

1 Corinthians 1:1-31

Subject: Wisdom of God

Human wisdom is nothing compared to God's wisdom
Don't rely on human wisdom to fulfill your view of God
Boast that the Lord has saved you so that only He gets the glory

One Point: Who's wisdom are you leaning on?

Intro to 1 Corinthians

Author: Paul, the apostle and church planter – during his third missionary journey.

Date:

Paul pens this letter to the church at Corinth while on his third missionary journey in Ephesus. He was in Ephesus for three years (Acts 20:31) placing the date of this letter around A.D. 55.

Setting and Background:

The city of Corinth prospered as a major trade city while being known as one of the most morally corrupt places during Biblical times. Paul founded the church on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1) and heard about the sin issues going on there during his third missionary journey. Most of the believers could not consistently separate themselves from their old, selfish, immoral and pagan ways. Paul wrote this letter in order to correct these behaviors within the church.

Main Point:

To help believers learn how to separate from their old, sinful ways that lead to destruction personally and within the church.

Read verses 1-3 as an intro

Verses 4-9 Thankful for the churches in Corinth

Verses 10-17 – Starts talking about division within the church (gets more in depth in chapter 3)

Verse 17 leads into what we will be talking about in this session

Read v. 18-31

v. 18 – Cross - It is interesting to see that Paul was using the cross as the main point to help the church understand the wisdom and power of God.

Romans would see the cross as a place of penalty resulting from an offense while the Jews saw it as a place of God's curse.

So the fact that Jesus died on a cross gives people living at the time a reference as to how God works. He chose to use a cross as the main symbol, which to people who don't believe saw it as foolish.

Power - The term power is used here to denote that it can transform lives – move people from death to life.

Also, he uses the statement in the present tense which gives hope to those who already believe that what they believe is correct. However, it also gives a chance for those “who are perishing” a chance to repent from their sins and believe. This was the ultimate sign of humility because you need to “give up” your rights and make Jesus your Lord and savior by believing something that most people see as foolish.

How can God come down from his throne into a human form and take on such punishment? That is just plain stupid and foolish for any divine being to do and doesn't make any sense. What god would subject themselves to such dishonor.

The gospel doesn't appeal to anyone filled with pride and knowledge.

v. 19 – In Isaiah 29:14 Isaiah prophesied that the gospel would be offensive to human wisdom.

v. 20 – Wise man, scholar, philosopher – Three types of intellectuals; leaders in the ancient world. Together they represented the pinnacle of human wisdom.

v. 21 – Wisdom vs. belief

Faith stands in contrast to human wisdom as the means of the knowledge of God.

v. 18-21 – Paul was not against intelligence, however people were using their intelligence to become spiritually elite and seek societal status by saying that they had a higher wisdom and more influence because of their wisdom. So Paul starts comparing human wisdom to God's wisdom based on the cross. He brings up the point that dying to save doesn't make sense, being tortured to save sins doesn't make sense. Therefore, God uses people who don't claim to know it all to reach those who do.

There are many intellectuals right now (Russell Moore, Ken Hamm, etc.) that God is using but they are some of the most humble people you will ever meet.

The Corinthians (Greeks) were lovers of human wisdom. Philosophers were national heroes. This led them to the worship of intellectualism.

v. 22 – The Jews wanted a sign; well because in the Old Testament that's how God revealed Himself. Plagues, splitting of the Red Sea, a pillar of fire, food falling from heaven, walls crumbling, etc. I don't blame them for that. The Greeks/Gentiles – just wanted human reasoning.

v. 23 – The Jews wanted a ruler to create a new regime with a new military that would rule the world. That would deliver them from the oppression of Rome – instead it was a savior nailed to the cross of shame. The Greeks wanted someone who could debate with wisdom – instead they heard of a man who seemed weak and was a failure because he died. Where is the honor and success in that?

v. 24 – Called – those who believe (v. 21) or saved (v. 18)
The gospel is for all who believe (Romans 1:16)
However, both were blind to the fact that Jesus actually fulfilled both of their desires. Christ was the power of God and the wisdom of God.

v. 25 – Paul isn't trying to say that God is foolish or weak but instead explaining how He is so much above us that he is on a whole other level and we can't compare to his wisdom and strength.

