

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

“...the wisdom of God...”

Few preachers really understand what it means to be 'led of God' to speak. I say this from personal experience, as well as from observation of the way preachers act and speak. We are all guilty of this, to some degree or other, and even as I write, I am still grappling with the awesome ramifications of claiming to be 'led of God'. In this chapter, Paul describes what it is to preach the 'wisdom of God' rather than the wisdom of men.

It is patently obvious that nearly all preachers preach from their own wisdom. Whilst I strive constantly never to do this, I am conscious of the fact that at times I fail... and if I am aware of this failure at times, I may also be **unaware** of failing at **other** times. Therefore, whatever is said here about other preachers also applies to myself.

I am not above other preachers, nor do I have superior talents. If I have anything at all, I pray that I have the calling of God (or else my position is untenable and sinful), and that I am gifted by Him to do the work - for the gift must always accompany the genuine calling.

This matter is of vital importance to all who preach. Are you actually **called** to preach - or did you elect yourself as preacher? I know from watching men and listening to them, that *many* preachers are not called of God. This is not arrogance on my part; it is a factual statement. Their 'preaching' consists of technique, timing, oratory skills and 'balance' of ideas. There is no power present in what they say, because what they say is of human means. I have 'been there and done that'!

Most Christians are used to this kind of second-rate offering and they put up with it. For this reason alone few churches are truly alive and few Christians know the power of God in their lives. Yet, they would dismiss a true preacher because his words are stumbling or halting, or

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

because he is too quiet, or too slow, or because he does not tell enough jokes, or because he does not fit his preaching to the strict deadline imposed on him!

God's power might well be in that quiet soul whose speech is unsure, whereas it might NOT be in the man whose fluency rivets listeners to their seats! Did you know that? If you judge preaching by fluency and easy-listening, or by clever use of words, then you might be in for a shock! The 'power' that so many claim is nothing but human oratory used to full effect. Paul's own preaching would probably have been disowned by many today. Indeed, if he had been invited to speak at churches as a pastoral candidate, he would probably NOT have been asked back again! Such is our inability to recognise God's TRUE power when we see and hear it.

Most men (and even women), as soon as they are saved, think they should, or can, preach. And churches, not understanding what a true preacher is, or how to recognise him, let such well-meaning people 'have a go' at preaching! This is particularly rife amongst charismatics, but is also found in most other churches and denominations.

A variation is to go to a Bible college and to be 'ordained'. Somehow, this artificially-produced ability to preach is taken to mean a man must be called of God. Whilst many excellent preachers have undergone college training, this alone is not the criterion to go by. A man is either called of God, or he is not. If churches do not know the difference, they are in serious trouble!

Paul often makes comparisons, and uses rhetoric, in order to highlight and define various matters. This is a typical Hebraic teaching form, and it permeates Paul's written ministry. We should expect this, because he was a high-status Hebrew scholar and theologian, and so he may have used rabbinical methods of tuition, which usually included question and answer sessions, or statements faced with counter-statements. Thus, the tutor would prompt the student at suitable junctures, and let the student discover the truth for himself, but guided by the rabbi.

Of course, the student may not be allowed to base his own arguments on anything other than God's word (although some liberal rabbinical authorities now ignore these boundaries. In this they are no different from some non-Jewish religionists, such as charismatics, unbelieving Anglican clergy, etc.).

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

Also note that throughout scripture God Himself makes promises or covenants with mankind, which are 'countered' by warnings. For example, the land of Canaan would belong to the Hebrews IF they obeyed the Lord; we may all enter heaven IF we are saved, etc. In a later chapter we shall come across a vital main text used by charismatics, which they use to falsely-warrant the idea of an angelic or heavenly language or 'tongue'.

But, as we shall see, it is simply another comparison used by Paul in order to emphasise a point he is making; charismatics have got it totally wrong. In this chapter, Paul is comparing men's wisdom with God's wisdom, saying that his own preaching is God's word, and not his own, so it can be trusted.

Verse 1

1.

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.”

Paraphrase:

‘And I came to you, fellow Believers, proclaiming what God says, and not with superior ideas or human learning.’

So, he sets the scene immediately. He is answering those Corinthians who followed after preachers rather than God Himself, by saying that God, not Paul, is the author of the Gospel message. How modern preachers need to learn this fact!

In the AV text 'excellency' is **huperoche**, meaning superiority, pre-eminence, elevation. The root word, **huperecho**, explains it a little better; it means to have or hold over someone, to be above or superior to. Thus, Paul says his preaching does not resort to making himself out to be superior, holding his own learning over the heads of others, so as to browbeat them. I know of some modern preachers whose words fly over the heads of their listeners. They want to impress their listeners with their learning and big words. Thus, his listeners are untaught.

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

With others, they *cannot be bothered* to use language that can be understood by everyone, so leave the majority untaught and uninterested. Such preachers have no place in the churches, and it is very likely they have never been called to preach anyway. Any man called to preach or teach will have a constant burden to reach others. He will not be content until he has reached everyone who is listening. If he has no such burden, then he is not called, but deludes himself. Also, when he speaks it will be from God, not from himself.

