

**I CORINTHIANS 1:18-25**  
**THE POWER OF GOD!**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to I Corinthians chapter 1 as we continue our in-depth study of Paul's letter to the church in Corinth.

Keep in mind that Paul spent some 18 months in Corinth sharing the Gospel message and then building them up in the faith.

Now, while in Ephesus, Paul gets word that there are some big problems going on in Corinth. They had some questions about different things, and thus, Paul sends them this letter to help them understand what they need to do, what they need to focus upon.

And make no mistake about it, how easy it is to get distracted from that which is important. I want to share these words with you to show you the problem and then we will look at the solution.

We are told,

The ancient Greeks were in love with philosophy, around which their culture was built. They had perhaps as many as fifty identifiable philosophical parties or movements, which vied [fought] for acceptance and influence. Each had its views of man's origin, significance, destiny, and relationship to the gods - of which they had many. Some of the philosophies had detailed schemes for the religious, political, social, economic, and educational ordering of society.

The Greeks were in love with human wisdom. They believed that philosophy (philosophia, "*love of wisdom*") was all-important.

Philosophy provided a view, invented by man, of the meaning of life, values, relationships, purpose, and destiny. Thus there were as many philosophies as there were philosophers, and people tended to line up behind their favorite. They widely disagreed as to which philosophy was the truest and most reliable, and, inevitably, many factions developed, each with its own leaders and adherents. Without an absolute standard for truth, ideas of right and wrong were based entirely on human opinion.

Unfortunately many of the Corinthian converts carried their spirit of philosophical factionalism into the church. Some of them still held onto beliefs of their former pagan philosophy. They were divided not only regarding Christian leaders (1:12) but also regarding philosophical viewpoints. They could not get over their love for human wisdom. They had trusted in Christ and recognized their redemption by grace through the cross, but they wanted to add human wisdom to what He had done for them.

Although it is true that men have recognized much that is true about life, a Christian has no need of human philosophy. It is unnecessary and, more often than not, misleading.

Where it happens to be right it will agree with Scripture, and is therefore unnecessary.

Where it is wrong it will disagree with Scripture, and is therefore misleading.

It has nothing necessary or reliable to offer. By nature it is speculation, based on man's limited and fallible insights and understanding. It is always unreliable and always divisive.

***“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ” (Col 2:8).***

The general intent of what Paul is saying to the philosophically oriented Corinthians can be stated like this: *“Since you have become Christians, have been filled by God’s Spirit, and recognize the Scriptures as His Word, you have no more need for philosophy. It did not help you when you were unbelievers and it will certainly not help you now that you believe. Give it up. It has nothing to offer but confusion and division. You are now united around God’s supreme revelation in Jesus Christ. Don’t be misled and split by human speculations.”*

Society in our own day still is enamored of various philosophies. These are not usually expressed in philosophical systems such as the Greeks had, but they are nevertheless human ways of understanding life’s meaning and values and of understanding them.

The world today, just as in Paul’s day, is caught up in the admiration and worship of human opinion, human wisdom, and human desires and aspirations. Men are continually trying to figure out on their own what life is all about where it came from, where it is going, what it signifies (if anything), and what can and should be done about it (if anything).

Modern man has made gods of education and human opinion. Although human ideas are constantly changing, appearing and disappearing, being tried and found wanting, conflicting with and contradicting each other, men continue to put faith in them. As long as they reject divine authority, they have no other option.

Just as in Paul’s time, the church today has not escaped the problem. We ourselves can fall prey to current trends in human thought. Some Christians frantically look almost everywhere but to God and His Word for values, meaning, guidance, and help. Or they add human ideas and insights to Scripture or try to *“baptize”* human ideas and insights with Scripture. We sometimes are more concerned about human opinion than about God’s Word – *“using”* Scripture, but not fully believing, trusting, and obeying it.

Paul had begun to attack the problem earlier in the chapter: ***“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”*** (1:17) . . .

God’s Word is the only true wisdom and is all the wisdom that is reliable and needed. All truth that God intends us to have and that we need is there. It needs no addition of human wisdom, which always falls short of His Word and most often contradicts or distorts it. Scripture stands alone - reliable, sufficient, and complete.

