

THE WISDOM OF GOD – Verses 18-31

a. *1 Corinthians 1:18 “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”*

- 1) The message of the Cross sounds like foolishness to them that do not believe and are perishing.
 - The unbelieving Greek philosopher thought the simple gospel message sounded foolish.
 - Because the Greeks sought after wisdom/intellect there was nothing in the gospel message that appealed to them.
 - They were so puffed up in the vast knowledge they collected for themselves that they despised the simple gospel message. They thought the simple gospel message was silly.
 - **The prideful, human wiseman says:** “*What do you mean crucified, suffered, and died? What do you mean died for our sins?*”
- 2) The message of the Cross to believers (“...but unto us which are saved...”), including Paul, it was the power of God.
 - The Lord used the simple Gospel message to save those that believed.
 - To a saved believer, the simple gospel message is the best thing that ever happened to them.
 - **Nelson:** “*The gospel penetrates to the core of self-centeredness. For those who exalt self, the message sounds absurd. But for those who bow humbly in faith, it becomes the power that is able to snatch them from death and impart eternal life.*”
 - **The humble, human, worthless man says:** “*Crucified for me, suffered for me, died for me, thank you Lord, thank you.*”

b. *1 Corinthians 1:19 “For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”*

- 1) Paul quotes from Isaiah 29:14.
 - In **Isaiah 29:13-14**, the Lord rebukes Israel for their man-centered worship and confirms that He will bring their own efforts to naught. God has His own ways to bring about victory, but Israel thought that they had a better way. So, Isaiah proclaimed that God would bring their so-called wisdom to nothing.
 - And so, it is with those who think that human wisdom and brilliant brains are the cause for godliness.
- 2) God will use the simple Gospel message to destroy and put an end to the wisdom of those who think human wisdom is the way to go. “...and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”
 - The simple Gospel is the only power to save a sinful soul.
 - **Adam Clarke:** “*No sinner has ever been converted from the error of his ways by their preaching or writings.*”
 - Those who think they are smarter than God will soon find out how foolish they are.

c. *1 Corinthians 1:20 “Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”*

- Paul now asks another series of questions?

- 1) **“Where is the wise?”** – Those who are intellectual and think they are smarter than God.
- 2) **Where is the scribe?** – Those who are experts in the details of laws.
- 3) **Where is the disputer of this world?** – Those who specialize in debates and argue philosophy and think they can solve the problems of the world.
- 4) **Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?** YES!
 - The wisdom of man does not even come close to the wisdom of God. **Proverbs 21:30**
 - The argument is clear. There is no wise man; there is no scribe nor a debater who compares to the wisdom and will of God found in Christ and His finished work.
 - **William McDonald:** “No human wisdom or intelligence can either discover or disprove God. No human reasoning can bring salvation. So all those who have lived by their own wisdom will be left with nothing. God had already made them all look foolish and showed that their “wisdom” was no more than useless nonsense. For all their learning, God would show them to be fools. Their wisdom would be “useless” because it could do nothing to provide salvation. That can come only through the cross.”

d. *1 Corinthians 1:22-23 “For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: 23 “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;”*

- 1) Paul refers to two general classes of people.
 - i. **Jews require a sign** – The Jews demanded a sign from Jesus in order for them to believe that Christ was the messiah. **Mark 8:11**
 - So, it is with the Catholics and the charismatics who are looking for signs, miracles etc.
 - ii. **Greeks seek after wisdom** – The Greeks sought after intellectual philosophy to solve their problem about the things of God.
 - It is no different today with the atheists who follow after the professors in the universities instead of the Bible for the answers to life.
- 2) Paul preaches Christ crucified. **“But we preach Christ crucified...”**
 - **Christ** the Messiah meant he had power, authority, and victory.
 - **Crucified** meant weakness, humiliation, and defeat.
 - **Christ crucified** was the ultimate paradox and contradiction, but this was what Paul preached!
 - The believers/church do not demand a sign, nor seek after human wisdom; but they must preach Christ and Him crucified.
 - i. The Cross is a stumbling block to the Jews – The Jews were looking for a Messiah who was powerful in this world, more like a political figure.
 - ii. The Cross is foolish to the Greeks – The Greeks were looking for more than someone who would come and die and rise again - that was foolish to them. They were seeking

for a brilliant man who perhaps knew how to debate others on a more philosophical standpoint.

