

The Foolishness of God, Part 2

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:21-28

Code: 1814

If you have your Bible, look at 1 Corinthians Chapter 1 with me, if you will. And we'll continue our study of the foolish of God. And I want to just say at the beginning that if you weren't here last Lord's day, you will not as fully be able to grasp what we say this morning as you would have had you been here. And I trust that if this study is something that is needful in your life, you will secure the tape from last time so that you can have both parts.

I don't like to get too bogged down in repeating what we did last time and so really the two should go together. If you were here last time, many things we say now will definitely fall into place. Now you're going to understand most of it, even though you weren't here, but perhaps a few things would be missing. I don't want anybody leaving now. So stick around. We're calling this particular section the foolishness of God. The world looks at what God has revealed in the Bible and what He has done in Christ's work on the cross as foolishness.

The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians Chapter 1 clear through the end of Chapter 3 deals with this particular subject of contrasting the foolishness of God with the so-called wisdom of the world. Now you'll remember that Paul is dealing with problems in 1 Corinthians. And the problems that he deals with range all the way from Chapter 1 to Chapter 16. The first problem that he deals with is the problem of disunity in the church. And this is a very, very big problem in the church.

I was at Western Seminary in Portland on Friday and the faculty were sitting around and we were talking about the church and one of the professors, a professor in church history, said "tell me, does your church have any problems?" And I said, "yeah, we have a few." He said "well, what kind of problems do you have?" I said, "well thank the Lord we don't have a 1 Corinthians 1 problem. We don't division. But we have 1 Corinthians 2 through 16 going strong."

And I really do thank God that we aren't a 1 Corinthians 1 problem. That there is unity here. In the church at Corinth there was division. And the reason there was division was twofold. One they were identifying with human teachers and they were lining up with men like verse 12. Some were saying, "I'm of Paul," others "I'm of Apollos," others "I am of Peter or Cephus," others "I'm of Christ." And so they were creating factions. There's a second cause of division and that was these people had been saved out of a very philosophically oriented society and they had all prior to their conversion been adherence to one or another philosophy.

And when they became Christians, they maintained this kind of philosophical identity. And so you still had a group of people over here who belong to such and such a philosophy and another to another philosophy and etc., etc. and they were all believers, but they couldn't get together in real unity because they were philosophically divided. And so Paul attacks the idea of division over the basis of the world's wisdom from 1:18 on to the end of the chapter.

And he is showing them that they should never have division in the church based upon philosophy. They should never be divided over economics, over social viewpoints, over perspectives that are propounded by men's wisdom. Because all of this is null and void anyway. They are united around the wisdom of God and that is common to every believer. So there is no reason for philosophical disagreement in the church.

And you know, that can happen. You can have people who have a different philosophy arguing with other people who have a different philosophy, but in God's word is the revelation of what is true and what is wise and we need to adhere to that. And so he attacks the idea of dragging into the church philosophical viewpoints, perspective based on human wisdom, and thus dividing the fellowship into groups around this human view. Now, what it really boils down to in 1:18 to the end of the chapter is the contrast between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of men. And they are opposites. As I told you last time, you don't need philosophy because when it's right, that just means it matches the Bible. And you've got the Bible so you don't need it. And when it's wrong, you really don't need it. So you don't need it.

You only need the word of God. And so that's what he says in essence. The world's philosophy is the opposite of God's wisdom. So don't mix it in the church. You don't need it. It only corrupts. You remember how we saw that last time? It only corrupts. You see, just to give you an illustration, there's only two kinds of wisdom in the world. God's wisdom and man's wisdom, and the two are distinctly defined. And to give you what I think has to be the most concise definition anywhere, I'll point you to James Chapter 3. In James Chapter 3, verse 17 we find the definition of the wisdom of God.

Here is God's wisdom stated and defined. James 3:17 says this, "But the wisdom that is from above," now we know right away that this is supernatural wisdom. It's outside of the earth. It's unearthly. It's other worldly. It's divine. It's God's wisdom. It's from above. And He defines it. It is first, that is it supremely pure. God's wisdom brings about holiness, purity, righteousness, and then he says it's peaceable. It's make peace. It's gentle. Means it's sweet and it's reasonable. He says it's easy to be entreated. Which means it's not contentious. It's full of mercy. It forgives. It is kind. It has good fruit. It is without partiality. God's wisdom unambiguous, not shifty, doesn't play politics and isn't double-tongued. That's what he means.

And the lastly, it's without hypocrisy. It's honest, frank, straightforward, and open, doesn't beat around the bush. That's God's wisdom. What James is saying here is you can tell a person who is teaching God's wisdom because he will be pure, peaceable, gentle, free from contention, full of mercy, good fruits, won't play politics, and will be straight, open, and frank, and honest. That's God's wisdom. Now, in contrast to that, you have man's wisdom in verse 15.

