

A Believer's Bible Booklet



What Denomination Are You?

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According to a certain parable, two men met a great many years ago at a church convention. To their mutual surprise, they discovered that both had formerly been completely blind and that Jesus had opened their eyes and given them sight.

"Isn't it marvelous," said the one, "how the Master makes clay, puts it on your eyes and tells you to go and wash? Then, when you wash, your eyes are opened and you can see."

"Mud? Jesus doesn't use mud. He just speaks a word, and you can see."

"Jesus does use mud!"

"He does not. I ought to know. I was blind and He just spoke a word and my eyes were opened!"

"He does use mud. If He didn't use mud, He didn't open your eyes. You're still blind. You just think you can see. I'll have nothing more to do with you. You have denied one of the fundamentals of our faith."

Presently those whose blind eyes Jesus had opened with mud came together in an exclusive group. They excluded all others and they called themselves "The Muddites". And those whose eyes Jesus had opened without the use of mud joined together also. Of course, they were called "The Anti-Muddites". These two groups spent their time in rivalry between themselves while the blind all around them groped through life not knowing that Someone had come to bring light to all who walk in darkness.

The State of the Church

Ridiculous? Not really. It is the tale of twenty centuries of Christianity. It is a story of divisions and denominations. This is the state of the church today.

I remember reading many years ago a defense of denominationalism. It was presented as part of the wisdom of God and I was quite impressed. The writer drew his analogy from the military. Just as a nation's military force is diversified with its navy, its air force, its infantry, its cavalry, its marines, and so on, each playing a particular part in the overall defense of the nation, so the church is diversified with its various denominations each with its own truths, emphases and ministries. Such is the wisdom of God.

Some give their lives for the promotion of a denomination. Others tolerate the situation. Still others ignore it. A few fight it.

What should be done? What does God think of it? Is there any other option? Does it really matter anyway? These, and a dozen more questions, bombard the mind of the sensitive Christian. Fortunately, we are not left to our own resources for answers. We do have a word from God that is very much to the point.

The Church in Corinth

One of the first places this phenomenon of denominationalism reared its head was in Corinth. Surely it is instructive that the question of divisions in the Church there is discussed by the Apostle Paul among the disorders reported to Paul about some Corinthians (1:10-6:20). It was one of the four disorders reported to Paul and corrected by him in this section. More than that, it is the first one he takes on. Further, he devotes more space to this than to any other single subject in his entire epistle (1:10-4:20).

The message is loud and clear. Whether they be on the level of the local church or the universal church, divisions among Christians are so destructive and defeating that they must be eliminated. It is to this end that Paul writes.

In the first paragraph, verses 10-17, the Apostle establishes the fact of divisions in the church in Corinth. It is to these verses that we will direct our attention in this booklet.

"Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I'm of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas,' and 'I of Christ.' Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, that no man should say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void."

1 Cor. 1:10-17*

*All Biblical quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New American Standard Bible.

Here is the portrait of a divided church. What is the Word from God to Christians participating in such a disorder? In these verses we will note the apostle's exhortation (v. 10-11), his description (v. 12), his condemnation (v. 13) and his exultation (v. 14-17). First:

I. THE APOSTLE'S EXHORTATION

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you.

verses 10-11

In a gentle but urgent tone, the apostle begins, "I exhort you." With warm tender affection he addresses them as "brethren". Yet there is a note of solemn authority when he implores them "by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." But what specifically is this appeal?

A. The Direct Appeal

There is but one exhortation in this verse. It is "that you all agree." It is simply an appeal for unity or agreement. Bishop Lightfoot has pointed out that in classical usage this expression "is used of political communities which are free from factions or of different states which entertain friendly relations with each other." We would use it today to describe a group of students who are doves or a group of senators who are hawks. These are groups of people where there are no factions, where there is unity.

Paul is now appealing to these Corinthians for such agreement. This is the unity for which our Lord prayed in John 17 when his prayer was, "that they may be one." This is the unity which our Lord had said would be the mark of discipleship and He said:

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one for another."

