

A Pearl of Great Price

by G.W. North

The sermon emphasizes the importance of crucifying human wisdom and relying on the power and wisdom of Christ crucified for true spiritual maturity.

Scripture: Matthew 7:6, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 2:5, 1 Corinthians 3:3, 1 Corinthians 13:11, 1 Corinthians 14:20, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:10, Colossians 2:3, James 1:5

Topics: "The Cross of Christ", "Wisdom"

Description

G.W. North emphasizes the tragedy of the Corinthians who, in their pursuit of wisdom, became carnal and misused spiritual gifts for selfish ends, leading to a hollow expression of faith. He highlights that true wisdom, represented as a pearl of great price, is unique and should not be debased by worldly desires. North teaches that to be a true Christian, one must embrace the crucifixion of self, as a crucified person is eternally alive in Christ. He warns that any wisdom or gifts not rooted in the power of the crucified Christ are ultimately ineffective and devoid of spiritual value. The sermon calls for a return to the understanding that true wisdom and power come only through the cross of Christ.

Transcript

The tragedy of the Corinthians was that they too were 'walking as men' (3:3). Seeking after wisdom, they almost certainly adored and used the gift, but only for their own carnal ends: 'the Greeks (Hellenists, Gentiles) seek after wisdom' Paul says. But as soon as this attitude is adopted toward any of the gifts, although they may seem to be powerful in operation and appear to hold their original God-given content in utterance, they are nevertheless empty shards; clouds without water; deceptions which in the end are sure to demonise and not spiritualise people. All such practice is really misuse, it is abuse of privilege, showmanship.

That such a thing should be is no less than tragic, for this most excellent pearl of wisdom, when set among the other 'precious stones' with which God adorns His temple, is at once seen to be absolutely unique. Wisdom is universally valued among men as the most precious pearl of all. How then could it be so debased? Perhaps we may allow ourselves to be taught a lesson from this. Certainly if we neglect what God here sets forth, we have little hope of pleasing Him, or of attaining to that manhood in Christ for which He pleads in 14:20 and 13:11, but instead must fail and, as the Corinthians were at that time, remain carnal, unspiritual babes (3:1-3).

Let us learn that because God, by Paul, says that the crucified Christ is His own power and wisdom, He is surely teaching us that our most powerful wisdom is to be crucified Christians. Let no man reject this truth through misunderstanding: a crucified man is not a dead man, he is eternally alive, living for ever as a crucified man. A man ceases to be a man if he be crucified and dead; he becomes by crucifixion a dead corpse, not a dead person. A crucified man is a living person who has gone through death, and behold he is alive for evermore! In truth there is no such person at all as an uncrucified Christian; to be a Christian, a person must have been personally crucified.

Beside this, God is also laying down a principle of truth for the operation of all the gifts, namely this: there is no power for good, nor is the wisdom of God in any of them either in themselves or in their use except it be the power and wisdom of Christ crucified. Wisdom of words makes the cross of Christ of none effect, so He says; flesh and not the Spirit is glorying if the cross be ineffective when the word of wisdom is in operation among us. It may achieve results in certain areas to limited degrees, but it cannot be of infinite value in the Spirit nor be to the glory of God.

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