"This wisdom descends not from above." Now this just plain old ungodly wisdom. This is human wisdom and it is defined in three terms. We saw these last time. Earthly, that is it is bound to the earth. It cannot know anything outside of itself, which is really a severe handicap. It's trying to pull itself up by its own bootstraps. Secondly, it is sensual. That is it is predicated on the lusts and desires of men. Thirdly, its source is demonic.

Now you see here two kinds of wisdom, worldly wisdom and divine wisdom. You'll notice something, God's wisdom does not need the addition of man's wisdom. Why would you add to supernatural wisdom something is earthly, sensual, and demonic? That would not do anything for God's wisdom, but what? Corrupt it. That's what philosophy does to revelation, through the word of revelation.

To put it even more clearly than that perhaps, Colossians Chapter 2, verse 8 says this, "Beware," now the Bible doesn't say that too many times. But when it does say that it's very, very important. "Beware," in other words, expect that you're going to run into this problem and be ready for it. "Beware lest any man spoil you, corrupt you, mess up your mind through," what, "philosophy and vain deceit." That is deceit based upon human vanity. "That is built after the tradition of men and the rudiments of the world's system and not after Christ."

Now watch out. Philosophy is built on human tradition. Philosophy is the ground work for the world's system. It is opposed to Christ, beware. Watch out for it. I've sure seen many a Christian who has gone off to the university and taken a course in philosophy and though they may not have lost their salvation, they lost just about everything else. Philosophy corrupts. "Beware lest any man mess you up, corrupt you through philosophy and the deceit of human vanity that follows the traditions of men the ground work, the basis for the world's system, which is not after Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," now watch this, "and you are," what, "complete in Him." You see, the addition of human philosophy is unnecessary. What can you add to completion? Nothing. It is finished. It is done. You do not need human philosophy.

Well, that is the viewpoint then that Paul is presenting to the Corinthian. You don't need to drag into the assembly of the believers the wisdom of men. All it will do is corrupt and divide and that is in fact, precisely what it had done. And incidentally, it also had contributed as we will see to most all of the rest of the problems in the Corinthian assembly, worldly philosophy, worldly morality, worldly concepts.

The Old Testament has some interesting things to say about this and we don't have time to go into all of it, but I would like to draw your attention to Ecclesiastes Chapter 1. Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon and it chronicles human wisdom. It says in effect what human wisdom is all about. And it's a most interesting book. And the Lord put it here for a very special purpose to show us the frustrations and the inabilities of human wisdom.

Now Solomon he was a pretty smart fellow. He says in verse 13 of Chapter 1, "Oh I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven." You see, I decided that I would apply wisdom and figure out all the answers. Verse 16, "I spoke to mine own heart saying lo, I am come to great estate and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem. Ye my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. I was so educated, there wasn't anybody as educated as I was. And I gave my heart to no wisdom. And of course, if I would know that I would know madness and folly as well, which is the opposite. But I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief and he that increaseth knowledge in increaseth sorrow." Try that some time.

Chapter 2, verse 1, "I said in my heart come now, I will test thee with mirth. Therefore enjoy pleasure." Now notice what happens here. He says, I looked for wisdom and I found it. When I summed up all my wisdom, I had nothing but a troubled Spirit, because the more I knew the sadder I got. You know why? Because the more of human wisdom you know, if you're honest, the less you really know. And the more you realize that what you really need to know you can't know. And that's grieving.

And so I said I know what I'll do, I'll cover up my dilemma by just living it up, verse 1. "So I'll test with mirth and enjoy pleasure and I did and behold this also is," what, "vanity. I said of laughter, it is mad of mirth, what good does it do?" I know what I'll do I'll get bombed. Verse 3, "I saw it in mine heart to give myself to wine." Well, that's...this is a really good insight into typical modern man. But that didn't do him any good either. "I know what I'll do, I made for myself," verse 4, "great works. I build houses, I planted vineyards, I made gardens and orchards and trees in them of all kinds of fruits. I made pools of water to water there with the wood that bringeth forth trees. I've got servants and maidens and had servants born in my house. I had great possessions of the herds and the flocks of all that were in Jerusalem before me." Folks, there you just about have the philosophy of the world.

How are you going to cope with the fact that after you've learned everything, you've learned nothing? One, just live it up, live in pleasure. If that doesn't work, get stoned. If that doesn't work, go crazy on work and self promotion and gain and possessions and lose yourself in that. And money, verse 8, "I gathered silver and gold and the treasure of kings and the provinces and then I liked music, so I started in on that. I got men singers and women singers and musical instruments and all that kind of stuff." And boy don't you kid yourself, isn't music a pacifier for our culture today?