John 13:35

Paul is not saying there is no room for differences of opinion among Christians. What he is saying is that agreement on essentials is a must and that love prevails in all things. Augustine comes close to the spirit of the exhortation when he says:

In essentials – unity

In non-essentials - liberty

In all things - love

B. The Double Effect

The apostle recognizes that unity or agreements among them would have a double effect. First, IT WOULD ELIMINATE DIVISIONS AMONG THEM. "And there be no divisions among you." The word translated "divisions" here is used in Matthew 9:16 for a "rent" in a garment. It is used in John 7:43 where there was a "division" among the people because of Jesus. It is a tear or a schism. As Paul looks at Corinth, he sees a church torn in pieces. Do you see the cause-effect relationship here? You have seen it in real life far too often. A disagreement is the breeding place of a division! Paul's appeal therefore for agreement is so that there be no schisms among them.

But, there would be another effect as well. only would agreement eliminate divisions, but IT WOULD RESTORE HARMONY AND FELLOWSHIP AMONG THE BELIEVERS. Paul says,

"but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment."

When Paul "spoke of them being "perfectly joined together" (AV) or "made complete" he used the verb Galen had used as a surgical term for the setting of a broken bone. It's the same verb that the gospel writers use for the mending of broken nets (Mark 4:21, 1:19). What a picture word! Paul is concerned, then, with mending breaks in the church and bringing the believers into a beautiful relationship of harmony with each other in their attitudes ("minds") and opinions ("judgment"). That is why he tenderly, lovingly but authoritatively appeals to them to agree.

C. The Distressing Report

This urgent exhortation follows a report he had recently received from the household of Chloe. We do not know anything more of Chloe than what is found in this verse. She may have been the blond beauty of Corinth. Her name means, "the blond" or "the fair one." Her name was a surname of the goddess Demeter. Since slaves were often named after gods, she was probably a freed slave. Undoubtedly, she was a wealthy business woman, something like Lydia, because she had a household of family slaves. It was some of her slaves that had come from Corinth to Ephesus, where the Apostle Paul was, and had demonstrated with conclusive evidence to him that there were "contentions" (AV) in the church in Corinth.

It was not merely the differences of opinion to be expected in every church. What had happened in Corinth was that the differences of opinion had led to "quarrels". The word Paul uses is the same word, by the way, that is used in the list of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:20. In that passage, it is translated "variance." It simply means "wranglings" or "quarrelings."

Now we see precisely what had happened in Corinth.

D. The Devastating Sequence

Among the Christians, there had been differences of opinion on some matters ("agree" v. 10). Those differences of opinion had led to quarrels (v. 11), and the quarrels had resulted in divisions or schisms (v. 10). This is the sequence that has been seen in the history of the Christian Church innumerable times:

Disagreement -> Quarrel -> Division

This sequence often leads to the birth of a new denomination. When we were in Canada, we lived in a small town about twenty-five miles from another small town in which a denomination had been born, a spin-off from the Holiness Group. It originated one night when the tie of Mr. Horner, who was enthusiastically preaching, became wrapped around his hand. He concluded the devil was trying to bind him in his preaching. So he tore his tie off,

threw it on the ground, tramped on it, and said ties were from the devil. From that moment onward he taught that Christians ought never to wear ties because they bound them in their Christian lives. This gave rise to a difference of opinion, which led to quarrels, which led to a division, and today in Canada there is a group called the "Hornerites". This is the division sequence at work.

The same sequence leads to splits among churches. I know of a church that had a difference of opinion on the matter of speaking in tongues. It led to a quarrel until finally a group of Christians got up and left. They started their own church down in the Y.M.C.A. There is the division sequence once again at work.

It is always behind the stage in divisions within a church as well. In a certain church that did not have any musical instruments there were some persons who launched a little movement to purchase an organ for their church. Some were for the organ and some were against it, but the people that were for it eventually won. An organ was obtained, but it caused a quarrel that has left a division in that church.

A difference of opinion that is dealt with in the flesh issues in quarreling and wrangling. In the heat of debate, a person becomes convinced that he is right and everybody else is absolutely wrong. The result? A division! That is exactly what happened in Corinth.

II. THE APOSTLE'S DESCRIPTION

"Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas,' and 'I of Christ.'"

v. 12

Each group had its own slogan, its one person to follow: Paul, Apollos, Peter or Christ. That is Paul's description of this factioned church. How did this come to be? Let's see if we can reconstruct it.

