

## Thoughts From Other Minds:

It is important to note the emphasis Paul places on 'the word' (v. 18) and on preaching (vs. 21 and 23). However much he denounces and renounces the wordiness of human wisdom, he passionately believes in the rational nature of God's revealed wisdom. Not only is Jesus himself both the wisdom and the word of God, but Paul writes explicitly (2:13) of imparting the wisdom of God 'in words ... taught by the Spirit'. Neither the preaching nor the receiving of this message can be done with merely human resources, but we must never allow that fact to take away our responsibility to preach the gospel in words both relevant and 'taught by the Spirit'.

The wisdom - and the foolishness ... is seen in the Messiah hanging on a tree. To the Jews that presents *a stumbling block*, a complete scandal ... because 'cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'. How could the all-conquering Messiah, he who is to come, end his days hanging on a tree? That simply proves he cannot be the Messiah. There is no wisdom in that message; it is all non-sense. But Paul insists, 'We preach Christ, the anointed one, the Messiah, having been crucified.' It may look complete non-sense, foolishness, stupidity to unbelieving Jews and Greeks, but that serves to underline that they are among *those who are perishing* (v. 18).

Whereas Jews want *signs*, the Greeks constantly *seek wisdom* (v. 22): but, until they give up their reliance on their own insight and understanding, they will never be able to receive the wisdom of God in Jesus Christ. For the Son of God to be born in human form, then to grow up into manhood virtually unrecognized, to go about doing good and healing all kinds of sickness, to surrender his life into the hands of unscrupulous men, to die the death of crucifixion as a common criminal – all this defies human wisdom and understanding.

As long as the Greeks cling tenaciously to their search for wisdom along the tramlines of their own understanding, they will continue to go round in circles, on the spiral that descends ultimately to destruction. The word *perish* (v. 18) stands for 'definitive destruction, not merely in the sense of the extinction of physical existence, but rather of an eternal plunge into Hades, and a hopeless destiny of death, in the depiction of which such terms are used as "wrath and fury, tribulation and distress"'. ...

The wisdom of men, the wisdom that the Greeks constantly seek, will not allow such matters of conscience, of the need of salvation, of the prospect of eternal destruction, of a complete inability to find God and to know God, to bring them to their knees and to say, 'Lord, save me'. God has made himself unknown to and unknowable by human wisdom. He has made himself known in this crucified Messiah. He has decided to save from eternal destruction, not those who have particular wisdom or who do good deeds to the best of their ability, but those who believe (v. 21) in this crucified Christ. In this way God has indeed destroyed the wisdom of the wise (v. 19).

David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians*, pp. 43-45 (commentary on 1 Cor 1:18-25)

## Camperdown Noorat Terang Presbyterian Charge

23 October 2016

**Sermon:** "John Knox, Scottish Reformer, Preacher, Patriot"

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 1:1-31

### Sermon Notes

**Introduction:** We continue to remember the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century as it was advanced in Scotland through four men, three of whom gave their lives for the advancement of the gospel in Scotland.

The best known of all the Scottish reformers is John Knox. He is a good example of the truth of the old saying, 'throw enough mud and some will stick'. Some see him as 'the greatest of Scotsmen'; others say 'Of Christian virtues he had but few'.

Knox was almost single-handedly responsible for the destruction of the Roman Church in Scotland—and on account of this Roman Catholics, then and since, not only label him 'a heretic and apostate', but also attack his character.

Also, Knox stands utterly opposed to the modern spirit of tolerance that supposes that religious doctrines are merely matters of opinion and therefore equally valid. Even among some 'evangelicals' Roman Catholicism is today regarded as Christian.

Knox believed from scripture as the word of God that the battle was between truth and error, between good and evil, between God and the devil, and that error destroyed souls and the liberty of people under the tyranny of the devil.

While we need not justify all he said and did, we need not be greatly disturbed because his sharp denunciations of the unscriptural teaching of the Roman Church and his bold and confronting stand for the gospel offends the ignorance of our age.

#### 1. Knox's gracious life

Knox was born (c. 1514) in Haddington in East Lothian. He was ordained as a priest in the Roman Church in 1536; he served not as a parish priest, but as a church lawyer, serving in East Lothian from 1540 till 1543.