So, Paul did not come with 'excellency of speech'. That is, trying to lord it over people with superior learning. The text continues "**or of wisdom**" or, 'with excellency of wisdom'. The word for wisdom here is **sophia**, which has a wide variety of meanings. In this context we may interpret it as wide knowledge, acquired by experience and a sharp intellect; science and learning. The same word, *sophia*, can also mean proper skill in the teaching of Christian truth and godly living, so how do we know the interpretation I have given you is correct?

Well, the word 'wisdom' or *sophia* is qualified by the word *huperoche* (see above), which is implied in this case. Therefore, the 'wisdom' Paul is rejecting is the type that elevates men - their own learning. Paul would never reject proper wisdom that comes from the Lord. (Human wisdom has its place, so long as it does not contradict God's word, but it has no place in preaching or Bible teaching).

That this interpretation appears to be the correct one can possibly be supported by the root of *sophia*, which is **sophos**, meaning (amongst other things) the skill of Greek orators and philosophers. This is interesting, because Paul could easily have used such skill with his background. However, as a true man of God, he did not stoop to persuasion by human cleverness, but let God speak through him. As he later admits, this was to prove nerve-wracking!

Paul says he is "**declaring unto you**". This is another thing modern preachers know very little about! The word 'declaring' is **kataggello**. This allows for no debate or discussion. God's word is not open to democratic thinking. God is theocratic - what He says is absolute and supreme.
Kataggello

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

means to announce, proclaim publicly. It also means to denounce or even to betray. Thus, denunciation can be a part of proclamation. (Betrayal does not apply in this text).

In other words, Paul is saying that he **told** men the Gospel - preachers must remember that the message they have is God's absolute and unchanging law; we must not haggle it, or debate it. Nor may we 'offer' it as if there were any other alternative views. It is noted that the 'Alpha Course' that swept the UK in the latter part of the 1990's (and continues to grow), uses democratic means to discuss the meanings of doctrine. This is invalid and the approach is potentially heretical, as is the section of the Course on the Holy Spirit. All preachers must tell the Gospel as a matter of fact. As the roots of

ello -

ata

and

aggelos -

tell us, Paul's message is according to God's decree. Thus it must always be declared as fact.

katagg

k

Paul declares the 'testimony of God'. The testimony is **marturion**, meaning witness (probably derived from

martyr, meaning record, a legal witness). 'God' in this text is

theos

- the supreme divinity; the one true God - so Paul has no excuses or apology to make for his message.

martus, or

Verse 2

1.

"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

Paraphrase:

'For I chose to know nothing about you, except your salvation in Jesus the crucified Messiah.'

He chose or 'determined'. That is, **krino**, meaning (in this context) to resolve or to judge,

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

discover, see about something so as to know what must be done about it. He did not 'want to know' (**eido**) anything else about them, 'save' or 'but', whether or not they were saved. This is because salvation is the basic foundation upon which all else is built. We cannot build true doctrine upon sandy soil or upon an illusory base. Where there is salvation, there is always hope for change, and this is what Paul wanted to see.

Many problems can be overcome if salvation is true and present. (This does *not* mean we may be united on this earth with heretics or with those Believers who deliberately and openly reject God's word or practises. If these conditions continue we have no option but to discipline them, to the point of disfellowship if necessary).

Verse 3

1.

“And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.”

Paraphrase:

‘And so I came to you as a frail man, in dread, doing God's will even though I was quaking in fear.’

Paul is not being unduly pious here - he means exactly what he says! He entered one of the biggest and most powerful centres of sin in the known world when he went into Corinth. And the thought petrified him, as the words he used signify. 'Weakness', **astheneia**, is weakness of soul (i.e. self), not strong, bearing trials and troubles, frail. It is from

asthenes

, meaning weak, infirm, feeble. This supports his previous statement, that he spoke not with cleverness of men's ideas and learning, but only from God.

His 'fear', **phobos**, means dread or terror. He came in 'much trembling', 'much' being **polus** (great) and 'trembling' being

tromos

, or quaking with fear. It is a word describing a person who does not trust in his own ability,

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

which makes him anxious, and yet he nevertheless carries out his duty to the best of his ability. It is rooted in

tremo

, meaning to fear, be afraid, and

tremo

is rooted in

treo

, meaning to dread, terrify. It is plain, then, that Paul was truly scared out of his wits at the prospect of entering Corinth. He was of the same mind when he visited other places, too – yet he fulfilled God's command, which says a lot about his character and faith.

In a lesser way, as a preacher and teacher, I experience the dread of inadvertently preaching my own views, even though I do not intend telling others what I think. Often, after preaching or teaching, I prayed anxiously that I did not let self take over at any juncture, and that if it did, the Lord would negate what I had said in the minds and hearts of the listeners. Often, too, I fear men as I speak or write. Yet, I am compelled to carry on, because God demands it of me. So, any appearance of confidence I may show is not of myself, but is of God, whose work it is. Beware, preachers who are confident in their own ability!

