

## God's Wisdom Outperforms the World's Wisdom [Slide 1] 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Read MacArthur story. Paul writes, "The word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God."

The worldly wise will consider the message of Christianity to be foolish and even barbaric. Listen to the following examples: Robert Anton Wilson wrote, "Belief is the death of intelligence." Thomas Paine of Revolutionary War fame, said, "It would be more consistent that we call [the Bible] the work of a demon than the word of God. It is a history of wickedness that has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind." Aleister Crowley wrote, "One would go mad if one took the Bible seriously; but to take it seriously one must already be mad." Richard Dawkins wrote in *The God Delusion*, "There is something infantile in the presumption that somebody else has a responsibility to give your life meaning and point... The truly adult view, by contrast, is that our life is as meaningful, as full and as wonderful as we choose to make it."

The world's wisdom is usually at odds with God's wisdom. I want to speak particularly to our youth and College Students. Most of us adults who are working don't have to listen to the world's wisdom. We can choose to listen by watching TV and movies, following people on social media, listening to people talk around us, but we can always declare all that stuff to be rubbish, stop listening to it, and live in accordance with God's wisdom.

However, if you go to College you will be immersed in the wisdom of the world. You will be forced to hear it from your professors and made to regurgitate it on your tests. Most of your fellow students will blithely drink the world's Kool-Aid and parrot to you all the world's slogans. You have already heard most of them in High School anyway. You may have already had to listen to a lot of worldly wisdom from your High School teachers, although a good number of them may be Christians so it's likely that what you have experienced in High School is nothing compared to the indoctrination you will get at the University.

People in the world will level all sorts of ad-hominem personal attacks against you for any Biblical beliefs you hold. Most of the time they will not do so with reasoned arguments that contain solid evidence. Most of the time they will repeat unthinkingly what they have heard from others. They will have all sorts of faulty understandings of what the Bible teaches and how we got the Bible.

You need to realize that the wisdom of the world is at war with godly wisdom. You can choose to succumb to peer pressure and accept the thinking of many or you can fortify yourself by understanding the reasons and evidence for Christianity in order to be a light to the lost world. If you choose to stand for God's truth, you have to know the evidences for the Christian faith, you have to know why you believe what you believe, you have to know better than your opponents their own arguments, and you need to know the weaknesses and fallacies in the things they say. You can't be lazy or sloppy in your thinking. You have to be sharp and smarter than those around you, which will not be too hard if you work at it.

You can start by paying close attention to the sermon and taking notes and asking questions about anything you don't understand. Jason is also well equipped to answer your questions. Don't neglect to use him as a resource.

I invite everyone to turn to 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 where we will find that God's wisdom outperforms the world's wisdom. 1 Corinthians is the seventh book in the New Testament after the four Gospels, Acts and Romans.

[Slide 2] We're going to start with verses 18-25 where Paul declares that the message of the cross is foolishness to the worldly wise but it powerfully saves. Read.

Verse 18 begins with the word "for" which indicates that Paul is giving a reason for what he said in verse 17. He preached the gospel not in cleverness of speech so that the cross of Christ would not be made void or emptied of its self-evident power. As I said last week, when people get transformed, it is by the power in the message of the Gospel not by the eloquence of the preacher. Paul says in verse 18 that even though the word or message of the cross is foolishness to those who are dying in their sin, to those of us who are being saved out of the rule and effects of sin it is the power of God. According to verse 18 there are only two classes of people: those who are dying in their sin and those who are being saved out of their sin.

In verse 19 Paul quotes from Isaiah 29:14 from the Septuagint translation. In its original context Isaiah 29:14 warned people not to try to outwit God. When you try to deny God's Word or rationalize it away or ridicule it, you are attempting to match your wits and wisdom against God. That is like sending a cap gun to destroy a tank.

So, who can contend with God? Who can stand before him? Paul asks in verse 20, "Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age?" In other words, where is the person who can match God in wisdom? He answers with a rhetorical question: "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" The answer is yes, he has made foolish the wisdom of the world.

