

## WHAT SHALL WE THEN TEACH?

Today, the “EVANGELICAL” church is filled with MAN-MADE theories, philosophies, therapies, psychologies, and formulas that represent the WISDOM OF THE WORLD. Many evangelicals, in the name of "ALL TRUTH IS GOD'S TRUTH," advocate mixing “GOD'S WISDOM” and the “WORLD’S WISDOM” in addressing the SPIRITUAL needs of people. This approach, called INTEGRATION, is an affront to the AUTHORITY, SUFFICIENCY, and PURITY of Holy Scripture.

The issue is this: What shall we then TEACH regarding matters related to sin, salvation, and sanctification? In referring to TEACHING ministry, I am not negating the importance of the practical aspects of ministry. However, the great issue is what is to be taught in terms of DOCTRINE regarding evangelism, discipleship, and sanctification. It is my contention that the concept of INTEGRATING HUMAN PHILOSOPHY and GOD'S WORD for the purpose of SPIRITUAL MINISTRY is condemned by Scripture.

## THE WORD

In coming to Corinth Paul reveals his singular approach when he says, "***For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified***" (1 Cor. 2:2). The word DETERMINED means he had resolved to do this. He made up his mind after careful thought. I believe the IMMEDIATE CONTEXT is very significant. Paul had just come from Athens where he had addressed the philosophers (Acts 17, 18).

His address there seems to have been much broader than his emphasis in 1 Corinthians 2:2. His speech comes across as quite eloquent. He comments on various aspects of their religious life and seeks to build on that premise. He seems, in part, to rely on human reason, logic, and arguments. He quoted their secular poets, while tying in other theological truths, and conspicuously absent is the message of the cross, grace, and redemption. The RESULT was that a few believed, but Paul will attribute the first-fruits of ACHAIA to Corinth, where he went immediately after leaving Athens (1 Cor. 16:15).

It is with this background CONTEXT that Paul says, “I DETERMINED not to know ANYTHING among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (emphasis mine). He now emphasized NO POETS, NO INTELLECTUAL ARGUMENTS, and NO ELOQUENT SPEECHES. His whole emphasis now was JUST THE MESSAGE FROM GOD! This was Paul's approach to ministry as he entered Corinth. Most today would uphold Acts 17 as the model to emulate and shun Paul's approach in 1 Corinthians 2. Acts 17 is

seen as sophisticated while 1 Corinthians 2 does not appear as being “intellectually respectable”.

**NOTE:** I am not saying that what Paul said in his sermon on the Areopagus was at any point inaccurate. And while not being DOGMATIC, I tend to believe that the evidence of CONTEXT and CONTENT would argue for the position that he refocused and readjusted his APPROACH TO MINISTRY (cf. Gal. 2:11-13) as he came to Corinth, and never again diverted to accommodate the wisdom of man. Paul would flex in matters of custom, preference, culture, rights, etc., but not in the CONTENT of his doctrinal teaching ministry (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23; Acts 20:27). Paul said that Corinth was the seal of his “apostleship in the Lord” (1 Cor. 9:2).

The super STRONG emphasis in 1 Corinthians 1-3 is that Paul did not rely on human wisdom, but rather simply proclaimed THE MESSAGE FROM GOD. He had no message of his own, he was merely the bearer of GOD’S MESSAGE. This SINGULAR approach to ministry applied not only to EVANGELISM in a pagan context that put a high premium on “wisdom” but also to his TEACHING MINISTRY among the saints (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6, 13). Paul’s position on ministry in 1 Corinthians, whether it be in regard to EVANGELISM or DISCIPLESHIP, began and ended with the WORD OF GOD!

## THE WHOLE WORD

The WHOLE Word is the HEALTHY or the PURE Word. It is the unmixed, uncompromised, uncontaminated, unpolluted, unadulterated WORD OF GOD. While Corinth had MANY problems that needed to be addressed a priority concern was the HERESY of INTEGRATING the “wisdom of man” with the “wisdom of God” that was infiltrating the Corinthian church. This ERROR was uppermost in Paul’s mind and in concert with other concerns is IMMEDIATELY addressed in the first three chapters of First Corinthians. Of first concern was the right DOCTRINAL FOUNDATION on which the PRACTICAL then builds.

Paul states that his teaching ministry simply involved relaying the “**things freely given to us by God**” (1 Cor. 2:12). And he went on to say, “**these things**” (spiritual truths) were communicated “**not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches...**” (1 Cor. 2:12-13). SO SORRY, BUT FREUD DOESN’T HAVE A VOICE HERE! Note the constant repetition and emphatic emphasis that INTEGRATION is wrong!