Verse 4

1.

“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:”

Paraphrase:

‘And my instruction and my message from God was not given with human persuasion based on skill and learning, but in a show of the might of the Holy Spirit.’

'My speech', says Paul, was 'not with enticing words.' Modern preachers, especially charismatics, please take note! By 'speech', he refers to the sayings of God, or 'what I said (about God)'. The meaning of 'preaching' is profound and compelling. 'Preaching', **kerugma**, refers to the message proclaimed by a herald of God. The message, not the herald, is important, and it must be proclaimed publicly and openly.

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

The word *kerugma* is rooted in **kerusso**, meaning to be a herald, and it ALWAYS means the message he brings must be given with formality, in a grave manner, and with an authority that MUST be listened to and MUST be obeyed.

This is a direct assault upon charismatic preaching, especially of the Toronto Blessing kind, which is light-hearted and frivolous, and even stopped or drowned-out by intense and uncontrollable laughter or loud rock music! It can also be stopped or interrupted by other manifestations, such as shaking, running about, 'healing', howling, and so on.

None of these things is acceptable during preaching, which is the very message of God. He would *not* work against His own message for *any* reason, because salvation must come before any other spiritual gift or purpose. It stands to reason that if the message is to be given with gravity etc., that charismatic preaching which denies this requirement is NOT true Biblical preaching, but is humanistic and of Satan, to be ignored and refuted. Some wonder how charismaticism can be said to be 'of Satan'. Well, even if such preaching is 'of men', we are told in scripture that *whatever* is not of God is of Satan.

That Paul was emphasising God's power and not his own (Paul was a mighty mind in his own right, humanly speaking), is also seen in his use of the word 'enticing', or **peithos**, meaning persuasive. But, you might argue, Paul has elsewhere exhorted us to 'persuade men'! Yes, but bear in mind that he is making comparisons in this chapter, between true and false preaching. The 'persuasion' or 'enticing' in this text,

peithos,

is rooted in

peitho

, meaning to induce by words, to win favour, to seek to win someone, to strive to please.

This is not Christian preaching (though it is widely commonplace in most churches), which does NOT try to win people over by pleasing words or by clever arguments. As the chapter progresses, this is expanded upon. The charismatic idea is to induce people by fair words and devices to the 'cause of Christ'. They also use false gifts, such as healing and tongues, as 'proof' of what they say. This is not true preaching, but is a sham. The Holy Spirit does the 'winning', not us. He works in the *heart*, **after** He has quickened the spirit ('born again'). No amount of human effort or persuasion can aid this process.

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

The meaning of these words is qualified and supported by "**of man's wisdom**". Paul is saying that the 'persuasion' is not of man's doing, nor is it based on his learning. It is all of Grace and none of Man! Thus, Paul could tell the Corinthians that it was "**in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.**"

'Demonstration', **apodeixis**, means making manifest, to show proof. It is from **apodeiknumi**, which is to point away from one's own self, to expose or exhibit, to show what kind of person one is. Rooted in

apo

(the origin) and

deiknuo

(to give evidence or proof), the meaning is very clear. The preaching was proof of the kind of person God is. Proof of

what

? It is proof of

"the Spirit and of power".

'Spirit' is

pneuma

and it means (in this context) the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, the Lord, or God's power. Not Paul's prowess, but God's own power, through the Holy Spirit.

The 'power', **dunamis**, means the 'power of the Spirit', not of ourselves. In this context it means mighty work, or might that is **inherent in God because of Who He is**, His power or strength. It is not primarily a reference to miracles, at least not in this context. (Almost invariably, charismatics mean 'miracles' or 'signs and wonders' when they say 'power'. But, the number of times 'power' refers to miracles in the New Testament are very few indeed. Remember - the context helps to determine the interpretation).

Verse 5

1.

"That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Paraphrase:

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier
Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

'So that your trust/conviction of the truth is in the might of God and not in the learning of men.'

God spoke to the Corinthians **through** Paul **by** the Holy Spirit. The preaching exhibited *God's* might, which resides in Him because He

is God. It is His very nature, but it is not our nature. Anything we do or say in the Lord's Name is derived from Him and any power we display is delegated, and not our own. That is why a preacher who takes pride in the way he draws crowds, or in the way he supposedly performs miracles, is a fraud, a liar, and an arrogant deceiver, being self-deceived.

Paul entered Corinth in immense fear, totally devoid of pride and feeling ill-equipped humanly for the task. That is what he told the Corinthians. As he says in verse 5, he did not try to persuade them with fine words and arguments (something so common amongst preachers today).

Compare Paul's way with that of charismatic leaders, who take pride in ever-changing methods and means! Or, as the writer of the charismatic Alpha Course said - teach the course exactly as we wrote it - **because we know it works!** Thus, it uses human means, and everyone copies those means, hoping to get just a small slice of the cake for themselves. In this they are no better than Simon the magician, who wanted to buy the Holy Spirit!).