Human wisdom, epitomized in philosophy, has always been a threat to revelation. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has commented, ***“The whole drift toward modernism that has blighted the church of God and nearly destroyed its living gospel may be traced to an hour when men began to turn from revelation to philosophy.”***

But the trust in human wisdom that we call modernism is hardly modern. It began with Adam and Eve, when they set their own judgment above God’s, and was in full bloom in Paul's day. Whenever human wisdom, whether a definite philosophical system or not, gets mixed with divine revelation, revelation loses.

Without exception, man’s wisdom elevates himself and lowers God. It always, no matter how seemingly sincere and objective and scholarly, caters to man’s self-will, pride, fleshly inclinations, and independence.

Those are the basic characteristics of the natural man, and they always direct and determine the natural man’s thinking, desires, and conclusions.

The reason men love complex, elaborate philosophies and religions is because these appeal to human ego. They offer the challenge of understanding and doing something complex and difficult.

For the same reason some men scoff at the gospel. It calls on them to do nothing - it allows them to do nothing - but accept in simple faith what God has done.

The cross crushes man's sin and crushes man's pride. It also offers deliverance from sin and deliverance from pride . . .

But if we want answers to what life is about - answers about where we came from, where we are going, and why we are here, about what is right and what is wrong - then human learning cannot help us.

If we want to know the ultimate meaning and purpose of human life, and the source of happiness, joy, fulfillment, and peace, we have to look beyond what even the best human minds can discover.

Man's attempts to find such answers on his own are doomed to fail. He does not have the resources even to find the answers about himself, much less about God.

In regard to the most important truths - those about human nature, sin, God, morality and ethics, the spirit world, the transformation and future of human life - philosophy is bankrupt.

- John MacArthur, I Corinthians 1:18

I know that it was a little long, but it does set us up for what Paul is going to say here as we continue our study in I Corinthians chapter 1.

I have called our study – ***THE POWER OF GOD!***

There is the problem. We look to worldly ideas, worldly philosophies to grow in the faith, and it ends up being a disaster.

If God, the creator of the heavens and the earth isn't smart enough to give us what we need, then how great of a God is He?

For me, call me a simpleton, I believe that the God I love and serve is able to help me live out my faith by not only telling me what is right and what is wrong, what I am like, where I am going, and so on. But he also gives me the power to live accordingly as the Holy Spirit is the power where I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!

Keep in mind that Corinth was a wicked city. Immorality ran rampant. Even worse than the other Roman areas. Corinth was known for its wickedness, and you didn't go there to see

***The Sound of Music!***

So all these problems with the church in Corinth and the reason being is that they lost their focus and Paul is trying to correct this problem so that they can grow in the Lord.

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following main points.

They are,

***THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS – I CORINTHIANS 1:18-19***

***THE WISDOM OF THIS WORLD – I CORINTHIANS 1:20-21***

***THE POWER OF JESUS – I CORINTHIANS 1:22-25***

Let me make this clear. The words of human wisdom have not and will not save anyone.

Then how can a person be saved?

By the preaching of the cross!

Many have the head knowledge of Christ, but that is as far as it goes. It does not sink down into their heart and become part of their lives.

Head knowledge is important, but that is not where it ends!

Paul put it like this in Romans 10:9-10, **“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”**

Many have missed heaven by 18 inches or the distance from the head to the heart!

And I know what some will say, *“Come on, be practical. We need more than just hearing about Jesus Christ crucified. We have problems in our marriage. We have problems with addictions. We have problems with our children. We have problems with guilt. We have problems with doubt. Let’s face it, we have – PROBLEMS!”*

So did the Corinthian church and Paul is not going to give them worldly philosophies, but he is going to give to them Jesus Christ and Him crucified!

Remember what Paul said as we closed our study last time, **“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.”** I Corinthians 1:17.

That is where we will pick up in our study of this letter this morning.

With that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in I Corinthians chapter 1, beginning in verse 18 as we look at the - ***POWER OF GOD!***

## I CORINTHIANS 1

### VERSES 18-19

Did you notice that in I Corinthians 1:18 Paul is speaking of two different classes of people you might say.

The first group are those that reject the Gospel and they will perish!

The second group are those that receive the Gospel and they are saved!

Did you notice that there is not a third group of the fence sitters. You are either moving with Christ or you are moving away from Him. There is no middle ground!