You can't go anywhere without hearing music. People can't exist without it. They don't want to live with their own thoughts, they've got have somebody putting other thoughts in their mind. And so verse 9, a modest statement, "So I was great." Well, it's true. "And I increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem and my wisdom remain with me." Whatever he learned, he remembered. "Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them. I withheld not my heart from any joy." Anything I wanted, I got. Anything I wanted, I got.

You know, some people that's what they want. They get to the place where they can have anything they want. Anything they want, he had it. "And my heart rejoiced in everything I did." This was the portion of all my labor. And I looked on all that my hands had wrought all the works. And on the labor that I labored to do and behold all was vanity, again. And vexation of Spirit. There was no profit under the sun. And I turned to myself to behold wisdom and madness and folly for what can the man do that cometh after the king?" I mean, what could I do now? I mean, I've done it all, right? I looked at myself and I said well, here you are Solomon and you've done it all. What are you going to do now? There's nothing else to do.

"Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly." I mean, it's better to be smart than dumb. "And the wise man," verse 14, "eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And I perceived also that one event happen to them all." I said, you know, wisdom is better than folly, but you know what? They both ended up the same way. Smart people and dumb people. "Then said I in my heart," look at this verse 15, "as it happens to the fool, so it happens even to me. Why am I then more wise?" Is that amazing? The wisest man that ever lived said when all came to an end, I was a fool. See? That's human wisdom.

A lot of good it does you. But you know the whole world is busy building itself on human wisdom. Jesus said in Matthew Chapter 7, he said, "You know what a wise does? He builds his house on a," what, "on a rock." And who's a rock? God is a rock. And the floods came and the rains came and the floods descended and what happened? The winds blew and the house that was built on the rock stayed firm. "But the foolish man he built his life on the shifting sands of human wisdom and when it all came down the house was washed away." It's a clear contrast people between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of men. All the wisdom of men ever does is change the truth of God into a lie.

Now this passage, come back now to 1 Corinthians 1:18, this passage compares the wisdom of God with the wisdom of men. And it gives us five reasons why God's wisdom is superior to man's wisdom. Five reasons why God's wisdom is superior to man's wisdom. Number one, we're reviewing it's permanence. In verses 19 and 20, Paul says that God's wisdom is superior to man's wisdom because God's wisdom is permanent. And he doesn't make that statement. He doesn't say God's wisdom is permanent. But he shows man's wisdom to be impermanent. And therein is the contrast. Notice verse 19. "For it is written I will destroy the wisdom of the wise. I will bring to nothing the

understanding of the prudent." You see he says human wisdom when all is said and done will be destroyed. It will be brought to nothing.

And then he flings out a challenge for anybody to contradict that. He says "where is the wise," verse 20. "Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world." And he says the wise, the scribe, and the disputer and he talks about the three areas of human understanding. The wise, that's philosophy. The scribe, that's literature. The disputer, that's rhetoric. Call out your philosophers, call out your writers, call out your orders, let them contradict this.

Let all of the philosophies of the past have come to nothing. That all of the wisdom of men has resulted in no changes in the world. The same problems exist in a manifold sense. Where are the wise people? Where are the writers? Where are the people who speak with great oratorical genius? Where are all of these answer men? God has made foolish the wisdom of this world. And in the sense that God has frustrated it that it runs to its limits and still comes up zero it's foolishness. What do men need? Men need life, eternal. Men need the forgiveness of sin. Men need to know God.

Human wisdom can't forgive sin. It can't give life eternal and it can't bring men to God. When it's all said and done, it can't do anything, except as we said last time make comfortable people who are sinning. God allowed men to follow their own wisdom. He gave them that choice. And in all the pursuits of their own wisdom they came up with no answers, frustration. And God stepped in and made their wisdom foolish by what He did. What did He do? He forgave sin. He granted eternal life and He ushered men into the knowledge of Himself.

He did what men in all their wisdom couldn't do. And He did it by such a foolish thing the cross of Jesus Christ. That's not a complex philosophical thing. It's a simple, simple historical fact. And so they're wise only in their own eyes and only for a brief time. God's wisdom is permanent. Second thing, and this where we'll go for today. God's wisdom is superior to man's wisdom because not only of its permanence, but it's power. Verse 21. It's power. You see the problem with man's wisdom is it's nice to sit around and talk about it, but it can't do anything. Have you ever noticed that?