What has the world offered as the solution to the problem of evil or sin? Marx said the problem of evil lay with a class of people, the wealthy who owned the means of production and that if only the proletariat, the working class could own those means of production we could achieve economic justice. But it turns out the proletariat are just as sinful as the wealthy. Others say that education will solve the problem of evil because our main problem is that we are ignorant. By that reasoning, the more educated among us must be the more saintly. Has that proven to be true? Others say that societal conditions cause people to do bad things. If we could just eliminate poverty and change society we would eliminate the evils in society. However, societal structures are simply the creation of people. The problem resides in people. That is why they create oppressive structures.

God has made evident the foolishness of the world's solutions to problems. The world says the way to prevent divorce is by living together and that marriage is outdated. The break up rate of people living together hovers around 90%, much higher than the divorce rate among married people. I call living together premarital divorce because it trains you to separate. The world says that the way to prevent teenage pregnancy and STD's is to provide condoms rather than challenging people to remain pure until marriage, but the only sure-fire way to prevent both STD's and teenage pregnancy is to remain a virgin until you marry as God's word instructs.

When it comes to religion, all other religions think that man somehow can make himself better either through obeying laws, doing good deeds, coming back in endless reincarnations, or through meditation techniques, but none of these things can change the heart and the evil that lies within our own soul. The first step to solving the problem is not self-reformation. It is confessing, admitting to God that I have a problem that I can't solve and that I need his mercy and help.

As Paul explains in verse 21, people who exercise worldly wisdom in seeking God, do not find God. That is how God designed it. Instead God planned to have people declare the Gospel and those who believe the message of the Gospel will come to know God and be saved. Paul refers in verse 21 to the foolishness of the Gospel. What he means is that unregenerate people find it foolish, even preposterous that somehow a man crucified on a cross can do something for them.

Paul says that Jews sought evidence for God through miracles and Gentiles sought God through wisdom but the way to find God is through Jesus and his death on the cross which was a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.

The Jews expected a Messiah like Jesus will be when he comes back. They expected a warrior king who would subdue the nations and establish the Kingdom of God on the Earth. For Jesus to die as a criminal at the hands of their oppressors, the Romans, and then for his disciples to claim him as the Messiah was a scandal to the Jews. No way was he their Messiah. Why even the Law taught that anyone who hung on a cross or a stake was cursed by God. They were right because the curse of God did fall upon Jesus for the sins of mankind he bore in his body. Jesus' death on the cross was a stumbling block to them.

To the Gentiles the idea that God would get himself killed by his enemies seemed pure foolishness. Consider this description of the Roman mindset from historian Garret Fagan. Read quote. To the Romans, Jesus was not strong; he was weak. He was not victorious; he was defeated. He was a loser. How could he be God and why would anyone want to follow him? It was sheer foolishness.

Only to us Christians is the cross the power and wisdom of God. It is the power of God because faith in the crucified Christ is what saves us from the power and rule of sin. It is the wisdom of God, because who else would have thought of such a way to save people? Chuck Colson in his book, *A Dangerous Grace*, tell the following story of the Russian novelist, Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Read story.

God is neither foolish nor weak but if he were, his foolishness would be wiser than the wisest man and his weakness would be more powerful than the strongest man.

[Slide 3] To show how God's wisdom confounds the wise of this world Paul points out that the majority of those who are saved are not the wise and influential of this world, but the insignificant and the overlooked so that those who are saved will boast in the Lord and not in themselves. Let's read verses 26-31. Read.

Paul says to the Corinthians, "Look at yourselves. Not many of you are wise, powerful, or high-born people. The low social status of Christians in the first centuries was a well-known fact. Celsus, a well-known opponent of the Christians, sarcastically described them this way: Read p. 81, Gordon Fee.

God selected the foolish, the weak, and the low-born of this world to shame the wise, the powerful, and the upper crust so that no man should boast before God. It is certainly true that if you look at Christianity historically that it has often made its first inroads among the poor and the marginalized. This is not because God loves poor people more than he loves rich people. It is because poor people more quickly recognize their need for God. They don't have money or influence or powerful friends propping up their lives. They have less to be proud of, so the pride that prevents the wealthy and well-to-do from coming to God is not so much a barrier among the poor.