Paul wanted the Corinthians to place their trust in God and His power, not in himself or in any learning he had. Charismatics take 'power' to mean signs and wonders or miracles. But, the context demands another explanation, as we have already seen. And what of the 'faith' they ought to have? It is a small word used and heard in churches throughout the world - but no-one ever defines what 'faith' is!

Like so many words in scripture, it has a number of possible meanings. Faith, **pistis**, is conviction of the truth, especially concerning our relationship with God or Christ; it refers to trust in Him, which leads to holy zeal. Also, 'faith' is the belief that God exists, and that He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and the Giver of salvation. (If modern day Christians really believed in all this, they would not act as they do, and live such lax lives!). Faith is also the conviction that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah through Whom we obtain salvation. It includes general Christian beliefs and is a reference to faithfulness. All of this can also be taken to be a

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

rebuke against anything that is opposite.

Faith, *pistis*, is rooted in ***peitho*** (see earlier text), which means to obey, have confidence, believe, persuaded. Note - faith ***includes*** obedience and faithfulness! Thus, a man who claims to have faith in Jesus Christ or God MUST show that faith in obeying God and remaining faithful to His word. If men lack these qualities, then we may justly judge them to be unbelievers (as scripture advises). That is why I personally reject the claims of many charismatics to be Believers. It is not a bold or arrogant thing to say, because I am merely repeating scripture!

Christ Himself says that the proof of being a Believer is that we do what He commands. Logically, then, those who do NOT do what He says, or who add or take away from His words, cannot be Believers. True Believers who are not faithful and who show few signs of their belief, must work to prove themselves. A mere declaration of faith is not enough, for 'words are cheap'.

This true faith 'should not stand' in men's wisdom. 'Stand', ***eimi***, is to exist. That is, our faith must not exist and be sustained by human means or learning. It is easy for a while for unbelievers to pretend to be Believers, simply by learning scripture and how to 'talk' like Christians. However, this becomes empty and the pretender will feel a growing void within.

The 'wisdom of men' we are to avoid is, again, *sophia*. The 'power of God' is more or less the same as the 'testimony of God' (verse 1) and the 'wisdom of God' (verse 7). In this chapter the wisdom of men is compared unfavourably with the wisdom of God. That is, learning of men and contrived intellectual offerings versus the direct teaching of God through the Holy Spirit. On its own *sophia* is almost neutral, but Paul qualifies it by adding either 'of men' or 'of God'. Thus, we know which interpretation to use in any one instance.

The word for 'men' in this text is a particular one - ***anthropos*** - having more depth than other words in scripture for 'men'. Here it means human being, but includes the idea of Man's weakness, which leads him to make mistakes and to sin. It also can refer to contempt, or disdain/pity (probably because of this inherent flaw in Man). It can also refer to the dual nature of saved men - the new creation which is led by God, plus the 'old man' which is corrupt (though the 'new man' is greater).

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

These meanings help to emphasise what Paul is really getting at - the learning of men is corrupt and has no place in the preaching of God's word... though today it is found plentifully in our churches. Better a stammering, halting tongue used of God, than a fluency emanating from the 'old man'.

In this context, 'power', ***dunamis***, means the virtue of God, His strength, the ability He has because of Who He is. It is not a reference to miracles, etc. Currently, charismatics defy the proper interpretation of verses like this one, by making 'power' mean miracles. They publicly claim that 'when a man preaches the gospel, signs and wonders (

i.e. 'power'

) will

always

follow'. This is a lie.

Verse 6

1.

"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:"

Paraphrase:

'We declare the knowledge and practises of Christian living amongst mature people, not with men's learning, or with the teaching of human leaders whose learning will cease.'

When will this human learning 'cease'? At the end of time. This is also what is meant by 'tongues, they shall cease*'. Yes, they will - at the end of time. It is a reference to the temporal nature of Man and to the temporary nature of what he does. (* Note that this gift is rare nowadays, because of modern communication methods).

Again, we have the word 'wisdom': 'we speak wisdom among them...'. It is the same word as before, *sophia*. This time, though, it refers to true wisdom. Thus, the interpretation is as follows - broad and full intelligence with knowledge of the divine, skill in imparting Christian truths,

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

knowledge and practice of things needed to live a godly, upright life. Earlier, Paul said that he went to Corinth in fear and trembling, yet he preached anyway by the Holy Spirit, Who also controlled the results. This appears to be supported by the root of *sophia, **sophos*** - to make the best possible plans and to use the best possible means to perform them.

This wisdom was preached to those who were 'perfect'. This seems to be a strange thing to say to men and women who were being rebuked for their many sins! So, obviously, 'perfect' cannot be talking about their purity or righteousness! The word 'perfect', ***teleios***, means not wanting anything for completeness, consummate human integrity and virtue, full grown/adult/mature.

Rooted in ***telos*** it means the end of an act or state; aim or purpose.

Telos

is rooted in

tello

, which is to set out for a definite goal. What can we glean from these meanings? Obviously, the Corinthians were hardly model Believers! Paul was, rather, pointing them to their

state in Christ

In Christ

, they were already considered perfect and ready for heaven.