In the church at Corinth, we know that the divisions were fomented by Jewish false teachers (II Corinthians 11:13,22). They discredited the apostolic credentials of Paul before the Gentiles who had accepted them. Charles Hodge (I Corinthians, p. 13-14) writes:

The two principal parties in Corinth, therefore, were Gentiles calling themselves the disciples of Paul, and Jews claiming to be followers of Peter. The Gentile converts, however, were not united among themselves. While some said, we are of Paul, others said, we are of Apollos.

A. Paul's Party

Listen to how a spokesman may have represented this party:

"Paul was the one who preached when I was saved you know. He's the founder of our church and I plan to stay loyal to him. Besides, he has such a beautiful view of a Christian's liberty regarding circumcision, eating meats offered to idols and observing the Sabbaths. His liberal view of these things, his wholesome attitude toward Christian liberty fits perfectly with my background as a Gentile Corinthian. He's my man!"

B. Apollos' Party

Apollos had come to Corinth after the departure of Paul (Acts 18). This cultured Greek from Alexandria had a special appeal to those persons to whom the bodily presence of Paul seemed very weak and his speech was contemptible. They loved Apollos' polished style, his eloquence and rhetoric. They objected to Paul because he was not a philosopher nor a rhetorician of the Greek school. Dr. S. L. Johnson, Jr. says there are many modern members

of that cult, such as the woman who said, "I almost weep every time my pastor pronounces that blessed word, 'Mesopotamia.'" That would have been typical of Apollos' party. Today, there are those who are captured by the tone of their preacher's voice, or his culture, or pronunciation. The more obscure a sermon, the greater that sermon and preacher is. This is the intellectual party - the party of spiritual sophisticates.

C. Peter's Party

Perhaps their argument went something like this:

"Peter was one of the original apostles, so if you're tied in with him, you're tied in with headquarters: Jerusalem! Peter is the man to follow. He's a little older, a little more mature than those young men, Apollos and Paul. More than that, he is just a little more rigid when it comes to the Scriptures. He sticks a little more closely to our Jewish traditions (Galatians 2:11) and devotes his time to evangelizing us Jews. He is my man."

D. Christ's Party

These were those who said, "I'm not aligned with Paul, nor Apollos, nor Peter; I'm aligned with Christ. He alone is my teacher, and I am His disciple. I refuse to take any other name than His name." There is a familiar ring here. They sound like some today who declare they gather only in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. A spirit of partisanship prevails and they themselves become a party. This is the exclusive party.

Dr. H. A. Ironside chuckled as he spoke of a small church which was identified with an exclusive "splinter" denomination. The members cut out some gold letters and fastened them in the front of the church. The letters said JESUS ONLY. One day a gust of wind blew away the letters JES. Then the sign read, US ONLY. How fitting a caption for the exclusive party!

Several observations can be made from these divisions. First, the divisions at Corinth were not based upon fundamental doctrines of the faith. Do not misinterpret Paul to be calling for union between believers and unbelievers, or between theological conservatives and liberals, or between fundamentalists and apostates. These are not the issues in First Corinthians. Such unions are not only impossible, but are categorically unbiblical. Second Corinthians 6:14 says that there should be no such relationship between believers and unbelievers in their church fellowship. The believer, the conservative, the one who is true to the Word of God ought to abandon an apostate situation and testify by his departure to his commitment to the truth and his loyalty to the Word of God. Paul is not appealing for unity between believers and unbelievers. The divisions in Corinth have nothing to do with the fundamentals of the faith, such as the virgin birth of Christ, the substitutionary atonement of our Lord, the verbal inspiration of Scripture, or the person and work of Jesus Christ. Where these are being rejected the believer must separate himself. But the divisions in Corinth were based upon non-essential doctrines.

Second, these divisions can be traced to personal, petty preferences, such as racial prejudices, pseudo-intellectualism, worldly sophistication or old-fashioned self-righteousness. Again, do not misunderstand Paul. He is not saying that there is no place in a local church for differences of opinion. Such a situation would not only be highly unlikely, but it would be undesirable. The followers of Peter needed the followers of Paul; if there was anything that the Jewish party needed for a proper spiritual balance, it was the preaching of Paul and Apollos. By divorcing ourselves from other believers, by ostracizing ourselves from their teaching, we become unbalanced in our Christian life and doctrine. Differences in spiritual emphasis help maintain balance.