Jesus said in Matthew 12:30, **“He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.”**

I think it is clear what Jesus is saying here. There is no one who is sitting on the fence in regard to the faith. You are either for Jesus or against Him, there is no middle ground.

Not because I have said it, but Jesus said it!

There is no neutral position. You are either for Jesus or you are not! You see, you don't have to oppose Jesus to be against Him, you only have to not be with Him!

Listen to what Paul says in Romans 5:9-10, **“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”**

Notice, if you are not with Jesus, you are His enemy!

Morgan puts this all into perspective for us as he wrote, *“Only two forces are at work in the world, the gathering and the scattering. Whoever does the one contradicts the other.”*

What side are you on?

May you be on the Lord's because you have come into a relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world!

And here in I Corinthians, when Paul writes that **"the cross is foolishness"** the Greek word that is used for **"foolishness"** is **MORIA**, (mo-ree'-ah) and we get our English word – **MORON** - from!

Listen to what they are saying. ***"You have to be a moron to believe in the cross of Jesus Christ for salvation! This is just plain moronic; it is absolute nonsense to believe this!"***

So what do they believe upon?

Their own wisdom or the wisdom of this world, which we will look at in a few minutes.

And where does that lead them?

Paul tells us that they will perish in their sins, they will be destroyed in eternal judgment!

There is no doubt about it, the Gospel message, Jesus Christ, seems so foolish to people.

Again, like I have said, some feel like this, ***"Are you serious? We need more than just hearing about Jesus Christ and Him crucified. You need to get real. I am having problems with my marriage. I am having problems with addiction. I am having problems at work. Let's face it, I am having problems, and you are telling me that Jesus is the answer?"***

Like it or not, that is the solution to every problem we have, **JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED!**

And yes, the death of a man on a cross to save us from our sins seems foolish.

It would be like saying someone dying in an electric chair will save us!

That is how it may seem and how many see it, and Paul tells us that for those who believe this way, deny what Christ has done for them, they “**are perishing**” which speaks of a work in progress, that is the direction they are moving in – ***THEY ARE PERISHING!***

Let’s face it, we are all moving in one of two directions. Either towards Jesus or away from Him and the direction you are going will determine where you will spend eternity!

Now as we read I Corinthians 1:18, why does Paul write that we “**are being saved. . .**”?

It seems like Paul is saying that we are working our way up to being saved. We just need to try harder. Run faster. Do whatever it takes and if we do, then we will be saved. But not yet, we are still in the process of being saved!

Is that what the Scriptures are saying?

Absolutely not!

Is that what Paul says in his letters?

Absolutely not!

“Wait a minute Pastor Joe. Didn’t Paul write in Colossians 1:19-23, ‘*For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight - **if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.**’ There it is. *If we don’t continue on in the faith, then we come up short in our salvation!*”*

First of all, the word that Paul uses for “**reconcile**” is the Greek word *APOKATALLASSO*, (ap-ok-at-al-las’-so).

Normally the Greek word *KATALLASSO* is used for “**reconcile**” but Paul adds a preposition to intensify its meaning.

Paul is saying that our reconciliation is complete, it is total, it is thorough, he could not speak any stronger, and he is coming against these false teachers that would teach otherwise!

But what about what Paul wrote here in Colossians 1:21?

I want to focus on this word that Paul used in our Bibles. It says that we were “**alienated**” from God.

The Greek word *APALLOTRIOO*, (ap-al-lot-ree-o’-o) literally speaks of being “*transferred to another owner.*”

This is awesome, what God has done for us.

Satan owned us and that ownership was manifested in the things we did, how we lived, for self. Our minds and actions reflected who we belonged to.

But God stepped in and took us out of Satan’s hands and now we are children of God.

Paul put it this way back in Colossians 1:13-14, and this is from The Amplified Bible, “**[The Father] has delivered and drawn us to Himself out of the control and the dominion of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, In Whom we have our redemption through His blood, [which means] the forgiveness of our sins.**”

Now, in Colossians 1:23, is Paul saying we can lose our salvation if we don’t continue on in the faith?

That is the big question. We will look at that and then we will deal with what Paul was saying here in I Corinthians about “**being saved.**”

First of all, what did you do to be saved?

Were you at that point where you were doing so good that God saved you?

Absolutely not.

You were a sinner separated from God and when you repented of your sins and asked Jesus to be your Lord and Savior, you were saved. It is a grace gift, not based on what you have done to earn it, but you received that free gift by faith!