Elsewhere, Paul refers to Believers as being already in heaven, whilst living on this earth. This is consistent with proper Biblical theology. Our salvation is IN CHRIST. God cannot punish Believers with hell, because all He sees is Christ, who has taken our stead. Thus, we are 'perfect' IN HIM, even though *in ourselves* we still fail and sin. In Christ we have everything that makes us complete, even if we often negate our true state by sinning. It is rather like a prince who does not act in a regal way - he is still a prince by birth and state, even if he does not act like one at any particular time. Paul may also be saying 'I am talking to mature, grown people'.

Paul goes on to say that this wisdom is not that of the 'princes'- ***archon***, the rulers, chiefs, magistrates. The word is the present participle of

archo

, which is to rule or reign over. Thus, although these rulers are primarily the state rulers, it can also apply to religious rulers, such as priests, members of the Sanhedrin, etc. This is because the Jewish state, although under Roman control, was still basically a theocracy, in which the state was a function of the religion.

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

The Jews were as much ruled by secular chiefs (including Romans) as they were ruled by religious leaders. The word may also refer to leaders of thought, such as philosophers, etc. Whatever final interpretation we use, it *must* mean those who lead by human learning and thought.

Their thoughts and leadership will 'come to nought'. This phrase is one word in the Greek, ***katar geo***.

It means, destroy, abolish, fall, to render inactive or inoperative; to deprive of force and influence or power; to put an end to or do away with. Verses 6 and 7 echo what God says in Isaiah 29! Follow human leaders if you will, and be astounded by their wit, charm and learning, or even by their self-advertised 'power' and self-appointed role, but they will finally be cast down and destroyed, along with their learning. Only what is of God has true substance and will survive.

Verse 7

1.

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:"

Paraphrase:

'But we tell you the things of God, the Gospel that leads to your salvation (or/and, 'your blessed state when Christ comes again')

.'

This 'wisdom of God' is 'in a mystery'. Mystery, ***musterion*** (derived from ***muo***, to shut the mouth) is something secret or hidden; not obviously understood, the hidden purposes of God toward the righteous. That is, known to them, but hidden from the unsaved or godless. As we have already said, this finds resonance in Isaiah 29. It is the 'hidden wisdom': hidden,

apokrupto

, meaning concealing, keeping secret. Note this is continuous and not just in the past tense. It is a combination of both

apo

- separation from, and

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier
Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

krupto

- hide, hide one's self, keep secret, to conceal so it might not be known.

All of this is vital to realise, especially for those who believe (against scripture) that salvation is available to all. Clearly, Paul is saying that God ***deliberately conceals the truth of salvation from men***, but reveals it to those He has predestined to receive it! They understand it because their spirits have been quickened. And, as *apokrupto* tells us, this is a

continuous act of God - He is

still

concealing salvation from those who are not to be saved.

This is a definite statement of election, not of universal salvation. It is very clear that salvation is not just a matter of acknowledging Who Christ is, or that He is Saviour. Nor may salvation be obtained by 'choosing' Christ or by 'making a decision' for Him. The very words of scripture deny this possibility to men. Rather, we are told in blunt terms that the *Lord* determines who shall be saved, and that He maintains a veil of secrecy over salvation as far as the yet-unsaved and not-to-be-saved are concerned.

Many Christians angrily refuse this kind of statement, because they feel it is barbaric or ungodly. But, God Himself said it. He is the potter and can do with His created beings whatever He wishes! He has chosen to keep the book of life locked (like the book in Isaiah 29:11, 12) to those He has not ordained to life. This is a very sobering thought. We who are saved cannot boast of our salvation, for we did nothing to deserve it.

We must, then, thank God for His provision, and shudder that others will go to hell. This is surely a spur to witness! Not that our witness itself will effect salvation, but because it will be a proof of our love for our fellows, and of our obedience to God. It is also the ordained means of spreading the good news, alongside evangelism.

This 'mystery' of salvation is revealed to us who were elected before the world was ever made, because it was 'ordained' that way by God. Ordained, ***proorizo***, means predestinate, determine or appoint beforehand, decree from eternity. It is from

pro

- before/ago, and

horizo

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

- determine, declare, appoint, mark out boundaries (as in the root

horion

, meaning boundaries of land or border, which is supported by its own root,

horos

, meaning a bound or limit).

Do not fight God's own word. He tells us that He has set a limit or boundary around salvation. That inevitably means, to the distaste of many, that God will not save everybody. Indeed, it means He has determined in eternity (as the primary preposition **pro** - 'before' - indicates) who will be saved. Thus, He rejects most. That is why He refers to His elect as a 'remnant'! Some Christians try to avoid this conclusion by saying that 'God foreknows' who will be saved. But, that is not what God is saying. He says that He deliberately chooses some to be saved and deliberately conceals salvation from the rest. Foreknowledge is NOT the same as 'election' or 'ordained'.

He ordained this 'before the world' (was made). World being **aion**. It means world, but also eternal or eternity, for ever. It is the same as

aei

, meaning always, ever, perpetually. This reinforces the statement that salvation was made available in eternity before the world was made. That being so, no-one, by any means or effort, can either obtain salvation if it has not been decreed, or add to the 'book of life', for it has been written and the names have been finalised.