People don't get changed lives from it. It doesn't transform people. It doesn't forgive sin. It doesn't make new creatures. It doesn't usher people into the presence of God. It doesn't do anything like that. It gives people an intellectual satisfaction that they can pare it out a certain thing. I remember sitting down one time on a college campus with a guy and he said to me, "I understand your philosophy is the philosophy of Jesus Christ." I said, "No," I said, "I...it's not a philosophy, it's the truth." "Well," he said, "that's debatable." "Well," I said, "it might be debatable to you, but it isn't debatable really." I said "what view do you hold?" He says, "Well, I'm convinced that the proper perspective is yen yang." Now at the time I wasn't real hip on what yen yang was. I have since become a little more acquainted with yen yang. Yen yang is the philosophy of opposites. And this is

what this student proceeded to say. He said, "You see," and he drew in the sand, he drew a circle, and he said, "you see this circle, you draw the circle and then you put a sort of put an S in the middle." It looks like Safeway sign. "You sort of put an S in the middle with a circle. Then you put another circle inside each of those two halves. One-half is black with a white circle, the other half is white with a black circle." He said, "you see, that's yin yang."

And I thought to myself, if any man be in yin yang, he is no, no, no. He's not going to make it. I said "what do you mean?" He said, "well, don't you see it? It's the philosophy of opposites. You see that if there's an up, there has to be a down. If there's an in, there has to be an out. If there's a good, there has to be a bad. This is the philosophy of opposites. Don't you see?" I said, "I see, I see. But so what?" That was the whole thing. I said, "well, great, what did that do for you?" You know what it did for him? It just gave him a little intellectual game that he could play and it gave him a little piece of ego that he could use to show somebody what he knew. That's all. Didn't change his life a bit.

He had no power. Doesn't have any power at all. And the world looks at the gospel and says how foolish, but verse 21 says, "Since in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God," and we went into that in detail last time, "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save." Do you see something here people? What the men of the world couldn't do when all of the composite of their wisdom was put together, God did. He saved men. From what? From their sins, their meaninglessness, from Satan, He saved them. Rescued them. Delivered them into His own presence. Forgave their sin, gave them life eternal. That's what He did.

And the world by all of its wisdom didn't know God, couldn't know God. The God by the foolishness of preaching, something like the cross so objective, so simple, so uncomplicated, had the power to generate eternal life, forgive sin, and wisdom of men could never do it. You see God's wisdom is powerful. Now notice at the end of verse 21, we have to note this, "the foolishness of preaching saves them that believe." There is a human response required and that is faith.

You see how that militates against the idea of wisdom? Paul didn't say in Romans 1:16, The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all those who can figure it out. To all of those who can understand it's nuances and complexities. "It's the power of God to all those who," what, "believe." And one man came to Jesus and said Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief. What he was saying was I believe a little bit. Is that good enough? And it was good enough. It isn't a question of figuring out. When you start trying to figure out the mind of God, that's when you get into trouble. Try to figure out all the little nuances of the gospel and you're going to really be in a lot of trouble. Believe it and accept it, that's the key.

All right, so it's powerful. He reiterates the same thought in the verses that follow, verses 22-25. And he's still talking about power here. Look at verse 22. "Since the Jews require a sign and Greek seek after wisdom, we preach Christ crucified unto the Jews a stumbling block and the Gentiles

foolishness." Now notice this, he says here we are in the world and we're preaching this simple message of the cross. God in Human flesh comes into the world, He lives, does miracles, proves Himself to be God, dies on the cross, sheds His blood, bears the punishment for our sin, rises from the dead. We keep preaching this message. And we keep telling people this is the apex of history. This is the theme of the universe. This is the salvation of men. This is the wisdom of God, etc., etc., and they say oh ridiculous, ridiculous, stupidities. Now why did they reject it? Well, he says verse 22, "The Jews require a sign."

Now here was the problem with the Jews. They had to have a supernatural proof for everything. Everything. This is characteristic. Their constant demand was this, "what sign showest thou?" What they were really saying was do a trick. Do something really super magic. And if Jesus had done some magical cartwheels and pulled off some real stupendous things then He would have begun something that he never could have stopped. But He did his miracles really for His disciples because miracles only solidify the faith of people who already believe. People who don't believe will find a way to explain them away believe me.

Believe me. You think about the blind man in the gospel of John. You know, it takes a whole chapter, a whole chapter and the Pharisees by the time the whole chapter's done, they've researched the whole thing. They're still convinced the guy wasn't really made to see. In fact, they say oh it must be somebody different. And they finally go to him and say now wait a minute, are you the guy? I'm the guy. We don't believe you. They find his mother and dad. Is this your son who was born blind? That's the guy. Well, what happened to him? I don't know what happened to him. And they say to the man, well, who is this person. He can't be somebody from God. And he says to them, you're telling me that. You know that He has opened my eyes and you're asking me whether He's from God.