- They are both looking for the Anti-Christ. The false prophet will work promoting the agenda of the antichrist. **Revelation 13:11-15**
- The antichrist will be mainly a political/military leader, but the false prophet will be more of a religious leader. Politics and religion will merge into a worldwide movement bringing the end goal to worship the Antichrist.

e. 1 Corinthians 1:24-25 “But unto them which 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.”

- Christ is the sign and wisdom of God and is the answer to the sinful problem all men have, both Jew and Greek/Gentile.
 - **“Which are called”** = To the Jews and Greeks who believe Christ the power and wisdom of God.
- 1) **Christ is the power of God** = The crucified Christ purchased our redemption. Christ conquered sin, death and hell, and in Christ alone Salvation is provided for believers which is the power of God. **Romans 1:16, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, Hebrews 1:1-3, Hebrews 4:12**
 - 2) **Christ is the wisdom of God** – Wisdom is Christ personified. The wisdom in Creation, in Character (Proverbs), in the Cross – Salvation, sanctification, and glorification. **1 Corinthians 1:30, Colossians 2:3,**
 - **William McDonald:** “But strangely enough, the very things that the Jews and the Gentiles sought are found in a wonderful way in the Lord Jesus. To those who hear His call and trust in Him, both Jews and Greeks, Christ becomes the power of God and the wisdom of God.”
 - 3) God is wiser than men. **“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”**
 - God is never foolish or weak; Paul uses hyperbole speech to prove just how much wiser and stronger God is in comparison to human wisdom.

f. 1 Corinthians 1:26 “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:”

- 1) Paul finished exposing the foolishness of man and exalting the wisdom of God, and now reminds the Christians that they were not called because of their wisdom or their might or nobility. No, they were ordinary sinners who believed a simple gospel (Christ Crucified).
 - This does not mean intellectual men with esteemed positions cannot be saved; but neither their wisdom nor their office can save them.
 - *I heard a story of “Lady Huntington, a rich and influential friend of Whitfield and Wesley, said she was going to heaven by an “m”: it isn’t any noble that are called; instead, it is not many noble.*

- 2) If this is the case, why do some professing Christians embrace human wisdom and promote preacher/teachers who try to make the gospel message more acceptable to the world?

- *A preacher once said, "If men were to build a church, they would want to enroll the most prominent members of the community. But verse 26 teaches us that the people men esteem so highly, God passes by. The ones He calls are not generally the ones the world considers great."*

g. 1 Corinthians 1:27 *"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; (28) And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: (29) That no flesh should glory in his presence."*

- 1) God has chosen to use things that may seem foolish to expose and bring shame to the wisdom of this world.

- **Warren W. Wiersbe:** *"God chose the foolish, the weak, the base ("low born"), and the despised to show the proud world their need and His grace. The lost world admires birth, social status, financial success, power, and recognition. But none of these things can guarantee eternal life."*

- 2) God has chosen to use weak and feeble things to expose and bring shame to the things that are mighty in this world. **"...and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;"**

- God used fishermen who had a family business. God used an ex-tax-collector. God used educated men (so-called mad men) who made themselves of no reputation and counted all the things they had achieved but dung to spend their life preaching the Gospel. **Matthew 4:18-22, Matthew 11:25, Acts 4:13, Exodus 4:10, Philippians 3:3-8**

- The power of a simple gospel is able to change a sinner and give them holy boldness to stand against wickedness in high places.

- *A preacher said, "But God chose what the world considers foolish to shame those who think they are wise. He chose the powerless to shame those who are powerful. Why would God not choose leaders and influential people who could make sweeping reforms and be followed by the masses? God does not choose as people choose. His sovereign choice is not based on anything that people can do or achieve."*

- 3) God has chosen to use base (low) things, things that seem to be worthless and despised by the world to expose and bring shame and an end to those things that seem honorable. **"And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:"**

- God used a rod to split the ocean in half. God used trumpets to destroy the walls of Jericho.

- God used an ox goad to slay 600 Philistines. God used a donkey's jawbone to defeat an army.

- God used a little stone and sling to bring down a giant. God used a lunch box to feed 5000 men.

