

“Do You Have Cable?”

1 Corinthians 2

Hymns: #595 Love Divine All Loves Excelling #596 May the Mind of Christ My Savior

Reading: 1 Corinthians 2

Bo and Giz were neighbours and avid football fans. It was Saturday morning in Bo's house when there was a knock on the door. Opening the door Bo was met by his very excited neighbour Giz. "Come on in Giz...what up?" "Well my poor little friend", said Giz, "I've just come over to tell you that I am now the proud new owner of a state of the art, stunning and huge new TV. Its 110 inches of breathtaking resolution, 4k, interactive smart TV capability. The experience of this baby is unreal and immersive. I can play games, stream movies, access the internet...it's amazing Bo." "Wow that sounds amazing Giz, congratulations, how much did that...", before Bo could finish his sentence, Giz suddenly saw the Divisional Playoffs football game was on Bo's ancient little 24 in TV. "Gotta run Bo Ring...Giz Mo gotta game to watch" and with that he was gone. Giz returned home switched on the monster TV and flicked through the channels, but couldn't find the game. His TV performed flawlessly and everything he saw and heard while searching for the game was amazing...but he never found the one thing he really wanted to watch. While Giz Mo sat frustrated in front of his beautiful new TV, Bo Ring enjoyed watching the game. You see Bo had something Giz didn't have. Bo had cable...and the game Giz really wanted was only available on cable. You see, no matter how good your TV may be there are some things you simply cannot see without cable.

This morning as we come to Ch. 2 of 1 Corinthians we are going to see the spiritual reality of this fact. The one thing really desired can only be seen if you have "cable"...that is a hard wired connection to the Spirit's wisdom. You may have the 110 inches of smart TV intellect and may be capable of doing all kinds of things, but without cable connection to the Holy Spirit, you will search in vain for the one and only game in town...that is your God destined glory of election, adoption, sonship and eternal life in Jesus Christ.

Last week we saw the boasting of the baby believers at Corinth and here in chapter 2 Paul instructs the Corinthians and us on the importance of getting "cable" installed. In doing so we'll see the "The Method of the Messenger", "The Maturity of the Message" and "The Measure of a Man". I've title this morning's message "Do You Have Cable?"

1. The Method of the Messenger V.1-5 *"1When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. 2For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. 4My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power."*

The apostle Paul, in contrast to Peter or the other Galilean fisherman-come apostles, was a very well educated and learned man. He studied under the great Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of the Jewish fathers (Acts 22:3). Today we would say that Paul had graduated with a degree from university and had a doctorate in Theology as well. So Paul was no dummy. But when he came to Corinth with the testimony of God, he purposefully set aside any flowery, poetic or oratorical prowess that might have impressed the ritually religious Jews; and he left out any powerful apologetics or scientifically satisfying rationality for the Greeks. Instead he made up his mind ahead of time he was not going to engage with them in conversation about anything other than Jesus

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Christ and in any way, but Him crucified. Paul purposefully did not use wise and humanly persuasive words, which he certainly was capable of and which both Jews and Greek would have much preferred. How many times must Paul have bit his tongue and held his peace in the face of the snobbery ignorance of the religious and the arrogant blindness of the rational. He could easily have blown them both out of the water with what he saw and knew, but he had “resolved”, that is, he had made the decision and was exercising self-control in that decision, to not engage them in anything other than the proclamation of Jesus Christ and him crucified. This decision led many people to say of Paul “His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing.” (2 Cor. 10:10) and they rejected his apostolic authority.

What was it that made Paul make such a resolution? Look at v. 5 “so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.” Paul understood very clearly that this sinful world is going down like a sinking ship and that all the wisdom of man in the world is not capable of saving anyone. There is only one life boat capable of saving anyone and that is the power of God in Jesus Christ. But for people to be convinced that they are on a sinking ship is going to require a demonstration of the Spirit's power, not an argument from human wisdom. Because Paul knew this to be true in his own life, knowing it took a Damascus Road experience to knock him off high horse, he resolved to know the one and only thing that can save and to preach Him in the only way that can truly save.