Pretty obvious isn't it. The end of it was antagonism and hatred toward Christ. The world does not have the mentality to except the supernatural to being with because the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness to him and he will reason them away. That's why today we don't we need miracles all the time to convince people who don't believe. That's an act of God in their lives. Jesus did miracles in front of the disciples to convince them who already believed of His power which was exhibited then and would be exhibited in their lives and, in fact, he said "greater things shall you do than I have done."

But they always wanted a sign. Matthew 16, the Pharisees and Sadducees came and they said well, we want a sign and Jesus said in verse 4, "there shall no sign be given this wicked and adulterous generation, except the sign of Jonah." Which meant Jesus would die three days in the grave and arise. And when He rose from the dead, you know what they did? They bribed the soldiers to say that they stole His body and that He didn't really rise. That's how blind they were. They didn't want to believe.

So the Jews required a sign. Now the Greeks, you see they were different. They sought wisdom. Now the Greek wouldn't say oh do something supernatural. He would say now let me figure this out. God becomes man, oh no, no, no. No, that can't be. No, no, philosophically you see that doesn't work. And then on a cross bearing, sitting on a...no, no, no. No, see you have two viewpoints. Here you have the supernaturalist and the rationalist, right? The Jews were the supernaturalists and they had pushed that way beyond its norm and the...at the same time the Greeks were the rationalists and they had pushed that way beyond its norm.

Now I believe that I'm a supernaturalist, are you? I believe in God. I believe He's accurate. Secondly, I believe I'm a rationalist. I mean, I haven't thrown my brain away. See, but I'm not going to be all supernatural to the place where it's irrational or all rational to the place where it's anti-supernatural. There's a balance. You know, the Greeks were so in love with their own intellects that that's all they cared about. So he says here we have these two kinds of people and we come in verse 23, we preach Christ crucified. We preach the fact that the Messiah died on a cross and by the shedding of His blood, paid the penalty for sin, the purpose for which man was made is restored as he's ushered in the presence of God. His sin is forgiven. He can dwell with God forever. We say that to the Jews and they go, don't believe it. And they turnover to the Greeks and they don't believe it either.

Why? Verse 23 says, "Because unto the Jews it is a stumbling block." Well, you say Israel I have an announcement to make. You see that person hanging on that cross bleeding? That's your Messiah. Are you kidding? That's our Messiah? Do you know they still don't believe that? You know the biggest hang up that the Jews have over the messiahship of Jesus Christ is His death, because they have their own little deal figured out. He would come and He would set up His kingdom. And He came, but He didn't do that. You say what did they do with Isaiah 53? They don't do much with it. You say, what do they do with Psalm 22? Mostly they avoid it.

You see it predicted the Messiah would die. So Messiah's on a cross and they go back to Deuteronomy 21, I think is, verse 23, "He that is hanged on a cross or a tree is cursed of God." He can't be the Messiah. And so they stumble over that. The cross doesn't prove He's the Messiah. It proves He isn't. Why didn't even throw off Rome. He didn't set up His kingdom. Ridiculous. And so now the Jews have abandoned the whole idea for the most part of a Messiah and they just talk about a messianic era, which is sort of like a great society. A happy time, a peace time in the world. And there won't even be a personal Messiah.

They've given up on it because they've been waiting too long. Well, they're never going to see another one. He's already been here. And they seek signs. They expected Jesus to do all kinds of supernatural wonders and things that pop and happen in the...you know, they were able to read Joel 2 and they expected some kind of stuff to go on, you know, when He set up His kingdom. And here

He comes riding meek and lowly on the foal of an ass into Jerusalem. And for a day or so it's Hosanna, but boy that went fast, didn't it?

Hurray, Hosanna, to the Son of David and He says, "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone. So I'm going to have to die." What? See, they didn't understand that. It's about that time they bailed out and by the time Friday came, they were screaming for His blood. This couldn't be the Messiah. Where are the wonders? Where are the signs? On the other hand, how did the Gentiles react? To the Gentiles the whole idea was foolishness. This was foolish. Why? Well, for several reasons. Do you know the one basic tenant of philosophy, Greek philosophy, was the fact that God was defined by the term apatheia, from which we get the word apathetic. To the Greeks, God was totally indifferent to men. He was unconcerned about people. He was incapable of feeling because they said God has to be so far beyond men that He could never be touched with anything human. The very opposite of Christ who can be touched.

But they said God could not be touched with any human feeling. So the idea that God became incarnate and human flesh and bore the sins of men, the pain and the anguish, died on the cross, was absolutely ridiculous to them. God is remote. God is detached. God is indifferent. Celsus who made a life career out of attacking Christianity with zeal long, long ago said this, "God is good and beautiful and happy and is in that which is most beautiful and best. If then He descends to man it involves changed for Him and a change from good to bad, from beautiful to ugly, from happiness to unhappiness, from what is best to what is worst and God would never accept such a change."