And here is the problem. Not everyone who says he is a Christian is a Christian.

Jesus made that point in Matthew 7:22-23 as He said, **“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”**

It isn’t that Jesus knew them at one time, at one time they were saved, but they were never saved.

John put it this way in I John 2:19, **“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.”**

They were not real branches but Judas branches and thus, their fruit was fake, it was wax you might say because they were never saved.

The words ***“if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel”*** in the Greek isn’t a conditional statement making our salvation contingent upon our faithfulness in continuing in the faith.

You see, the word **“if”** carries with it the idea of **“assuming that you continue in the faith.”**

That is to say that continuing in the faith isn't a condition for staying saved; it is a characteristic of those who are genuinely saved; they continue in their faith no matter how many times they fall or fail.

We call it perseverance and it is the hallmark of a true saint!

And what Paul is saying here in I Corinthians is that our salvation is, in a sense, progressive.

Let me explain.

When you opened your heart to Jesus Christ, you were saved from *the penalty of sin*.

I think we are all in agreement with that.

It speaks of our justification!

Now the big question might be – ***WHAT IS JUSTIFICATION?***

To put it simply, the Bible speaks of justification as the act of God declaring a sinner to be righteous through faith in Jesus Christ. It's a gift from God that frees a person from condemnation and the wrath of God.

Let me share a couple of Scriptures to show you what the Bible speaks of on justification.

In Galatians 2:16 Paul wrote, **“knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”**

I think that is very clear. Our good works don't justify us but our faith in Jesus does!

Also, in Romans 5:1-2 Paul wrote, **“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”**

Once again Paul speaks of our justification being by faith and because of that we have access to God the Father, we are at peace with God now. We are no longer at war with God because apart from Christ, we were at war with God.

So this deals with being – ***SAVED FROM THE PENALTY OF SIN!***

But that is not the end of it.

You see, day by day we're saved from ***THE POWER OF SIN!***

I think that is important because for some, they are saved and that is the end of it. No, it is just the beginning. And this is a process, not for salvation but our sanctification!

When you think of sanctification, in its most basic sense, means to set it apart for Gods special use and purpose.

In I Thessalonians 5:23-24 Paul wrote, **“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.”**

If God is sanctifying us, then does that mean we don't have to do anything?

Of course not. Yes, God is working in us, giving us the ability to live holy lives, but we must then walk accordingly. We can't do this on our own, but God works with us, and we must work with Him.

And one day we will be presented to Jesus blameless, and I love how Paul ends that. He says, **“He who calls you is faithful, who will also do it.”** Thank you, Jesus!

And what we see here is that we are – ***SAVED FROM THE POWER OF SIN!***

And one day, when Jesus comes to take us to heaven, we'll be saved from ***THE PRESENCE OF SIN!*** These bodies of flesh will not inherit the Kingdom of God, they will not inherit heaven, but we will be given new bodies that will be free from sin!

In Revelation 21:27, in speaking of the eternal state, John wrote, **“But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”**

So there is coming a day when we will be – ***FREE FROM THE PRESENCE OF SIN!***

And here is the wonderful news. Those who hear the Gospel message, those that believe it, there is the power of God to save them as it has saved us and we **“are being saved”** which again is another work in progress, that is the direction we are moving towards.

Like I have said, it is speaking of our sanctification process or God making us more like Him.

Our salvation is secure in Him, I don’t believe you can lose that free gift that God has given to us, for Paul tells us, **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”** Ephesians 2:8-9.

God has the power to save us, but we must ask Him to save us. He will not go against our wishes.

It is said that Billy Graham once attributed the large number of responses to his sermons on one central theme. It was, that he always drew attention in his sermons to the Lord Jesus Christ and to ***“the power of the cross.”***

That is what Paul is doing here. In fact, in Romans 1:16 Paul wrote, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”**

The Gospel is the life, death and resurrection of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ! The power for life is there in the Gospel and thus, the rejection of that free gift is found death, eternal separation from God!

Paul believed that the Gospel of Jesus Christ **“is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes . . .”**

It is what we need to hear and receive if we are going to be saved! And, it is what we need to share with others!

Now the Greek word that is translated **“power”** is ***DUNAMIS***, and we get our English word ***“dynamite”*** from it.

