harmonised, and yet sinners should in Him find hope and salvation. And this Christ, when He is preached, and received by faith, is in the heart the power of God to raise up there what no other power can do. The law begets despair; nothing but the power of God in Christ can beget hope. The law stirs up enmity; nothing but some discovery of the goodness of God in Christ can take away the enmity and produce love to God and His ways. "And the wisdom of God". Christ in His Person is a manifestation of the wisdom of God, and He is the essential wisdom of God. And in His mediation, as He is between God and man, He is the wisdom of God for sinners. O how useful, if I might so speak reverently, is the wisdom of the Lord Jesus Christ in His mediation to poor, ignorant souls. He knows the mind of the Father and came to declare it. He knows the law of God and came not to abrogate it, not to destroy it, but to explain the spirituality of it, and then to go to the end of it in obedience and suffering. If you shelter under a nominal faith in Christ with respect to the law, and think that He came to take away, to abrogate the law, O what a mistake you make. He preached the law. You read the 5 Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount, and see how the Lord Jesus preached the law; did not minimize, did not destroy it, but rather, if one might speak so, showed the extent of it. It has been said of old time that if you kill you are in danger of the judgment but I say unto you if you hate your brother without a cause you are in danger of the judgment. He showed the spiritual nature of the law. But He did not only do that, but He also showed that He came to fulfil it, and in life and teaching, and in His obedience and in His precious death, He explained, He fulfilled, as in no other way could be explained or fulfilled, the holy claims of divine justice upon men. Hell, eternal perdition, will never exhibit the law of God as the life and death of Christ exhibited that holy law. "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men". The weakness of God might be said to be Christ when He was crucified, for it is written in the Epistle that Christ was crucified through

weakness. Not that God could be other than omnipotent, but He subjected Himself to crucifixion, was voluntarily weak in His crucifixion. But O the strength that there was exerted in the death of Christ. "The weakness of God is stronger than men", than all men put together. No man could have effected what Christ did when on the cross. He destroyed death and him that had the power of death, even the devil; made a show of principalities and power and nailed them to His cross. The strength and the wisdom of God are seen in what, to men, appears folly and weakness.

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called". Aspiring wisdom is brought down. A comforting word this may be to some who fear at times their natural ignorance will be a bar. Not many mighty, not many wise, not many noble are called. And not that being ignoble and weak and foolish naturally ensure it at all, but it is a word to comfort those who find an obstacle in this to direct them to the right place. That it is by becoming a fool that men are made wise. If they naturally have wisdom that must be laid aside. Natural riches, those have no weight in this matter. Natural intellect, that wont fit into this plan. Righteousness, that must be cast aside, and the person must become, in himself, with respect to God and God's favour, as if he were not. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 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: That no flesh should glory in His presence." And I believe the Lord brings all His people down to this nothing, things that are not. Why, what being in respect of God's favour and presence and love and goodness is there in a man when the curse of his sins is upon him, when the law of God thunders in his conscience, when his helplessness and ruin and ignorance and rebellion, his sinful nature is discovered to him? He has no being of hope, no being with respect to the goodness of God. Says he, I am undone; my being is undone. Yea, an untimely birth he may think is better than his being which is but a being to await eternal destruction. And all his efforts, as you were singing just now, all his efforts prove vain. He cannot gather up any goodness. If he attempts to keep the law, if he attempts to avoid the things

that the law condemns, he finds himself shut up to the law; no way out. He is constantly condemned. All the law can do is to set lessons, to give rules, and when it finds that those rules are violated, to curse the man and that curse in the conscience brings a man to nothing. Like a man in a condemned cell; they say you could sell his life for nothing; it is of no value to him. A few hours, what is that to him who is about to go to the gallows? That spiritually is the experience of the people of God under the law. But he has a being by the preaching of the cross, and in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, an eternal being, and so the Apostle says "Of Him", that is of God, "are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption", and in those four things is all the well-being of a poor immortal soul. No man can need more than is in Christ. He is made everything for life here and for glory hereafter in the experience of the child of God.