You see, the Greeks could not allow for our God to become man. They thought it was incredible that one would come to earth and love humankind and sorrow and weep and die on a cross. And another thing about Greek philosophy was everything had to be complex. If you could figure it out it probably wasn't true. You see? I mean, it was just...if the average guy could figure it out it wasn't any good. I mean, it had to be something in only...you know, the real high brow, intelligentsia could handle. And here comes these Christian preachers who were, you know, pretty seedy characters. I mean, they weren't really educated in philosophy. They were just coming out of the woods kind of and they were preaching this blunt message, "I am determined to know nothing except Christ." And that was so simple rather than complex. And it was so uncluttered and it was so uncultured and it was so crude that they laughed at it.

Nothing was more absurd to rationalist than that the blood of a crucified God could remove sin, secure salvation, promote holiness, and give eternal life. They laughed. You say well, that kind of fouls up God's plan doesn't it? I mean, if he preaches to the Jews and it's a stumbling block and he preaches to the Greeks and it's foolishness, then where does he go? That covers it. I mean, the Jews and the Gentiles they've got it. Did that foul him up? Nope. No, you see, it says in verse 24 this, "But," I'm glad that's there aren't you? "Both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God." In spite of the fact that the most rejected it. The call of salvation effectually

came to some Jews and some Gentiles. And they believed and immediately Christ became to them not a stumbling block, but the power of God. Not foolishness, but the wisdom of God.

You see how he contrasts those two things with the two reactions? The Jew says this can't be our Messiah, look at Him. Meek and lowly and dead. That isn't the powerful Messiah, but for the ones who did believe Christ became to them the power of God. And isn't that right? Paul said to the Colossians in 1:29, I think it is, he said, "I just want to tell you that I labor but it isn't me, it's Christ working in me mightily." See, and so the Gentiles they said ah foolishness, but to the Gentiles who believed, it became what? Wisdom.

Christian do you realize something? Do you realize we sit around a lot and we listen to the great men of our world, and there are a lot of great people from the human viewpoint. Much more intelligent than we are. I mean, I couldn't even get through some of the educational processes that they've been through and I've read some books that I gave up on on page 20 because I didn't even understand what they were talking about. I mean, you know, there are levels obviously of intelligence. And there are some people who just are super, super intelligent. And we're just not in the same world with them. But when they sum up all of their wisdom through all the ages and put it all together, you know what? Just us plain old humble Christians are wiser than they. That's right.

You say John, that's bragging. No, no, no, you don't understand that. I'm not talking about my own wisdom. I'm talking about the fact that I know the wisdom of God. You say, how'd you get to know that? It's in the Bible and I understand the Bible. You say well, why don't those guys read the Bible? They can. You know what, they won't understand it. You know why? Because they don't have the resident interpreter who's the Holy Spirit.

2 Chapter 1 Corinthians, verse 7 says "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery it is hidden wisdom." Do you see that? It is hidden wisdom and it is only revealed to those who know Christ. Verse 8, "Which none of the princes of this age knew." The best of men, the classiest of people. They didn't know this. Why not? Because it wasn't open to them to find it. Verse 9, "Eye hasn't seen it, nor ear heard it." What does that mean? That means it cannot be known empirically. I cannot be known externally. I cannot be known by experience. Secondly, neither has entered into the heart. That is, it can't be known rationally. It can't be known internally. You can't know the truth of God by observation. You can't know the truth of God by rationalization, but verse 10 says, "God has to," what, "reveal it by His Spirit who comes to live in you when you receive Christ."

Now, I'm not saying I'm smarter than the rest of the people in the world from an IQ standpoint. That just isn't true. I took an IQ test one time and I'm not. I know that. There are an awful lot of people in this world far more intelligent than I. But I know what they with all of their intelligence will never know the wisdom of God. And they're struggling with all of their economics and all of their social sciences and all of the disciplines that they're struggling with to try to figure out what's going on in the world.

And I can tell them, but they never give me a chance.

People say to me, why aren't you on such and such a talk program? Who would want me? I got all the answers. That would end...that would end the discussion. Then what would they do. They'd have to play music. Well, you see that's essentially what Scripture says and in regard to power it says this, with all that men have devised, they don't have the power to change their character. They don't have the power to transform their lives. But Christ does.

And so the wisdom of God is so much superior to the wisdom of men, because it has the power to save. The power to regenerate new life and grants divine wisdom. So unto them that are called, those that elect, God has chosen, Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. We have so much power it's unlimited. We're able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think, aren't we? According to the power that works in us. Exciting.