The same is true with the Gospel. It has the power to change people’s lives, to move them from the power of darkness to the power of light and it is an explosive change!

Morris tells us regarding the power of the Gospel, ***“The gospel is not advice to people, suggesting that they lift themselves. It is power. It lifts them up. Paul does not say that the gospel brings power, but that it is power, and God’s power at that.”***

Absolutely and yet, many today negate the power of the Gospel, and they look at programs or this or that and leave out what is needed the most!

And, like back then, the problem today, is the Gospel is not very attractive to people.

Why is that?

Because we see that in the Gospel man’s sin is exposed and their hopelessness to do anything about it on their own.

Thus, to make the Gospel more appealing we change the message as Geoffrey Wilson wrote, ***“The unpopularity of a crucified Christ has prompted many to present a message which is more palatable to the unbeliever, but the removal of the offense of the cross always renders the message ineffective. An inoffensive gospel is also an inoperative gospel. Thus Christianity is wounded most in the house of its friends.”***

How true that is.

In many churches you will not hear about sin, and I wonder what people are being saved from?

Let us not be ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation. How do we obtain it? The Gospel is for all who believe – do you believe?

And then, in I Corinthians 1:19 we see Paul quote from Isaiah 29:14 to illustrate his point using Israel as an example of the foolishness of trusting in human wisdom and not in God for our problems.

They were looking to Egypt to help them against the Assyrians and the only one who was going to be able to save them was God! (II Kings 18:17-19:37)

Assyria already captured the Northern Kingdom of Israel and was now going after the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Hezekiah was the King of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and he was a good King for the most part.

When he saw what was happening, the King tried to make a deal with the enemy, which is always a big mistake, but it is the wisdom of man. If you can't beat them, join them!

When things got to be a mess and his strategy didn't work, when the wisdom of man failed, he turned to the Lord who gave them the victory.

In II Kings 19:35 we see how the battle was won, **“And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses - all dead.”**

Not bad for a night's work for one angel, 185,000 Assyrian soldiers wiped out!

The point here is simple. No matter how wise people think they are, those that love to dispute the Gospel, no one can do for us what Jesus has done – He saved us!

You see, it puts to silence all the foolish arguments and foolish wisdom of man!

The same is true when it comes to relying on human wisdom to save us today whether we're talking about social or spiritual problems.

So we have seen – ***THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS!***

As we read on, we will deal with – ***THE WISDOM OF THIS WORLD!***

### VERSES 20-21

Keep in mind that the Greeks were lovers of wisdom. They were into philosophy, the wisdom of man.

Someone defined philosophy as, ***“A blindman in a dark room looking for a black cat that isn't there.”***

How true!

Paul warned us in Colossians 2:8-10, **“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”**

And yet, man loves to think he is wise in what he does, what he says, but that is not true apart from the wisdom that God has given to us.

Ray Stedman put it like this. He wrote,

The first is the scribal, or Jewish approach - the study of all the wisdom and writings of the past. The Jewish scribes gave their whole attention to reading the ancient Scriptures and ancient writings of wise men, trying to gather it all and reduce it to practical applications for their day.

But Paul says, “*Where does that get you?*”

The answer is: *Nowhere*.

Well, what about the debater of this age?

That was the Greek approach. The Greeks loved to get together to debate the philosophies of their day. We would call it the dialectic approach, arguing as to which is better, which is right, and debating all the conflicting philosophies and opinions of the day.

Paul is raising the question, “*Where does that get you?*”

Again the implied answer is clearly: *Nowhere*. What is it worth? Nothing. That is a very harsh judgment, isn't it? I think at this point we must make a very important distinction.

There is a difference between human knowledge and human wisdom . . .

Knowledge is the discovery of truth, and God always encourages it. He gave us minds to use. There is nothing anti-intellectual in the Scriptures.

I want to make that very clear. God has set man on a search to unravel and discover the millions of secrets he has hidden in the universe, many of the greatest, I am sure, yet undiscovered. Man is given the gift of reason to search these out. To investigate into any realm of knowledge is perfectly right and proper. To give yourself to a discovery of the laws of physics and what is behind matter is perfectly right. To give yourself to investigation of the wonders of the human body, of medicine and pathology, is perfectly right . . .

