

## **The Wednesday Word, Sept. 21, 2011: The Gospel and Authentic New Testament Ministry, Part 1**

Paul was, apart from the Lord Jesus, the greatest apostle we have ever seen. We can learn much about authentic New Testament ministry when we listen to him. He says,

*“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” 1 Cor 1:17-18*

Did Paul write this on a slow day when there wasn't much 'apostle-ing' going on? Had he taken off his apostle's hat when he penned those lines? No, on the contrary, in these verses we discover the heart of genuine apostolic ministry. We see that true, New Testament, ministry centres in and on the gospel, embracing it as the very power of God.

Paul makes no secret about the authentic apostolic message saying,

*"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." 1 Cor. 2:2.*

Many have, incorrectly, taught that the Corinthians were such babies that Paul could preach only the simplicity of the cross to them. Had the church been mature, these folks tell us, he could have preached 'deep things' to them. But this is sheer nonsense! The truth is quite the opposite; Paul, as an apostle, had nothing deeper to teach than the gospel. (I wish some of those who claim to be modern day apostles knew this!).

Adolph Saphir puts it this way:

“To know Jesus Christ and Him crucified is not the minimum of knowledge but the maximum of knowledge; that to know “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” is not to know little but to know all; that here is not a descent from a loftier region, but an elevation into the highest sanctuary; that in “Jesus Christ and him crucified” all doctrines, all God's teachings, and man's experiences culminate; and from “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” all duties, all works, all ministries are to emanate and to be evolved.”

Adolph Saphir: Christ Crucified: Cpt 1, The Center of the Gospel

We hear much today about the restoration of the fivefold ministry of Eph. 4:11. Would that today's "apostles" would emulate Paul for Paul had no more profound a message than Christ and Him crucified. Paul knew that Christ personally embodied the fivefold ministry. Jesus was:

The apostle, Hebrews 3:1

The prophet, Hebrews 1:2

The evangelist, Luke 19:10

The pastor/shepherd, John 10:11

The teacher, Matthew 7:29

Furthermore, when Paul determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified, he determined to bathe his hearers in the fullness of God. As an apostle, Paul knew that Christ was both the power and wisdom of God (1Cor 1:24). There was, therefore, no more profound a message than the gospel. Far from being only for beginners, Paul goes on to explain that the knowing and preaching of Christ crucified was, “the

demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1Cor 2:4). As a result of gospel preaching, their faith would stand, “in the power of God” (1Cor 2:5). The gospel, in Paul’s inspired mind, was not merely for beginners, but for the building up of all believers to whom he ministered.

It is, likewise, the gospel, the good news of Christ and the application of His finished work, that builds us up in the most holy faith. If, however, we expose ourselves to a steady diet of subjective, believer centred teaching, we will grow stagnant and wither. God has erected a Throne of Grace in the gospel. When we go there, we meet the King in His beauty. When we see Him and encounter Him there we will never again be satisfied with a man centred message.

And that’s the Gospel Truth!