In saving so many poor people God makes it evident that salvation is not based on human accomplishments and human merit. He shows that salvation is a matter of mercy and grace, not a

matter of man working to earn his salvation. There is no occasion for boasting when you have been saved by God's mercy and grace. There is only occasion for giving thanks to God.

When you get to Heaven you won't be able to boast that you arrived because you were rich or good or smart or deserving. Your only boast will be in the greatness of your God who out of his great love and compassion for you, reached down and rescued you out of your sin and impurity and made you as white as snow. God the Father designed salvation so that only he, the Son, and the Holy Spirit get the credit for your deliverance. All you did, as a drowning person, was to grab hold of the lifesaving ring that God tossed you and you trusted God to bring you safely to solid ground.

[Slide 4] So Paul ends his discussion of God's superior wisdom by saying, "Let the one boasting, boast in the Lord." Don't wait until you get to Heaven to do this. Do it now. Brag on God, on how he saved you and adopted you into his family. Talk about his great love, his abundant mercy, and his overflowing grace. How can you do this?

I love how Hobby Lobby every Easter takes out a full page ad in the newspaper to speak about the death and resurrection of Christ. You could put an ad in The Facts giving thanks to God for his great mercy in saving you. You could post on Facebook or other social media how wonderfully God saved you. Get creative. Think about ways you can brag about God.

[Slide 5] The second thing I would encourage you to do is not to be deceived by worldly wisdom which usually is no wisdom at all. Here are just a few examples of worldly wisdom that you need to resist.

One, a person's feelings or self-perception determines their gender. Worldly wisdom says that if you feel you are a woman in a male body or vice versa that your gender is what you actually feel regardless of what your chromosomes reveal. This argument reminds me of the word of faith preachers who teach that whatever you speak with your mouth can become reality. Both groups make the same mistake. Reality is not determined by what I feel or say. Reality is determined by what actually exists. If I feel that I am a woman when my body is that of a man then my feelings are distorted. They are messed up. I need to find out why my feelings are out of sync with reality rather than redefining reality to match my feelings.

Two, there are many truths because each of us has our own truth. False, there is only one truth and the extent to which my truth matches the one truth, to that extent I am right. Truth is what corresponds to reality. Granted we all have many different opinions and preferences. I may think that caramel turtle fudge ice cream is the best tasting ice cream and you may think that Rocky Road is the best tasting ice cream but neither one of us can claim that ice cream is actually caviar or fish eggs. We can argue about whether Ruth Bader Ginsberg is a good Supreme Court Justice but we cannot argue about whether she is currently a Supreme Court Justice. She is. You can argue whether the unborn child or fetus should be aborted. You cannot argue that it is not human, but merely tissue. No, by the time a woman knows she is pregnant the child has already progressed from being tissue to being a human organism complete with multiple organ systems. Its DNA already marks it as human and no other species.

We could talk for a long time about the world's wisdom versus Biblical wisdom, but one final example I give you concerns the frequent arguments made against religion, including Christianity. You've heard about the Inquisition and the Crusades and how oppressive and intolerant people of faith are. I will certainly admit that true Christians sin and sometimes do horrible things, although I suspect most of the evil done in the name of Christ are not done by true Christians but by those who profess to be Christian but have no true relationship with Jesus. Be that as it may, if body counts are any indication of a threat, then atheist systems like

Communist Russia under Stalin, Communist China, and Cambodia under Pol Pot have murdered far more people than any so-called Christian group.

Nor does the argument take into account how many universities, hospitals, rescue missions, shelters etc. were founded and are run by Christians. After Hurricane Harvey all sorts of churches and Christian organizations were on the ground helping people. I saw no organized effort by atheist or agnostic organizations. In his book, "Who Really Cares?" Syracuse University Professor, Arthur Brooks, reveals that religious Americans are more likely to be generous to the downtrodden than secular progressives. Worldly wisdom sees religious belief as a threat to the well-being of a nation when the exact opposite is the case. True God-followers are a blessing to a nation, but the real threat to a nation comes from the godless.

Realize that the world will always think we are fools, unthinking, gullible, and ignorant for espousing godly wisdom, but in the end the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisest of men, and the weakness of God is stronger than the most powerful person. Let's pray.