However, Paul maintains that we should hold our differences of opinions without wrangling over them. Such quarreling is a work of the flesh. The resulting divisions, schisms and parties are inevitable.

Third, the parties in Corinth only appear to have been called by the names of great men: Paul, Apollos, Peter, Christ. In 4:6, the apostle says:

Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

The verb translated "figuratively applied" means to change the outward appearance of a thing, while that thing itself remains unchanged (cf II Cor. 11:14-15, Phi 1 3:21). Apparently, then, Paul has taken a situation which existed in Corinth and changed the outward appearance of it. His description is a veiled allusion to the actual facts. He used the names of Paul, Apollos, Peter and Christ only as illustrations of the Corinthian situation. Paul was a master teacher who probably adopted this technique to avoid talking in generalities and yet prevent the resentment that would come from using the real names.

Although not called by the names of Paul and Apollos which were used, the parties in Corinth were real. Probably they were the Jewish, Intellectual, Liberty, and Exclusive Parties, which were called by the names of the actual leaders in the church. This tendency has continued through the centuries. As a result, today we have the Russellites, Wesleyans, Lutherans, Mennonites, Calvinists, Arminians, Church of Christ, etc. This practice, therefore, began in the earliest days of the church.

Of course, not only do the names of men identify parties. The Pentecostal Party has taken the name of an event which is particularly significant in its doctrine. The Baptist Party has taken its name from an ordinance which it emphasizes as the means for church membership. Some are known by their doctrinal emphasis (for example, the Holiness Group). The Congregationalist, Episcopalian and Presbyterian Parties are named after their respective methods of church government.

Such non-essential divisions are all denounced as wrong. Confronted with this situation in Corinth, Paul's indignation explodes in a series of questions which condemn all such partisanship, schisms, divisions and denominations.

III. THE APOSTLE'S CONDEMNATION

Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

v. 13

These three rapid-fire questions are like three deadly thrusts of a sharp sword. Anyone alone would have been sufficient to condemn their divisions. Together the three are devastating.

A. Such divisions are an offense to the person of Christ.

When Paul asks, "Has Christ been divided?" he is asking if our Lord has been divided up or parceled out into various groups. Has one part of Him been given to Paul? Has another part of Him been given to Peter? Of course not! As Christ is incapable of divisions, so the church cannot be divided. Divisions are an offense to the person of Jesus Christ.

B. Such divisions are an offense to the work of Christ.

"Paul was not crucified for you, was he?" The "Pauline Party" begins to squirm in their seats. They look at each other nervously. "Was Paul crucified for you?" "Well, no." "Was it Paul's blood that redeemed you?" "No, no, that's not true." "Is it Paul that has purchased you for himself?" "No, not Paul." "Well, who is it?" Of course, it's the Lord. It was the precious blood of Christ that was shed for us. Our divisions are an offense to the work of Christ because it is the work of Christ that has purchased us for Himself. We are His personal property. Taking any other name, saying we are disciples of any particular preacher or theologian is an offense to the very work that Christ has done on our behalf. Believers have no relationship even to inspired teachers such as to justify being called by their names. We are called Christians because we belong to Christ.

C. Such divisions are an offense to the confession of your relationship to Jesus Christ.

Again, he asks, "Were you baptized in (into) the name of Paul?" What does he mean? Barclay says:

"To give money into a man's name was to pay it into his account, into his personal possession. To sell a slave into a man's name was to give that slave into the absolute and undisputed possession. A soldier swore loyalty into the name of Caesar and he belonged absolutely to the emperor."

Robertson and Plummer suggest that the phrase, "into the name of Jesus Christ" implies "entrance into fellowship and allegiance as exists between the Redeemer and the redeemed." That helps us understand the question. "Were you baptized into the name of Paul?" "Was your baptism an acknowledgment of the absolute undisputed authority of Paul in your life?" Of course the answer is "No."

They were baptized into the name of Christ. In their baptism, they publicly acknowledged their allegiance to Him. He was the one who had undisputed claim and authority in their life. None of the Corinthians were the possession of Paul that they should call themselves by his name. This was a contradiction of their confession in baptism.