Knox never told of his conversion—but a temporary toleration of Protestants (1542-43) allowed Thomas Gylliame to preach the gospel in East Lothian and Edinburgh: 'he was the first man from whom Mr Knox received any taste of the truth'.

In his *History of the Reformation in Scotland* Knox tells of the powerful preaching of George Wishart in East Lothian (1545-46); Knox 'waited upon him carefully', serving as his bodyguard. Wishart, on the night of his arrest, sent him to safety.

Although Wishart forgave Cardinal Beaton and all who condemned him not all shared his gracious spirit; two months later some 'Protestants' broke into St Andrew's Castle, murdered the Cardinal and took possession.

The castle became a refuge for many Protestants, including Knox and his pupils (Easter 1547), but it was stormed by the French, who sentenced Knox to slavery in the galleys as a rower. After about 19 months he was freed and went to England.

Edward VI was king; Knox was appointed to preach at Berwick, where he was well-received and loved by the people, then in Newcastle and London. In 1553 Edward died, Mary became queen and Knox fled to Europe, leaving his wife in Berwick.

Knox returned to Scotland (2 May 1559) to lead the Reformation of the church. During his absence a spiritual movement had gone ahead, with Tyndale's New Testament widely read, and hidden congregations meeting in homes and in fields.

There was also a military and revolutionary movement in defence against persecution and in patriotic opposition to French domination. Knox rallied the Protestant army by his preaching. In 1560 the French left and the Protestant cause triumphed.

Knox played a key role in establishing the Reformed Faith by law and in maintaining and defending the Reformed Church against attempts by Mary Queen of Scots (returned to Scotland 1561) to re-establish Roman Catholicism in Scotland.

He died 24<sup>th</sup> September 1572, deserted by old associates, with the majority of the nobility of Scotland against him, but confident in the mercy of God for him in Christ Jesus.

## **2. John Knox's gracious legacy**

We learn from Knox that Reformation is God's work, by his word and Spirit, in the hearts of men and women and boys and girls. In 1543 the Scottish Parliament permitted all to read the scriptures in their own languages.

Knox applauded this as 'no small victory of Jesus Christ, fighting against the sworn enemies of his verity. Then might have been seen the Bible lying on almost every gentleman's table. Thereby did the knowledge of God wondrously increase, and God gave his Holy Spirit to simple men in great abundance'.

Do we want to see the work of God revived? Then let us read our Bibles and encourage others to do likewise and pray that God will do it again in our time, for it is 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts' (Zech 4:6).

We also learn from Knox that God works through people of his choice. Knox was a strong man of God for perilous times, a man who stood firm for the truth and carried the nation with him. We must pray that God will give us such men for a reformation in our time, who will stand alone rather than compromise the gospel.

Finally, we must learn from Knox to know God's truth and to love God's truth and to defend God's truth passionately.

In Knox unwavering firmness, determination, and constancy were matched with an entire submission to the authority of the scriptures as the word of God and to his glory as the greatest good, and with the conviction that error destroys souls.

We might be embarrassed to hear Knox preaching, for example, that the so-called sacrifice of the Mass is idolatry; but Knox's passion sprang from compassion for sinners and knowing that what is at stake is not merely opinions, but their eternal life or death. So we must know the truth and the errors that oppose it, to be saved ourselves, and to be God's channels of salvation to others, to his glory.

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## ***My Notes:***

### ***Questions for Reflection:***

1. Tolerance is a 'hot' issue today. How does the modern view 'tolerance consists of neutrality' (Greg Koukl, <http://www.str.org/articles/the-intolerance-of-tolerance#.WAql4IVOJPY> (a very helpful article and well worth reading)) affect modern attitudes to John Knox and to us as evangelical Christians? How might we defend ourselves and our faith from charges of intolerance and worse?
2. Read and reflect upon 1 Corinthians 1, and especially verses 18-31; how does the apostle Paul's teaching in this passage support Knox's contention that true reformation in religious matters is not by armies and politicians, but by his word and spirit, in the hearts of people?
3. Read and reflect upon Ephesians 4:9-16 while thinking about John Knox and the Reformation in Scotland. How, and for what, ought this send us to prayer, that God might do for us in our day?
4. Knox was renowned as passionate in his proclamation and defence of the gospel. How does 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11 justify such passion in him, and urge us to imitate him in sharing this passion?