- God used His Son to purchase our redemption. **Isaiah 53:3** *“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”*
- 4) God uses these things so that no man gets the glory. **“That no flesh should glory in his presence.”**
- God reveals the foolishness and the weakness of man in this world system, even with its advancing technology, philosophy and religion? “That no flesh should glory in His presence” Salvation is wholly of grace, and the work of God in Christ, otherwise, God cannot get the glory. **Psalms 49:6-7**
 - Wisdom, talents, or any kind of works cannot accomplish Salvation—faith in Christ alone does—so no one can boast in their achievements and say I secured my eternal life. Ephesians 2:8-9
 - **Nelson:** *“Since Christ not only imparts wisdom but also righteousness, the Christian cannot boast, except in the Lord.*
 - **Warren W. Wiersbe:** *“It is this truth that Paul wanted to get across to the Corinthians, because they were guilty of glorying in men. If we glory in men — even godly men like Peter and Paul and Apollos — we are robbing God of the glory that He alone deserves. It was this sinful attitude of pride that was helping to cause division in the church.”*
- h. 1 Corinthians 1:30 “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:”**
- Paul now refers to the person in whom we are to glory in.
- 1) God has given us Christ – **“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus...”**
- i. For God so love the world he gave us Christ. **John 3:16**
 - God promised us eternal life in Christ before the world began. **Titus 1:2**
 - God is the source of our salvation, and we are in Christ because of God the Father. **John 6:37-38**
 - **Romans 8:31-32** *“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? (32) He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”*
 - ii. We are to glory in God for giving us His Christ.
 - **Luke 2:14** *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”*
 - **Psalms 44:8** *“In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah.”*
- 2) God made Christ to be our Wisdom. **“...who of God is made unto us wisdom...”**
- In Christ is the “Wisdom of God” revealed to us.
 - **Colossians 2:3** *“In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”*
 - The treasures of the Gospel have been revealed to babes – those that are in Christ.
 - **2 Timothy 3:15** *“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”*

3) God made Christ to be our righteousness. “...**and righteousness...**”

- Righteousness refers to our “standing before God”.
- By faith alone in Christ we have been given the righteousness of God. In Christ we are declared righteous.
- **Romans 10:4** “*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*”
- **2 Peter 1:1** “*Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*”

4) God made Christ to be our sanctification. “...**and sanctification...**”

- Sanctification refers to our “position.”
- In Christ we are set-apart and made holy. Apart from Christ, we not only stand condemned, but positionally we will remain defiled, dirty, wicked sinners.
- **William McDonald:** “*In ourselves we have nothing in the way of personal holiness, but in Him we are positionally sanctified, and by His power we are transformed from one degree of sanctification to another.*”
- **1 Corinthians 6:11** “*And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*”

5) God made Christ to be our redemption “...**and redemption:**”

- Redemption refers to our “deliverance.”
- By grace alone through Christ alone we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ.
- We have been brought back from the slave market of sin, death, and hell.
- **Romans 3:23-24** “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (24) Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*”
- **Colossians 1:12-14** “*Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: (13) Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: (14) In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.*”

i. **1 Corinthians 1:31** “*That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*”

1) Therefore, if all we have has come from God through Christ alone, then we have nothing to glory in but in the Lord alone. AMEN!

- Paul, Apollos, and Peter are nothing without Christ, and you, Corinthians, are nothing without Christ.
- **1 Corinthians 3:7** “*So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*”
- **Morris:** “*All we are, and all we have—if it is of any value at all in the scale of eternity—is given us by our Creator and Savior Jesus Christ.*”

- **Warren W. Wisrsbe:** *“Since every believer is “in Christ,” and he has all that he needs, why compete with each other or compare yourselves with each other? It is the Lord who has done it all! “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord”*
 - **Galatians 6:14** *“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”*
- 2) The same admonishment has been given to ALL the saints in every generation. ***“That, according as it is written...”***
- i. Jeremiah 9:23-24
 - ii. Psalm 115:1
 - **Vernon McGee:** *“Our glory should be in the Lord. We should glory in the Lord Jesus Christ today. Let me ask you, what do you glory in? What are you boasting of today? Are you boasting of your degrees? Of your wisdom? Of your wealth? Of your power? Are you boasting today of your position and your character? My friend, you don't have a thing of which you can boast—and I know I haven't. But we can boast of Christ. He is everything. He is everything that we need.”*