If I understand verses twelve and thirteen correctly, I see Paul saying two things to us of tremendous importance.

Directly, he is condemning an ATTITUDE that leads to parties or factions within the church. There is still just one local church in Corinth, but in that church attitudes have developed that have fractured and fragmented the body.

This tendency is one of the curses of the contemporary church. Some give to a preacher a loyalty that only God deserves, and by their attitudes they divide Christians. Others crusade for a favorite doctrine at the expense of the whole counsel of God, and by their attitudes they divide churches. Personal prejudices, preferences, social standings and ethnic backgrounds cultivate attitudes that often fracture the body.

Indirectly, one can readily see a condemnation of DENOMINATIONALISM. Paul categorically condemns fragmenting the one church of Jesus Christ into segments that are labeled by the names of men or doctrines or days or any other such thing. Denominationalism is a product of the carnality of men - not the wisdom of God. We dare not defend it, tolerate it or ignore it. But how shall we oppose it?

"What denomination are you anyway?" Hardly a week goes by that I am not asked this question. Recently I asked one of our deacons how he answered that question. He responded: "The same denomination that Paul was." Now that's not a bad answer. What denomination was Paul? None! In the New Testament church, denominationalism did not exist.

Someone has said that the New Testament church was like a bottle of medicine that had many ingredients in it, but no label. It practiced baptism but there were no Baptists. It believed in predestination, but there were no Presbyterians. It believed in the - Holy Spirit but there were no Methodists. It observed the Lord's Supper but there were no Plymouth Brethren. It feared God, but there were no Quakers. There were bishops but no Episcopalians. The early church, you see, was a church where all the ingredients were present, but there were no labels that fragmented the church.

In Believers Chapel, we adhere to that practice. We are a nondenominational independent local church seeking to practice the principles of the New Testament. We have no organizational affiliation with any other church. We refuse to take any name that will fragment the church of Jesus Christ, because we recognize that to do so is an offense to the person of Christ, an offense to the work of Christ, and an offense to our very confession of allegiance to Christ.

That is why we are called Believers Chapel. This is a term used in the Scriptures which includes every member of the body of Christ. There is no fragmenting of the church of Christ in our name; it is a confession of our recognition of the unity of the Body of Christ. We do not want to do anything that will jeopardize that unity.

John Wesley once was very troubled in regard to the status of the various denominations and the chances of each with regard to future happiness or punishment. In a dream one night he imagined that he was transported to the gates of hell.

"Are there any Romans Catholics here?" asked the thoughtful Wesley.

"Yes," was the reply. "Any Presbyterians?"

"Yes," was again the answer. "Any Congregationalists?" "Yes."

"Any Methodists?" by the way of a clincher asked the pious Wesley.

"Yes," was the answer, to his great indignation.

In the mystic way of dreams, there was a sudden transition, and he stood at the gates of heaven. Improving his opportunity, he again inquired:

"Are there are Roman Catholics here?" "No," was the reply. "Any Presbyterians?" "No."

"Any Congregationalists?" "No."

"Well, then," he asked, confused, "who is inside?" "Christians!" was the jubilant answer.

That is exactly what the Scriptures teach. My dear Christian friend, it is toward this mentality that Paul exhorts us in these verses: I am a Christian, nothing else. I will take the name of no other person, no other organization. Any other name would be an offense to the person of Christ, to the fact that He is the One who died for me and purchased me with His precious blood, and to the fact that when I was baptized as a believer, I confessed my allegiance to Him. There is no other name than the name of Christ that I, as a Biblical Christian, can ever take.

A WARNING !

But beware. We who attend a church like Believers Chapel and take no other name than "Christian" can be very denominational in our attitudes. Those who said, "I am of Christ" were just as wrong as those who said, "I am of Paul." They included in their party only those who said "I am of Christ" and excluded from their party all others. As believers in Jesus Christ who want to be biblical in our practices and faithful to our confession, we will take only the name of Jesus Christ, but not for a moment will we exclude from our fellowship or from our warm companionship another Christian who may take another name. We at Believers Chapel could be more denominational than any denominational churches in Dallas if, in our attitude, we became sectarian or exclusive in any sense.