He is made unto us wisdom, the wisdom of God in the plan of salvation. He is made wisdom to the person so that by the Spirit of Christ he is led into the ways of God, directed from the law to Calvary's cross; taken away from his own strength and wisdom to see in Christ all that he needs - a Mediator, an Intercessor, a Prophet who knows the Father's mind, a teacher that can teach him by His Spirit infallibly. Christ is made wisdom and righteousness. This is a stumblingblock to the Jew; a stumblingblock to many a person, this, that Christ alone crucified, Christ as having fulfilled, obeyed, and suffered the law's curse, should be made to a man righteousness, and it is only as He is made to a man righteousness, that he has a being in God. Our righteousness has no being, whatever good works we do; it has no value because we have no being in God. We are cursed of God naturally. Righteousness wrought by a perfect man, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, this imputed to a sinner, O what value there is in it. How it will make a man, upon whom it is put, perfect in God's sight, complete in Christ. Nothing else will do it. Not that there are not good works to be performed by the people of God, but no good works can be performed in the way of merit to procure God's favour by a man who is dead under the law. Righteousness - the Lord Jesus is said to be the Lord our Righteousness. He brought in everlasting righteousness when He died and was cut off, not for Himself. And this is made out by the Spirit, shown to men, shown to be sufficient so

that they, at times, feel that could they produce any actions that might be termed perfect, they would not mention, they would not look to them; they would cast them away as polluted garments. It is only as the Lord Jesus is made known in His Person and the merit of that Person in His work, that their righteousness is discovered, and a man thereby is enabled to cast aside all else. It is a great stumblingblock. Men say, well but are we not to obey what God says? They say, are we, should we, venture alone on what Christ has done? Would not that lead to licentiousness? If the Lord Jesus manifests Himself to you in His blessed Person and work, you will know this - the more you know of Him the more you will love good works and the less you will trust in good works because there is no need, the work of Christ being more than sufficient and more glorious than any work of a poor man, though that work be glorious as it is the effect of grace. "And sanctification". Sanctification before God and in the heart, Christ is made. Who can subdue our sin, but Christ? What can keep out, what can drive out really, from our affections, our hearts, evil thoughts, but some manifestation of Christ crucified? What can fix our affections on things above and heavenly glory, but some manifestation of Christ? I believe that there is nothing that can effectually subdue sin but the revelation of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ within a sinner's heart. And He is made this, so that a person realises that to be sanctified, to be made holy, at any time of his experience here - and it is sweet to have holy desires and holy thoughts - he has no hope of this but as the Lord Jesus may come to him.

"And redemption". Complete, eternal redemption; so that though he himself is sold, sold absolutely, in Christ there is a price of value paid that has effected for him eternal liberty, redemption from slavery, slavery to sin, and slavery, if one might speak so, to the law, slavery under the curse. This redemption is in Christ, and the blessed Person of Christ. "Who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." The blessed Person of Christ is this to the people of God. They never get to the end of Christ. Christ has gone to the end of the law for them, but the little they know of Him makes them, at times, long to know more and to experience more of what He is and what He has and the effect, the consequence is this. "That according as it is written, He

that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord". If ever we glory it must be in Him in whom we have our well-being, in whom, as we hope, we have redemption, eternal life, righteousness, wisdom, strength and sanctification. We owe all to Him, and when He manifests Himself at all to us then we can glory in Him. What a great thing it is to glory in Christ, but how it crucifies the flesh to be brought there. The Apostle Paul was brought there through crucifixion, so that he did say, - and all the saints more or less say - "O wretched man that I am". He felt that everything in Him was against this Christ, and against the law of God, but he was brought to glory in Him and thank God for Him and for victory through Him. So may the Lord bless us for His Name's sake.

AMEN.