Paul creates a split in his letter here:

v. 18-25 – The message of the cross is offensive and foolish to the wise of the world

v. 26-31 – Shifts to the recipients of the message and who God chooses to use to send out this message.

v. 26 – wise, influential, noble birth – Few people were of these labels – God chooses to use you whatever you know and whoever you are. Regardless if you are super smart, have great charisma (people skills) or if you are even born into a rich/noble family.
(not many vs. not any – saved by the M if you are one of those people)

v. 27-28 – The three uses of “God chose” directly correlate to vs. 26 (wise, influential, noble birth) – 1. Foolish things to shame the wise 2. Weak things to shame the strong (not talking about the physical sense but in influence) 3. Lowly and despised things (people born into a lower caste system, poor vs. noble/rich)

v. 29 – God chose those people so that no one can boast before God. **God chooses the least likely people because the Creator deserves all the glory, not the created.**

v. 30-31 – we only boast in the Lord because Christ Jesus took our place, he freed us from the debt of sin that we have (Rom 6:23) – we have nothing to be proud of because what we deserve is death.

Wisdom – Christ became our wisdom from God for us.

Righteousness – Right standing before God

Sanctification – Cleansing from the impurity of disobedience

Redemption – Liberating us from the bondage of sin

So What

God has always done things with people who seemed the least likely to be voted “most likely to accomplish great things” at their high school -

“God used the trumpets to bring down the walls of Jericho. He reduced Gideon’s army from 32,000 to 300 to rout the armies of Midian. He used an oxgoad in the hand of Shamgar to defeat the Philistines. With the jawbone of a donkey He enabled Samson to defeat a whole army. God used a few loaves of bread and some fish to feed 5000 men.” – Believer’s Bible Commentary.

Do you see the theology of grace in these verses? How you don’t have to be the best of the best in order to be God’s best?

2:12-14 – Wisdom from the Spirit of God – we receive it when we believe so that we can understand, rather than reject, the gospel daily.

Things haven’t changed much today. Many people say if only I had a sign from God or sometimes they believe something after saying “that makes sense”

Whose wisdom are you leaning on?

The church in Corinth kept leaning on what they thought made sense, that made them seem significant, that gave them societal clout, that made them look good because of what they knew.

When you go through your day whose wisdom do you lean on? Do you depend on what you know, what you’ve learned? Or do you depend on the Holy Spirit to guide you, give you peace, walk you through the tough times?

How you answer that question shows what you are boasting in.

Now What

Here’s Paul’s answer to that question:

2:2 – I know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

1:17 – Preach the gospel, not with human wisdom.

Boast in the Lord

“A God discovered by human wisdom will be both a projection of human fallenness and a source of human pride, and this constitutes the worship of the creature, not the Creator.” NAC 69

The gospel doesn't make sense at all, a perfect and holy God would come down as a human, die for his enemies because they constantly live for themselves instead of for Him and then give them the free gift of salvation from what they deserve. THAT. DOESN'T. MAKE. SENSE.
Ephesians 2:8-9

Whose wisdom are you leaning on?

Who are you boasting in?

In order to be saved, we must confess our sin and admit that we are unworthy of God's gift of salvation. We must humble ourselves and accept the free gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ. We must cease trusting in our goodness, in our works or efforts, in our worthiness, and cast ourselves on the sinless Son of God who died in our place, bearing the penalty for our sin, and giving to us His righteousness as a free gift. The gospel which saves is the gospel which humbles, and that humbling gospel is the basis for Christian unity and harmony. If you have never accepted the gospel message, and the gift of salvation in Christ of which the gospel speaks, I urge you to do so this very moment.

<https://bible.org/seriespage/multiplying-divisions-1-cor-110-31>

The first shall be last and the last shall be first