1 Cor. 1:17....preach the gospel, not with the wisdom of words...

1 Cor. 1:21....the world through wisdom did not know God...

1 Cor. 2:1....did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom...

1 Cor. 2:4....my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom...

1 Cor. 2:5....that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men...

1 Cor. 2:6....we speak wisdom... yet not the wisdom of this age...

1 Cor. 2:13....we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches...

1 Cor. 2:18....If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool...

1 Cor. 2:19....the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God...

## **NOTHING BUT THE WORD**

For Paul, teaching ministry started and ended with the WORD OF GOD. He insisted that it must be the UNCOMPROMISED HEALTHY/WHOLE Word, and one compelling reason was that he knew only a WORD-BASED ministry will endure the FIERY JUDGMENT of God when He evaluates the quality of our ministry at the believers' judgment.

In 1 Corinthians chapter three the LOCAL CHURCH is in view and Paul's instruction primarily relates to church leaders regarding BUILDING INTO the lives of those who comprise the church. The foundation of the Church is Christ. Now on that foundation, the issue is how shall we build the church? This is the issue Paul is addressing. The instruction involves a warning to BUILDERS! There is a right and a wrong way to build the LOCAL CHURCH WHICH IS THE TEMPLE OF GOD.

While not being dogmatic at every point I believe the following is in view: There appears to be three categories of "BUILDERS" in view in this passage (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12-21). The builders are the "spiritual" leaders entrusted with BUILDING the church with a WORD BASED/WISDOM OF GOD ministry. The materials relate to the QUALITY of one's ministry of the WORD in the lives of those who make up the local church. The immediate context and the overall emphasis in 1 Corinthians 1-3 makes it clear that the issues involve ministry of the WISDOM OF GOD versus a ministry of the WISDOM OF THE WORLD.

### **1 Corinthians 3:11–17 (NKJV)**

**11** For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

**12** Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

**13** each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

**14** If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

**15** If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

**16** Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

**17** If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

1. GOLD, SILVER, PRECIOUS STONES: This category represents the works of the faithful builder who builds with the pure uncompromised wisdom of God. ONLY THE WISDOM OF GOD WILL STAND THE TEST. ONLY THE WORD OF OUR GOD SHALL STAND FOREVER. ONLY A WORD-BASED MINISTRY WILL ENDURE.

2. WOOD, HAY, STRAW: This category represents poor workmanship of unsatisfactory quality. This builder, while saved, tried to build the church with INTEGRATION. He integrated the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world, and his work is burned. He will suffer loss of wages (reward) but not lose his soul. This should serve as a RED WARNING FLAG TO ALL THOSE who seek to integrate PSYCHOTHERAPY and worldly PHILOSOPHY, etc. (cf. Col. 2:8).

3. DEFILES THE TEMPLE: God will destroy this individual. Apparently, this individual seeks to build solely on the basis of the WISDOM OF THE WORLD. Grave sin has grave consequences. The punishment fits the crime. Is this individual saved? We are not told, but the warning is solemn. ANYONE WHO WOULD DARE TO DEFILE/DESTROY/CORRUPT GOD'S HOLY TEMPLE THROUGH A MINISTRY OF THE WORLD'S WISDOM will be destroyed by God Himself. How is the Church defiled? The CONTEXT is undeniably clear that through a ministry that incorporates the WISDOM OF THE WORLD the Church is thus defiled!

Verses 18 & 19 in the IMMEDIATE CONTEXT say *"Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written..."*

## **WHICH CATEGORY ARE YOU IN?**

As the Church gets ever closer to the end, we are seeing the fulfillment of **"they will not endure sound doctrine..."** (2 Tim. 4:3). Today, the church is doing psychology and a host of other "OLOGIES" that represent

BLATANT INTEGRATION of God's wisdom & man's wisdom for the purpose of "SPIRITUAL MINISTRY".

If this approach to ministry stands in the day of judgment, I will have totally missed the point of I Corinthians 1-3. Only a WORD-BASED ministry will endure! On judgment day, may our doctrinal ministries be characterized by "THE WORD, THE WHOLE WORD, AND NOTHING BUT THE WORD." Such a ministry will stand the test of Christ's evaluation on judgment day!

"All that is not eternal, is eternally out of date." -- **C.S. Lewis**