The position that Believers Chapel has always taken and, I pray to God, will always take, is that we are an independent local church seeking to follow the principles of the New Testament without any organizational tie to any other church in Dallas or in this world. We will have happy fellowship with any church that is evangelical, believing and preaching the Word of God. We will receive into our fellowship and to the Lord's Table any believer in Christ. By so doing, we seek to confess our belief in the oneness of the Body of Christ.

Do you see what we must avoid? It is what Paul, I believe, is condemning in this passage. He condemns primarily the attitude of sectarianism, of denominationalism. We will never, by God's grace, permit ourselves to ever cultivate such an attitude that will fragment the church of Christ. Indirectly he is condemning the practice of denominationalism. Again, by God's grace, we will never take a name or a position that will deny the oneness of the Body of Christ. May God help us always to testify by our attitudes and actions to the unity of the Body of Christ.

IV. THE APOSTLE'S EXULTATION

I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, that no man should say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void.

verses 14-17

In Corinth, Paul himself had baptized very few converts. He does not consider this a matter of chance but of providential direction and joyfully thanks God for it. Now he sees the purpose! If he had baptized more people, he would have been open to the charge of trying to create a party for himself. If more people had been baptized by him, they would have had their basis strengthened for saying that they belonged to Paul. Knowing this, Paul thanks God in His providence for keeping him from baptizing more people in Corinth.

Do not misunderstand Paul here. He is not saying that baptism is unimportant. On the contrary, our Lord commands it (Matthew 28:19-20); the early church practiced it (Acts 2.8.10.16. etc.); and the Apostle Paul expounded it in Romans 6. It is an act of public confession of faith in Christ. So Paul does not minimize its importance. He assumes every Christian at Corinth has been baptized.

Why, then, did Paul not baptize more people? He gives us his own answer: He says that he was not sent to baptize but to preach the Gospel. That is a remarkable statement. Could Paul have said it if baptism was necessary for salvation? No, he distinguishes between baptism and the Gospel. The Gospel is the good news that Christ has died for the sins of men and women and will freely forgive and save each one who will simply turn to Him and personally receive Him as their Savior. Freely, as a gift, salvation will be given to them. Paul defines the gospel that he preached.

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures..."

I Corinthians 15:3-4

This was the message that led to their salvation. Baptism is not a part of becoming a Christian. Paul could never have said what he said if baptism was a condition of salvation. Paul's commission then was primarily to preach the Gospel; baptism was a work which the Lord and the apostles generally left to others (John 4:1, Acts 10:48).

Paul's commission included not only a priority regarding the preaching of the Gospel. but also a particular manner of preaching it. It was not to be in the wisdom of words. That is, it was not to be with the flowery eloquent speech of the professional rhetorician, nor with the speculations of philosophy. That kind of preaching obscures the cross. When the cross of Christ and the message of the Gospel is embellished with flowery rhetoric or with philosophical dissertations, it appeals to men's intellect. When the cross of Christ is simply preached, it appeals to man's guilt. We learn that when God gave His Son to die upon that cross for us, it was because, before God, we were guilty sinners. The former type of preaching attracts men to the preacher, so that they leave saying, "My, isn't he a great speaker? Isn't his intellect astounding?" The apostle's presentation of the Gospel caused men and women to leave having been attracted to Christ. Their hearts were moved when they realized that God's Son came and willingly and freely gave His life to die as their substitute, bearing the wrath of God for their sin that they might be forgiven and saved. The former type of preaching leads men and women to put their confidence and their trust in human wisdom and in human devices. The apostle's kind of preaching leads men and women by the Holy Spirit, to come simply and quietly to the cross of our Lord Jesus and say, "Lord Jesus, I realize that I'm a guilty sinner and you have died for me. I want to trust You personally as my Savior and depend upon You and Your work upon the cross alone for my salvation."

My dear friend, if you will do that today, God, in His matchless grace, has promised that He will forgive your sins and will receive you into His family as one of His children, and you shall be saved. May God help you quietly just now to come to the cross. Stand simply before Him as a guilty sinner. Thank Him for dying for you. Place your trust for your salvation in Him and in His work alone.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:16