This 'mystery', salvation (and, by implication, those who were to be saved) was ordained before God created the world. For what reason? *'unto our glory'*! Glory, **doxa**, when applied to men, is an opinion of someone - in the New Testament that opinion is always good, resulting in praise for that person, honour, dignity, glory. It speaks of things belonging to Christ; also a glorious exalted state, or the blessedness of those who are His at His Second Coming. From the base of **dokeo**, it means reputed, 'it seems good', and 'pleased me'.

What does this really mean? It means we are counted as praiseworthy, and we have a good name before God. He gives us honour. Remember who Paul is talking to - the Corinthians! Yet, they still have God's praise and honour. Their natural, earthly state at the time of writing was certainly not worthy of any kind of honour or praise, so how could they be praised? Surely Paul was rebuking them, not praising them! The answer is in Christ.

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

As a natural man I am personally prone to sin, all the time. Even so, **in Christ**, I am saved. The praise and honour are not for myself as a natural man, but for my new created state before God. That is, it is

praise for Christ

in me, Who died for me and Who alone is worthy. In myself I am worth nothing. In Christ I am counted as worthy

because of Him

.

So, God is looking beyond our earthly tabernacles and upon His own Son, what He did and what that represented. The praise we have is 'unto' or *toward* what Christ means us to be. It is our coming, future state in heaven. It would be wrong to suggest that this refers to our 'potential', as some claim. We have no other 'potential' than we

now

have on this earth.

Our 'potential' can only be to carry on as we are, living holy lives punctuated by sin! We do NOT have the 'potential' to be utterly perfect in the heavenly sense, because we have the 'old man' within. Thus, the 'perfection' Paul sees in the Corinthians is that state they shall enter into in heaven, and which was already partially within them through Christ Jesus.

Verse 8

1.

“Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

‘The leaders of this world didn't understand. If they had understood, they would not have killed the One Who could save them!’

We have even more mysteries - human mysteries - in this statement. On the one hand, preachers through the ages have said that Jesus Christ would be crucified in their own age, because that is what human nature is really like. Yet, here Paul says that the killers of Christ would **not** have killed Him if they really knew Who He was. Which is true? Both.

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

Look at Judas: he knew Who Christ was, yet he still sold Him into the hands of the authorities. That is a dark reminder of what we are truly like as human beings. There is another point to make, already discussed above - that God blinds to the truth those who are not to be saved.

The 'princes' in this text refers to the priests involved in charging Christ, and the Roman rulers who allowed the death penalty to be put into motion. It does not refer to the ordinary people. What exactly does Paul mean? It does not make human sense. That is the key - the answer is in God's own eternal plan, not in our own logic. Earlier Paul said that salvation is locked out of the minds and hearts of those who are not elect. Paul is using a rhetorical statement, almost a muse. He is saying "***if*** they were able to understand, they would not have killed Him, but they ***could not*** understand, because they were blinded by God." This is a strange paradox to us, but is part of God's plan.

A paradox in scripture must be properly understood. It is something that *appears* to be without sense, but which is part of God's own thinking, and is therefore perfect. The meaning of 'paradox' is something that *appears* to be absurd or contradictory, but which is founded on truth. We do not know what the answer is because of our finite minds, or because God has not revealed it to us. Either way, a paradox is not a contradiction, for God cannot contradict Himself, nor can His purposes be without plan and purpose. Nor are His actions and thoughts the result of caprice. (God never reacts; He only works out His plan).

That we do not understand something is irrelevant, for God is the Potter. All we need to know is that if something is in scripture and we cannot make sense of it, then so be it! It still remains true, without flaw or contradiction. The impediment is our own limitations.

Verse 9

1.

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

Paraphrase:

'But, it was written a long time ago (by the prophets), that men cannot see, or hear or imagine, the things that God has in store for His elect.'

Very often contradictions and 'mistakes' supposedly found in scripture are just misperceptions. Here we have a quote (see the AV text) – but those who wish to destroy God's word point to it in triumph as an error. It is not an error, but merely a paraphrase. Even Christ paraphrased or summated prophetic texts! I am paraphrasing the texts in this study without, I hope, losing any of the thrust of the original biblical meaning.

The quote is taken from Isaiah, where the wording is in a different order. But, so what? The components are exactly the same! We are being told that God has prepared, in eternity, many blessings that we cannot even dream of, so great and wonderful that the human mind cannot possibly think what they may be. Just as God prepares our minds and hearts to receive Christ, so He prepares our way in this life, as well as our glories in heaven.

Verse 10

1.

"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

Paraphrase:

'However, God has shown us something of his benefits by way of the Holy Spirit, Who knows and understands everything God has done in secret.'

God has 'revealed' things to us... **apokalupto**, uncovered what was previously veiled and kept from us. It was completely unknown to us until the Spirit gave us the knowledge. That is why we cannot 'teach' Christianity to anyone. The unsaved can come to know facts about Christianity,

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

but they can never know the essence or living heart of it, because they are spiritually incapable of knowing it. For them, the deepest or secret things of God will remain hidden.