Scripture says there is something faulted about human wisdom - it does not know how to use truth. All truth discovered through human knowledge is misused, abused, twisted, distorted, and, therefore, we end up worse off than we were before . . .

It is amazing that even thoughtful secular writers will distinguish these differences.

I was reading recently an excerpt from Vance Packard's new book, *The People Shapers*, in which he explores the possibility of molding the minds of men and altering human behavior by scientific process.

He concludes with these words:

*A person can be high in learning ability and memory, and still remain a fool. The two do not add up to either brilliance or wisdom in thinking. Until someone comes along with a pill for wisdom, we might better aspire to become a more humane society, rather than a more brainy one.*

- <https://bit.ly/41G4nGy>

How true!

Think about this for a minute. The movers and shakers from time past have come and gone. Their philosophies have come and gone. And yet, people continue to look to man for wisdom instead of God who does not change. His Word will continue on and will not change because it is truth. And the church is buying into this garbage and listening and accepting it over the Word of God! The wisdom of man is foolishness!

Think about this. This so-called wisdom is man centered. It is a philosophy of life that is rebellious toward the will of God, which rejects entirely the word of God, and is completely humanistic in its approach to life.

And when you look at the Gospel message, there is nothing in it to appeal to a person's pride of knowledge. It is a work of God!

It is as Spurgeon said, ***"It is certain that a blind man is no judge of colours, a deaf man is no judge of sound, and a man who has never been quickened into spiritual life can have no judgment as to spiritual things."***

And that is what Paul tells us in I Corinthians 2:14, **"But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."**

Listen to what James has to say regarding earthly wisdom and what it does and then we will look at Godly wisdom and what it does. They are vastly different. You see, these two schools of wisdom descend from two entirely different information streams, God and Satan!

In James 3:15-16 we are told, **"This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there."**

Look at what James says this false wisdom, or this earthly wisdom is from, and obviously, it is not from God.

First of all, it is earthly or of this world.

Secondly, it is sensual or of the flesh.

And lastly, it is demonic or from the Devil!

And notice what is born of that kind of wisdom. We see confusion, strife, all kinds of evil things.

Then James moves to Godly wisdom, and he says in James 3:17, **“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.”**

Notice the vast difference between the two types of wisdom.

As we look at this Godly wisdom do you see the fruit that is born out of this wisdom!

First it is **“pure”** or free of contamination.

It is **“peaceable”** or it brings about peace.

It is **“gentle”** and the idea here is patience that does not respond negatively when mistreated.

It is **“willing to yield”** or teachable.

It is **“full of mercy”** or they minister to all, even those who mistreat them.

We see **“good fruits”** which of course speaks of good things being produce in our lives.

And then we see James speak of being **“without partiality”** or not showing favoritism to people, dividing the church up.

And lastly James speaks of our faith being **“without hypocrisy”** or not to be two-faced but to be authentic in your faith.

Now isn't this wisdom from God much better than the wisdom of the Devil, earthly wisdom?

Of course it is unless you are self-centered, then it won't be!

We think we are smart but listen carefully to this. “One day, students in one of Albert Einstein’s classes were saying they had decided that there was no God. Einstein asked them, how much of all the knowledge in the world they had among themselves collectively, as a class. The students discussed it for a while and decided they had 5% of all human knowledge among themselves. Einstein thought that their estimate was a little generous, but he replied: ***‘Is it possible that God exists in the 95% that you don’t know?’***”

Isn’t it amazing at the conclusions people come to with the limited knowledge they have and yet, nature itself says there is a God, and you can know Him through His Word if you are willing to humble yourself before Him!

As we have seen – ***THE WISDOM OF THE WORLD*** is foolishness because it is trying to apply what they know with what they feel in their heart and that is not a good thing. We need the wisdom of God!

And it all boils down to this - ***THE POWER OF JESUS!***

#### VERSES 22-25

The Jews represent the religious people who worshipped the true God but through human works; and the Greeks represent the intellectuals who worshipped at the altar of human wisdom.

The Greeks were the rationalists, and the Jews were the religionists - both placed emphasis on man rather than on God.

Yes, the Jews were looking for their Messiah to come and deliver them from the Roman bondage they were in, to set up the Kingdom!

Thus, they were looking for a sign showing them that this is the Messiah!

When you look at the life of Jesus, His whole life was a sign that He is the Messiah, they just refused to accept Jesus because it went against what they believed, not what the Word of God has said!