Paul had his priorities right about the sinking ship of this world and its supposed wisdom. Like the “frightened woman on the Titanic who found her place in the life boat that was about to be dropped into the raging North Atlantic. She suddenly thought of something she needed in light of death that was breathing down her neck. She asked for permission to go to her state room. She was granted just a moment or so, or they would have to leave without her. She ran across the deck that was slanted at a dangerous angle. She ran through the gambling room that had money pushed aside in one corner ankle deep. She came to her stateroom and pushed aside her jewellery and reached above her bed and got three small oranges and found her way back to the life boat and got in. Death had boarded the Titanic. One blast of its awful breath had transformed all values. Instantaneously, priceless things had become worthless. And worthless thing had become priceless. And in that moment she preferred three small oranges to a crate of diamonds.”¹

Paul knew that “Three oranges of Christ and Him Crucified” are worth more than a crate of diamond studded eloquent words or persuasive worldly and scientific wisdom.

And notice how Paul felt about this approach, look at v.3 “I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling.” I think these words are an honest representation of exactly how Paul felt and equally I think they are a demonstration of the Spirit's power, not only in Paul's personal experience but in the result of his approach among the Corinthians. Paul will tell the Corinthians latter in this letter to “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” (1 Cor. 11:1) and he tells those at Philippi “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice.” (Phil. 4:9). So, if you feel inadequate to share the gospel and to proclaim Christ and Him alone among your friends and relatives; if you feel fearful to be so single focused; if you tremble at the resolve to ditch the normal conventions of this world in all its small talk, gossip of others, and the million diversionary distractions that one's undisciplined stream of consciousness can vomit up...then know you are in good company with the Apostle Paul. And Scripture exhorts you to follow in his company. If Paul could feel inadequate, fearful and trembling then you and I can cut ourselves

¹ WE Sangster

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some slack and remember that courage is not the absence of fear...its doing what needs to be done in spite of the fear.

And what is it that must be done? Look again at V. 5 “...so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.” Saving faith MUST rest on God's power, not men's wisdom or scientific argument. Have you become fully convinced yet that you do not “argue” anyone into eternal life? Faith must rest on God's power and revelation and that kind of faith comes from the Word held out with a demonstration of the Spirit's power in and through the message and the messenger. You see, while mental assent is important to saving faith, if that is all it is, there is a problem. Your faith must be based on more than just someone else's words to you. You must have a personal encounter and experience of the Spirit's power; that is the power of God that makes you say with conviction what the Samaritans said after the woman at the well's testimony to them: “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.” (John 4:42)

J Vernon McGee said “This is the reason I sincerely question a great deal of this apologetic preaching today- such as trying to prove that Bible is God's Word or that the first chapter of Genesis is scientific or that the flood really happened. Don't misunderstand me, there is a place for that, and I thank God for men who have specialized in those areas. But we need to understand that salvation does not rest upon whether we can actually prove the inspiration of the Scripture, though I certainly believe we can prove it. The question is: what does your faith rest upon? Apologetic preaching will call our attention to the Word of God, but our faith must rest upon the power of God.”²

Can I remind us all this morning, that witnessing for Christ as Paul did here, is simply sharing with someone else what Jesus Christ has done in YOUR life and doing so by the power of the Spirit.

So, having established the method of the messenger, Paul goes on to say that the message is in fact a very deep and wise one, but is so only for the mature.

2. The Maturity of the Message V. 6-13 *“6We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” -- 10but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. 11The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.”*

What exactly is this message of wisdom among the mature? Paul says it is that which has “been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began”. If we look at what Paul said to the Ephesians I think we can see a reality that fits this description and which constitutes the message of wisdom among the mature.