It follows, then, that schemes to 'teach' or 'lead' men to come to a knowledge of God are futile, whether it is the new fad of the Alpha course, or the ancient method of Rabbinical school teaching where intricate forms of debate are used to help a Rabbi to teach others. If a person is unsaved, no amount of teaching will help. He will remain unsaved and will remain in ignorance. He will gain many facts, but his heart and soul will be dead and the deeper things will not touch him.

Vast numbers of these people are found in our mainline churches today, as well as in the Roman Catholic organisation and many other pseudo-Christian groups and in Bible colleges containing men and women unsure of their calling – if they have one at all.

So, if God does not give the knowledge and understanding, no man can gain them by his own efforts. The mass exodus of people from 'reformed' churches to the charismatic cult groups at the height of the Toronto Blessing consisted mainly of those who were 'pretend' Christians, whose salvation was an illusion created by having a factual knowledge of God, whilst remaining unsaved. It does not matter what group one belongs to – Protestant, Catholic, or some other cult – for unsaved is unsaved. There is no distinction with God; all who are unsaved are in the same pitiable state.

You will notice that any knowledge and understanding a Christian has is not his own. He does not gain them because of his own spiritual activity. They are given to him by the Holy Spirit; it is He Who 'searcheth...the deep or extreme things (bathos) of God'. He examines and inquires into the mind of God and then passes on suitable information to those who are saved, in measure (as we are told elsewhere). Some Christians know more than others, but they are not superior or 'more spiritual'. Anything they know and can do is given to them by the Spirit as a gift.

The deep things of God are connected with basis (from baino, to walk), a 'stepping' or the foot. This indicates that the deep things of God are to do with our walk in life, a walk determined by scripture plus the leading of the Holy Spirit. Do not be fooled by those who appear to be Christian because of their 'good' lifestyle – anyone can adopt a lifestyle, but no-one can adopt a way of life based on Holy Spirit prompting unless it is first given to him by the Spirit. Until that time he is dead.

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier
Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

Verse 11

1.

“For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”

Paraphrase

‘A man knows himself and his thoughts, because his mind shows him. But, he cannot know God’s thoughts – only the Holy Spirit can know them, because only He has the same mind.’

Paul is making sure that his readers understand their position in Christ. They are saved, but they cannot know or understand unless the Spirit gives them these abilities. Without mentioning the actual words, Paul is thereby referring to predestination and election. Man cannot have even a glimmer of spiritual insight unless he is first saved by grace. this is one of the major reasons I never debate truth with an unbeliever, or expect him/her to understand what I am saying.

This is seen in the word ‘knoweth’, **eido**, which means to perceive with the senses, to discern, to pay attention with the mind, to examine and to come to the proper conclusion leading to suitable action. We are told that we cannot know the things of God unless the Holy Spirit gives us such knowledge and understanding, as the next verse tells us.

Verse 12

1.

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.”

Paraphrase:

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier
Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

'Being saved we no longer live in ignorance, but have knowledge and understanding given to us as a gift by the Holy Spirit.'

Before we are saved we have the 'spirit of the world'. This does not mean the spirit within us, for it is dead. It means the way of thinking of the world of sin. When we are saved, however, we receive the spirit of God. Again, this is not a reference to our own spirit, which is now alive. It refers to the 'spirit of God' or, His will and way of thinking. These are given as free gifts by God, through the Holy Spirit. They are given as gifts only to those who are saved. That is how we can say with certainty that the unsaved have no idea at all of what God really says or means.

Verse 13

1.

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

Paraphrase:

'We can now speak of the things of God using words and ideas given by the Holy Spirit, and now have the ability to use spiritual judgement.'

Though they become very angry, we can tell the unsaved clergy of Rome and Anglicanism, and within Protestantism, that they are ignorant and are unable to teach us anything of God. They are dead in their sins and have no access to the 'spirit of God'. So, they cannot possibly understand what God wishes, nor can they teach others. This is very evident in the sinful activities and theology of such people. We, the saved, can do so, because the Spirit gives us such information and ability freely. He does not give this to the unsaved!

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

In the AV text the latter part speaks of “*comparing spiritual things with spiritual*”. This ‘comparing’ is sugkrino meaning to fit everything together perfectly or to interpret. Thus, the saved who live as God wishes are able to interpret God’s word truly, whilst the unsaved clergy and others cannot do so. Listen to any unsaved Anglican, or a blatant charismatic for example, and you will know what I mean! One struggles all week to produce a ten minute ‘sermon’ – which is usually a diatribe about social injustice or some other worldly issue, and the other does not have a stop-tap to shut off his flow of irrelevancies and unscriptural nonsense, both saying very little about something that is even smaller in spiritual significance.

It need not be said that a true pastor or teacher will speak the truth with the authentic authority of the Holy Spirit, comparing spiritual with spiritual – giving genuine interpretation of God’s word. Whilst we must always check what others say against scripture, such men called to teach and preach must be listened to and, when necessary, submitted-to as under shepherds and men called by God to speak His word. (Not in the ‘shepherding’ sense of charismatics).