Well, he closes this little section with verse 25, which is a principle that sums up everything he said "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men." Let me ask you a question. Is God foolish? Is God weak? Both of those are words that are used for the sake of irony. They are words looked at from a man's viewpoint. When a man thinks God is foolish, when a man thinks God is weak, at that very point he is infinitely wiser than that man and infinitely mightier. You see? Listen, put it this way, there are a lot of things that God knows that we don't know, right? I mean, listen, you read the Bible and you get all done and you study it year after year and you know what you really realize? You hardly know anything. That's what education does for you. Teaches you what you don't know. And the more educated you are, the more you know you don't know. And I learn the Bible more and more and you know what happens? Pretty soon I got all the verses down and then I'm living in the cracks. You see, and I'm saying yeah, yeah, it says this and says this, but what about this?

And you begin to see that God is far beyond what you can even imagine. There are complexities in the mind of God that are absolutely beyond human kind to even comprehend. And so there are things that...I mean, if you wanted to compare the smartest of men with the absolute supreme exhibit of the wisdom of God, the difference would be infinity because the difference between the total wisdom of men and the simplest truth of God is infinity. You see, He's saying the simplest thing I've ever done, the cross. The weakest exhibition of my power and ever is infinitely beyond the greatest of your wisdom and power.

Now that gets you in the perspective doesn't it? That's the principle. God's simplicity and God's smallest representation of power is able to do what man's wisdom and power could never even begin to think of doing. There's the principle. The doctrine of the cross may be foolishness, but it has power. Power to save lives. Power to grant wisdom. A third point, and we'll quit here. He shows that God's wisdom is superior to men's by not only its permanence in power, but this is great, it's

paradox. You know, the world loves wisdom. Oh the world just really glories in that. And do you know that psychological tests show that the desire to know is equal to the sex drive. People really want to know. And there's a lot of...there's a lot of self glory and vanity in knowledge, isn't there?

The Bible says knowledge puffs up. Boy you know you know this and flash that knowledge and you flash...you're sitting in a group and somebody says well, oh I know that. Why...blah, blah, blah, see this is...you know, knowledge does that. There are benefits in ignorance. Humility, you know? Is it nice not to have the answer so you could just sit there and learn. Some people don't have the answer, but they give one anyway, you know.

But, you see, the world loves everything to be complex and to figure it out with their own wisdom. We...you know that's why...that's why it appeals to be a psychologist, because you can sit over somebody and analyze them. See? You can tell them why they do what they do and oh here this is this and thus and so...you know, that just gives you a sort of a God complex. And the world loves that. They love to have all the answers. But you know something? God didn't appeal to that, because that's vanity. You know he...God could have made gospel that was so complex that only really smart people could have been saved who could figure it out. I mean, it could have been a real screwy philosophy and you would have had to be really at the top level of your class. You know Phi Beta Kappa and all that to be saved.

But you see, that would have destroyed the purpose that God had in mind. Because most people aren't at that level. Jesus said, "I thank you Father that you did this from the wise and prudent," Matthew 11:25, "and revealed it unto babes." Because you know when He did that, He showed the world how much He needed their wisdom. He didn't need it all. You want to hear something? You think of the greatest professor you know, secular world or the greatest mind you know in the world, the most brilliant mind in the world, something like Einstein or something, brilliant mind, now you think of really the dumbest guy you know, who's a Christian, just a klutzy guy. Just a nice guy, you love him, the Lord loves him, but just, you know, not that smart. That's the way the Lord made him. Don't knock it you know. A lot of us are on there. But that's just the way the Lord made him.

You want to know something, that guy is infinitely wiser than Einstein ever thought of being. Infinitely. And that little humbled guys life, watch this, stands as living rebuke to the wisdom of the world. Look at verse 26, "For you see your calling," now you know what that means? That means look around you, go ahead. Who's sitting near you? Check them out. You see your calling? Look around. He's saying looking at the calling of believers, look around you brethren, look around. "Not many wise." No not many wise men after the flesh. Do you see any philosophers in your row? Do you see any of the world's great intellects here this morning? "Not many mighty." Do you see any of the world's greatest influential people here this morning? "Not many noble." Do you see any kings, princes, high born people? No, you say it's not a whole lot of them, just us. There's Joe over there and there's Mary and Bill and, you know, checking around. I don't seem to see any of those kind of folks.

Well, you see God had a purpose in this. For the most part, isn't it true the church is composed of simple, humble people? It's just us. Oh we say this, wouldn't it be great if so and so became a Christian? Don't we say that a lot? Wouldn't it be great if so and so became a Christian. Oh if only, you know, and that would be great, but one reason that the Lord chose the church from the humble people was as a living testimony to the world that He doesn't need its rank and its influence and its wisdom. You see? Not many. Now there are some mighty and there are some wise and there are some who are noble. There was Dionysius, there was Surgus Polis, there was the noble ladies at Thessalonica and Bureah. There was the chamberlain by the name of Arastus who was the treasurer. There have been some noble and mighty and wise. Not many.