² J. Vernon McGee; *1 Corinthians; Through The Bible Books; Pasadena Cal; 1977; p. 34*

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“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. (Eph. 1:4-6)

Here we learn that our predestined election to adoption and sonship are what believers have been destined to before the creation of the world and this was given us freely in the One He loves, Jesus Christ. Election to adoption and sonship is nothing short of participation in the Divine Union of the Triune God of Grace. Jesus made this very clear in his High Priestly Prayer in John 17 where he prayed to The Father for us to see His glory and to do so by means of Divine Union. “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (v. 20-21)... “I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”(v. 26)

The experiential awareness and participation in this amazing grace and will of God does not come to us through the natural physical faculties of our eyes, ears or minds. This is what Paul means when he says “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”. So then how are we going to get in on this if we can’t get at it by our eye gate, ear gate or by our mind’s reasoning? The answer is you gotta have “cable” and that is exactly what God has given us in the Holy Spirit’s indwelling. The Holy Spirit is the only way you can get in on this game.

You see, apart from God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit making Jesus known to us, we cannot know Him or the glory to which we have been destined by God. This is because only God can truly know God. He is both the Subject (The Knower) and the Object (The One Known) and He shares that knowledge He knows of Himself with us by His Spirit. When we hear the gospel, which is the power of God (Rom. 1:16) and we receive Jesus Christ to ourselves, believing that he is OUR Lord and Savior, then we simultaneously receive v.12 “not the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.” In other words, it is only when we receive the Spirit that we have a “hard wired cable connection” with which we can receive the signal to get in on THE Game and to understand the things God has freely given us. In God’s generosity he gives us an unlimited cable subscription and He does so for free.

Speaking of the Maturity of this Message, Paul says in v.13 “This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words or perhaps more literally as the NIV margin translation has it, “interpreting spiritual truths to spiritual men”. In other words, listen carefully, the same discipline required to resolve to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified, is the same discipline required among the mature to speak those things we have received from our spiritual cable connection. This is very different than throwing out the “disconnected little ditties” that pop into our heads or getting lost in endless speculations or scientific debates.

Let me ask you a question. When you are with other believers, what do you talk about? Does the conversation ever get out of the “foyer talk” of the weather, what footy team you barrack for or Aunt Milly’s bunions? Or do you see being with other believer’s as a precious privilege that is not squandered with trivia, but where spiritual truths are shared with spiritual words...that is, the unadorned and honest spiritual revelations you have received and offered in your own unadorned and honest words.

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When this precious privilege is seen and you begin to move in it, you need to be prepared for some shocking and confusing encounters. The reason for this is because not everyone who claims to be a believer actually has “cable” and some who do are still so immature that they never watch it, listen to it or share it. Notice how Paul describes this reality:

3. The Measure of the Man V. 14-16 *“14The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: 16“For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.”*

When the man with cable tells what he has seen and heard, the man without cable doesn't believe him and in fact thinks all those things he hears are sheer foolishness to him. He doesn't even know what the man with cable is talking about. After all his eye has not seen, nor his ear heard neither has such a thought ever entered into his mind even though he has the 100 inch LED , breath taking resolution, 4k, interactive smart TV. “He knows no more about spiritual matters than a goat grazing upon grass on the hillside.”³

But the man with cable now has the ability to make an assessment of the world and people around him based on what he has seen, heard and learned as a result of being connected. Because he's got “cable” he gets news and learns of events now that others don't get. As a result people without cable don't understand him and in fact they don't know what to think of him. This is Paul's meaning when he says the “spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment”. The natural man cannot discern the spiritual man, but the spiritual man discerns all things.

In these passages and the first couple of verses of chapter 3, “Paul divides human beings into three classes of people:

First is the ψυχικός- psuchikos- meaning of the senses, sensuous, natural, that is the Adamic man un-renewed through the new birth.

Second is the πνευματικός- pneumatikos- meaning spiritual, that is the renewed man as Spirit-filled and walking in the Spirit in full communion with God.

Third- σαρκίος- sarkikos- meaning worldly, fleshly, that is the renewed man walking according to the sinful nature who remains a babe in Christ.