Verse 14

1.

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

‘The unsaved man receives no insight from the Spirit, because he thinks they are foolish. So, he learns nothing of God – he is spiritually dead and incapable of understanding.’

The ‘natural man’ of the AV text is **psuchikos**. He is acknowledged to be ‘naturally’ alive, having the ‘principle of life’ common to all living creatures, including animals, but he is known by God to be spiritually dead. Being ‘natural’ such a man is ruled by his own ideas and passions, with no desire for God. This is shown in the primary verb

psucho

, which is a secondary root word for

psuchikos

via the direct root of

psuche

. The secondary root word means to ‘wax cold’ or to be cold. Breathing but having the coldness of death.

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

The natural man is, then, an unsaved man (hence the interpretation). He can have no insight whatever into what God is saying, even when he hears God's words. He cannot respond to God, nor have any saving grace applied to his heart and soul. Any supposed 'desire' for God shown by the unsaved man is superficial and is not the seeking of a soul called by God. Rather, it is a desire for the benefits of God without the necessary elements of predestination, quickening and repentance, etc., that are part of salvation. Like folk who are 'in love with the idea of love' so such people are drawn by the ethos of God, rather than by the Holy Spirit. Something about the idea of God attracts them, but it is not a sign of spiritual awakening. It is this superficial ethos that attracts so many to the deceptive Alpha course today, or to having sometimes deep discussions about God and 'showing interest'.

The unsaved man, in his heart, is opposed to God. The teachings and ways of God are simply not acceptable to him. That is why so many believe that Christ's sacrifice on the cross is disgusting and not an act of a loving God. But, being unsaved, the man is incapable of knowing God or understanding what He says. He is 'discerned' (AV), anakrino – he has been examined and found wanting, without excellence but with the defects of soul that cause him to be bound for hell. To be discerned is to be opposed by God, condemned (krino), called into question and 'put asunder'. This is a legal action by God, based on His own laws and requirements.

Many churches think it is 'evangelistic' to offer Alpha or similar courses to the unsaved. Some of the courses contain accurate and proper scriptural material, but the idea behind them is Arminian. So, we have the anomaly of genuine Christian material put forward with an Arminian mind! Alpha is Arminian through and through, but the genuine materials are thwarted by the inability of the teacher or pastor to see that his whole approach is wrong. His desire to see people saved is overcome by the heresy of his Arminian methods and by the attached charismatic heresies.

Rather than try to mimic the world and Alpha, he should just pray for the opportunity to preach the Gospel to whom it is for. The Holy Spirit will then provide him with the exact words at the exact time for the exact person or persons predestinated to receive them. For this the true man of God requires no forethought or expensive materials. He only needs to be open to the Holy Spirit. There is no other way shown by God in His word. Just remember that the unsaved cannot respond spiritually to courses. They must first be presented with the Gospel in all its simplicity. Only after they are saved can they respond to 'courses'.

Verse 15

1.

"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man."

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier
Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

Paraphrase:

'But the saved man can examine things properly without being judged by men (because they have nothing against him).'

'He who is spiritual' in the AV means he who belongs to the Divine Spirit... saved and holy. He is governed by the Holy Spirit, whereas the unsaved man is governed by his own sinfulness and by Satan, who is his 'father'. It does not mean that the spiritual man is always acting or thinking in a pure way. It means that he is no longer led by the nose by Satan.

The unsaved man cannot make proper decisions. He cannot examine the things of God truly, nor will God give him the ability to do so. Without that initial quickening, when the Holy spirit brings his soul alive, he is dead in his sins and dead to God. That same dead man believes he can speak against the saved man from a position of strength and knowledge. He cannot, because his knowledge is flawed and useless and his ability is defunct. He has no strength and no authority to scorn the saved man, who cannot be examined or judged by the unsaved.

Verse 16

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

Paraphrase:

'For how can an unsaved man know anything about God's will, or command God or His people? He knows nothing, but we know these things because we have knowledge of the will of God within us.'

The unsaved are arrogant in their belief that they can speak of godly things without being

1 Corinthians 2

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 02 August 2016 10:40

saved. They pontificate and make demands, but have no real knowledge or understanding at all. They cannot possibly know God's mind or will because they are dead and cannot have a spiritual contact with God. How dare they, then, attempt to teach others about God, when they know nothing themselves?

Only Christians can teach about God, for we have the 'mind ('divine things') of Christ'. Is this arrogant? No, it is a fact, a statement made with the full authority of the God Who is unknown to the unsaved! The unsaved cannot 'instruct' God – **sumbibazo** – or put together what God says in a spiritual way, or hold a valid opinion of God, or demonstrate anything about God.

We Christians, however, have the 'mind of Christ', the nous or capacity for spiritual truth, the higher powers of the soul, the ability to recognise and use goodness and to shun and hate evil. Our whole mind and heart think as Christ thinks. Thus, we are different, and eternally separated from, the unsaved.

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