Back to our friend Celsus, in 178 A.D. he wrote a letter attacking Christianity. This is what he said. "Here's a description of Christians. Let no cultured person draw near. None wise and none sensible. For all that kind of thing we count evil. But if any man is ignorant, if any man is wanting incense and culture, if anybody's a fool let him come boldly." Of the Christians he further wrote this. "We see them in their own houses, wool dressers, cobblers, the worst, the vulgarist, the most uneducated persons." Then he really got warmed up. He said, "They are like a swarm of bats or ants creeping out their nests or frogs holding a symposium around a swamp. Or worms convening in mud." That's what he said about Christians. Nice guy Celsus.

Well, you know, he looked around and that's what he saw. Can you imagine how that...here were all these simple frogs and they knew what he didn't know. Do you see how that the simplicity of the church stands as a rebuke against the complexity of the world's wisdom? We don't need the world's wisdom. We don't need it. The paradox proves it. We who are the simplest, the most foolish are the wisest. And in the Roman Empire was 60 million slaves, can you imagine what an impact this made on them, because most of the church is made up of slaves. And the slaves had all the answers. Oh that's bad news.

And so Christians stand for all time as a living rebuke against a so-called wise. And don't you remember in Colossians that the Bible says Christ is going to put the church on display before the principalities and powers to show the wisdom of God? Doesn't need the wisdom of men. Look around you he says. "Not many wise." That means the wisdom human nature, high class intelligence, "not many mighty." That means great or influential, powerful people. "Not many," look at this one, "noble." That means well born or from high ranking families.

And folks if you wanted a simple threefold definition of what the world thinks is a great man, number one, if he's very intelligent. Number two, if he has tremendous influence through money or power whether it's political or in the sports field or in the education field or whatever it is. Thirdly, if he's got high rank. He's General So and So, he's Senator So and So, he's President So and So, he's Vice President So and So. He's the head of this. He's head of...you see the world bases its greatness on

knowledge or education, on influence or power or education on influence or power of money and on rank.

Would you like to know the greatest man that ever lived according to God? Would you like to meet him? Interesting fellow. He's name is John the Baptist. Do you know he had no education? He didn't have any education at all formally. Did you know that he had no particular power? Did you know that he was a strange character. He wore kind of a modified Tarzan suit made out of camel's hair and he ate locust and wild honey and he lived out in the boondocks. Well, you say maybe he was well born. Maybe he came from a high ranking family. Are you kidding? Elizabeth and Zacharias, they were nobodies. You say well Zacharias was a priest. Sure he was a priest but there were thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of those priests and they had no rank.

No, you see, Jesus said, "among them that are born of women," Matthew 11:11, "there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist." The greatest whoever lived and he didn't fit any of the world's standards, but he fit God's standard because he was a wise man. He knew God. What a paradox. Look at verse 27. "God has chosen not the wise, but the," what, "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. God hath chosen not the mighty, but the weak things in the world to confound the things that are mighty and the base things." Literally the word base means low born. He has chosen the unranked, the low born things of the world, the things that are despised hath God chosen, things that aren't even considered. They are things which are not to bring the nothing that things that are.

Do you see the contrast there? In verses 27 and 28, he contrasts what God has chosen as he mentioned what He hasn't chosen. In other words, he says, God has not chosen educated, but foolish. Has not chosen powerful, but weak, not high born, but low born. He's chosen things that in the eyes of the world are nothing things to bring to nothing the things that think they're something things. Well, you see how the word of God shows. You see human philosophy doesn't mean anything. Paul says people get that stuff out of your ranch will you. You don't need it. Can't you see that the permanence of God's wisdom, the power of God's wisdom and the paradox of God's wisdom in choosing the church shows that God doesn't need human wisdom. Let's pray.

Thank You Father for giving us Your truth, Your wisdom. Help us to lean on it, not unto our own understanding, but to know that in Christ we have power of God and the wisdom of God. If there are some gathered in our midst this morning who has yet are leaning on human wisdom, we pray that You would move in their lives, call them to Your self and that they might exercise faith and believe in the work of Christ that simple, humble very crude as the world would judge it act is really pinnacle of all of history and the redeeming act of God for men.

Father, may they come to Christ today. Help us Lord who are Christians not to mingle in the wisdom of the world, but to become students of the wisdom of God, which is ours in Christ. We pray in His blessed name. Amen.

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