The natural man may be learned, gentle, eloquent and fascinating, but the Spiritual content of Scripture is absolutely hidden from him; and the worldly Christian is able to comprehend only its simplest truths, “milk” (1 Cor. 3:2) not meat.”⁴

What makes it challenging to the πνευματικός- the believer with cable- is that when he encounters the σαρκίος – the worldly and fleshly Christian he can't always tell what he is dealing with because sarkikos and the ψυχικός- the unbeliever without cable often look so much alike. Because it is difficult to pick sometimes, Jude advises us to “show mercy mixed with fear, hating even the clothing corrupted by sinful flesh.” (Jude 23)

This chapter closes with Paul quoting Isaiah 40:13 and asking a somewhat rhetorical question in "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" That is, what unspiritual, ψυχικός,

³ J. Vernon McGee; *1 Corinthians; Through The Bible Books; Pasadena Cal; 1977; p. 39*

⁴ *Scofield Study Bible- NIV; Oxford University Press; 2004; Note 1 Cor. 2:14; p. 1509-10*

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natural man has known the mind of the Lord? The answer is obviously none, he has no cable connection through the Spirit.

Then Paul makes one of the most staggering statements in the NT, “But we have the mind of Christ.” Just stop and read that again. But we have the mind of Christ. If you have received Christ as Savior, you have been given a cable connection by the Spirit indwelling you by which you have been connected to the mind of Christ. Can you fathom what this means? What kind of mind does Christ have? What does he know, what does He see, what does He understand and feel? While we are here on this earth you and I are being conformed to the image of Christ and having our minds renewed so that we can begin to fathom this. And for all eternity we will be plumbing the depths of this indescribable gift of grace. If I had to try and put the cookies of this truth on the lower shelf where the kiddies could reach them, I would say to “have the mind of Christ” is to begin now, in this life, to appreciate, experience and enjoy the Son’s communion with the Father by the Spirit. For that communion is what God has destined for our glory before time began. Hallelujah!

So what are we supposed to do with all this? Well, I think there are three very practical applications for us:

First, **RECEIVE**, make sure you have “cable”. And there is only one way to get “cable” installed...you have to receive it as a free gift. You don’t have to bribe “The Cable Guy” with \$50 bucks to get free cable like Jim Carry did in the movie by that name. And there is only one way to receive the Spirit...it is the simultaneous down payment and deposit given when you hear the gospel of your salvation and receive Jesus Christ as YOUR Lord and Savior. He has already made an organic connection between you and Him, but it’s not until you receive Him and his work for you as the gift of God, that you receive His Spirit indwelling you. The indwelling of the Spirit and the Spirit baptising you into the Body of Christ are instantaneous and simultaneous events initiated upon your receptive faith in Him. This kind of faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

Second, **RESOLVE**, that is make up your mind ahead of time that you will share your faith with unbelievers with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power; in other words, by simply declaring what the Spirit’s power has done in your life and share that with your own honest words and God’s words. Resolve to no longer try and “argue anyone into eternal life” so that their faith might rest on the power of God. Your own life and words should demonstrate the Spirit’s power. And when you couple that testimony with the Scriptures of “Romans Road”, you ensure that should faith be generated in someone, that their faith will not rest of your wise and persuasive words, but on the power of God.

Third, **RESPECT** your time with other believers for the priceless and precious privilege it is. To respect this time with others means ensuring that you are listening to your own “cable” connection first, then when you come together with them that this is what you “speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit to you, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.” Ditch the small talk and whatever other disconnected thought pops into your head and listen to and for the Spirit amongst yourselves as believers. We are commanded in Scripture to do this and to ignore this is sinful behaviour which must be confessed and repented of. Hear again the command of Eph. 5: 16-19 “**Be very careful**, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, **16making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil**. 17Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. 18Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. **19Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs**. So, no more squandering fellowship...respect one another and make the most of every opportunity...the days truly are evil.

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Let's pray...Father, your Word is a mirror, in which we see ourselves and the gap that still remains between what we see of the glorious image of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and ourselves. Please help us to learn from the Corinthian church and to grow up into the mature Sonship that you have destined for our glory before time began. Help us all to Receive, Resolve, and Respect as we move from this day forward. And now as we come to your Table Lord Jesus, to share in the intimate communion of your Body and Blood, we do so with gratitude and thanks. In your great and glorious Name we pray. Amen.