In fact, this word “**stumbled**” is a word we get the word “*scandalized*” from, and that is interesting to me.

You see, the preaching of the cross was a scandal, you might say, to the Jews because it meant that they would have to abandon all their religious works as a basis for their righteousness and receive the gift of grace!

On the other end of the spectrum, we see the Greeks who sought after wisdom and the cross was just foolishness to them, it was moronic to them!

They decided what was wise and what was foolish! Instead of giving them what they wanted, God gave them what they needed, a Savior, the Messiah to pay in full the penalty for their sins and set them free from the bondage sin had them in, if they would only receive Him.

But if you lose the focus of what Jesus has done, then you lose everything and you are living by the wisdom of this world, the wisdom of man and that is foolishness!

I like the way that David Guzik sums this up for us. He wrote,

Let every pulpit rightly say, “***we preach Christ crucified!***”

A strong church once inscribed these words on an archway leading to the churchyard.

Over time, two things happened: the church lost its passion for Jesus and His gospel, and ivy began to grow on the archway.

The growth of the ivy, covering the message, showed the spiritual decline.

Originally it said strongly, ***we preach Christ crucified.***

But as the ivy grew, one could only read we *preach Christ*, and the church also started preaching “*Jesus the Great Man*” and “*Jesus the Moral Example*” instead of *Christ crucified*.

The ivy kept growing, and one could soon only read, *we preach*.

The church also had even lost Jesus in the message, preaching religious platitudes and social graces.

Finally, one could only read *we*, and the church also just became another social gathering place, all about *we* and not about *God*.

- David Guzik

What seems foolish to man is the way that God has provided the forgiveness of our sins, through Jesus Christ. What seems like weakness is the power of God to save us, something we could never do!

If you take away the cross you have taken away everything and look at our world today that has taken out Christ, taken away the cross and they are living as they want, what is right in their own eyes and not by the Lord and His Word!

And from that we see all the confusion and chaos that is going on in this world and in the lives of individuals!

The solution is simple, “**but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.**” I Corinthians 1:23-25.

Look at what we have seen this morning.

***THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS!***

***THE WISDOM OF THIS WORLD!***

***THE POWER OF JESUS!***

As I begin to close, listen to these words from Ray Stedman and how what our Lord and Savior has done can change our lives.

We are told,

We remember the close of the '60s, when this whole nation was in the grip of a terrible wave of violence that swept across our campuses and in our city streets; we remember the great racial unrest of that time and the violence that broke out between black and white.

We remember reading about an eloquent young black radical named Eldridge Cleaver who made white people tremble and sleep uneasily at night. Nobody knew what to do with him.

The law could not handle him. No philosophy seemed to reach him. Nothing could change him; all the education he had in the American public schools had not altered him.

But somehow, in God's wisdom and God's grace, at the right moment in his life the word of the cross reached him and he saw himself for what he was, without hope or help before God, except in Jesus Christ.

How that delivered him and changed him. Now he is living among us, absolutely transformed, a positive force for good where once he had been a powerful force to destroy.

That is a demonstration in our own day of the power of the cross to effect what the wisdom of man cannot do.

We remember the mess of Watergate and the sickening discovery of a basic illness so deeply involved in our whole national life that it touched the highest office in the land.

Associated with it was an arrogant, ruthless young lawyer named Charles Colson.

Now we have the story of how the word of the cross reached the *“hatchet man”* of the Nixon administration, and he is now devoting his life to the rescue of men in prison.

He has been changed by the power of God . . .

I love to dwell on this because I think Christians have forgotten what God has put in their hands. What a marvelous God this is!

What man cannot do, God accomplishes by this simple word about the crucifixion of Jesus and the judgment on the wisdom of man.

I hope one effect in our own lives will be that we not only understand the greatness of the God with whom we deal, but we will understand the foolishness of the wisdom of the world that cannot hold a candle to the greatness of the revelation of the truth of God.

When we open this book, and study it, and learn what God says about what life is, we are dealing with a reality that breaks away and strips off the illusions and delusions of a secular age, and introduces us to bedrock reality.

That is where we ought to live.

- <https://bit.ly/41G4nGy>

Remember what Paul said, **“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”** II Corinthians 1:25.

May we never forget that and seek the wisdom of God and, **“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”** James 1:5.