



2: *The Message of the Cross* (1 Cor 1:10-2:5)

The Message of the Cross seems silly to so many in our culture. *God became man and died for our sins?* YEP! Today we explore why the ancient message of the Cross is so significant for followers of Jesus.

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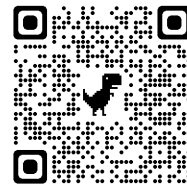
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teachingnotes

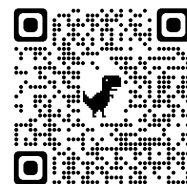
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VISUAL NOTES



today'steaching

Catch the Context

1 Corinthians 1:1-3 (NIV)

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, To the church of God in Corinth, to **those sanctified in Christ Jesus** and **called to be His holy people** [saints], together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul reminds the Corinthian Church of their beauty - **WHO they ARE in Christ Jesus. The church of God in Corinth**, not a building, but a **BODY** (1 Cor 12:27) - an "assembly" of folks who belong to Jesus. These people are **sanctified** - set apart for service to God, **His holy people** - often translated as "saints".

Can't We All Just Get Along?

1 Corinthians 1:10-11 (NIV)

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you **agree with one another** in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you **be perfectly united in mind and thought**. My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.

Sadly, **divisions** and quarrels among the Church often happens over stuff that really doesn't matter that much, all because we lose sight over what matters most. And that's why Paul spills most of his ink in this letter on this issue - **division within the church**. Paul wanted them to **agree with one another in what you say** (literally meaning "to speak the same"¹). They are to **be perfectly united in mind and thought** - to act like a **TEAM**. But a divided team won't be a winning team for long. Paul has heard about the **divisions** and **quarrels** in this church from over 200 miles away (by boat) in Ephesus.

TAKE SOME NOTES HERE

¹ Stephen T. Um, 1 Corinthians: The Word of the Cross, ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 24.

Who's Your Favorite?

1 Corinthians 1:12-13 (NIV)

What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." **Is Christ divided?** Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?

Some of the division had to do with which leaders they liked the best. Even though they brought the same gospel message, these people focused on the messenger more than the message. Who was the better orator, philosopher, story teller, communicator, or care-giver?

- **Paul** planted the church in Corinth.
- **Apollos** was the highly educated Jewish man whom Aquila and Priscilla helped to better understand the gospel (Acts 18:24-28). When Paul left Corinth for Ephesus Apollos was in Corinth (1 Cor 16:12, Acts 19:1). Paul mentions Apollos multiple times in this writing: 1 Cor 1:12; 3:4-6, 22; 4:6; 16:12.
- **Cephas** (pr. K-fas) - *Aramaic* for "Peter", whom the Corinthian church held him in high esteem along with Paul & Apollos. Paul mentions him 3 other times in this same writing (1 Cor 3:22, 9:5, 15:5).

Who Baptized You?

1 Corinthians 1:14-16 (NIV)

I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.)

Crispus was the former synagogue ruler whose entire family was baptized having believed in Jesus (Acts 18:8). Paul had baptized him. **Gaius** is likely the man who hosted Paul in his own home when Paul wrote to the Roman Church (Rom 16:23). **Stephanas** is mentioned later in the same letter (1 Cor 16:17).

- ➡ Paul likely had others he delegated to baptize many other people (Acts 18:8) while he was in Corinth. *WHO* baptizes you isn't nearly as important as *WHY* you are baptized. The Bible never prescribes who is to baptize, although it should clearly be someone who follows Jesus and has been baptized themselves.

The Message - Different Meanings to Different People

1 Corinthians 1:17-18 (NIV)

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but **to preach the gospel**—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For **the message of the cross** is **foolishness to those who are perishing**, but **to us who are being saved it is the power of God**.

What's Paul's point?

BIG TRUTH: The message of the Cross is more important than the messenger.

Let's keep the main thing...the main thing.

BIBLE in 5 Words: GOD, MAN, SIN, JESUS, JUDGEMENT.

God created **MAN**(kind) in His image, but we have **sinned** against God and marred that image. **Jesus** is God-in-skin who came to live a sinless life and die a sacrificial death to make payment for our sin. **Judgement** is coming on every person, based on what they have done with **the message of the cross**.

- ② **Is the Cross foolishness to you?** You think you are good enough to make it to heaven...or maybe you think there is NOTHING after this life...or maybe you just think what kind of God would demand a human sacrifice for sin?
- ② **Is the Cross the power of God for you?** You appreciate the serious of your sin and the graciousness of God, to give His life for yours! You trust that your sin was really paid for by Jesus on the cross.

Is the Message of the Cross Foolish?

1 Corinthians 1:19-21 (NIV)

For it is written: "**I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.**" Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know Him, **God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.** [* Is 29:14]

The message of the cross is certainly not **foolishness**. Paul is making a sarcastic statement to shame those who think they are so **wise**. A crucified King was NOT the message most Jews nor Gentiles appreciated.

The Message of the Cross vs. the Wisdom of Mankind

1 Corinthians 1:22-25 (NIV)

Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but **we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles**, but **to those whom God has called**, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God**. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Despite the many miracles Jesus performed, many **Jews** of Jesus' day demanded more and more **signs**. After feeding 5000 plus, rather than trust Jesus as their Messiah, people came back the next day and asked Him to do it again (Jn 6:30-31). The **Greeks** wanted to hear the latest **wisdom** being touted by the most intelligent philosophers. Instead of offering **signs** and **wisdom**, the first followers of Jesus would **preach Christ crucified**.

- **a stumbling block to Jews:** This horrific death of the Messiah was implausible for Jews since 1) they believed the Messiah would take over rather than surrender Himself 2) those who were killed and hung on a tree were viewed as cursed by God (Deut 21:22-23; cf. Gal 3:10-14)...so how could God's Messiah be cursed by God? That made no sense to them. Remember how Simon Peter pulled Jesus aside to set Him straight, because the Messiah couldn't be killed - so he thought (Mt 16:21-23).
- **foolishness to Gentiles:** **Cicero** the Roman philosopher who died some 40 years before Jesus was born, called crucifixion a "most cruel and disgusting penalty."² Crucifixion was a punishment only handed out to non-Roman citizens.³ How could the Gentiles of the mighty Roman Empire bow their knee to a crucified foreigner instead of the conquering Caesar?

✗ To the unsaved Jews and Gentiles, the message of the cross of foolishness...

✓ But **to those Jews and Gentiles whom God has called** and saved, the message of the Cross is **the power and wisdom of God** - that sacrificial story how our Sinless Savior took upon Himself the punishment of our sin that a Holy & Just God must judge.

The foolishness of God? God has no foolishness, but if He did, **the foolishness of God** is wiser than the highest of **human wisdom**. And if God had any weakness (He does not), then **the weakness of God** is still **stronger** than the greatest of **human strength**.

The message of the cross transforms the lives of Jews & Gentiles who listen and respond in humility.

Using the Weak to Shame the Strong

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 (NIV)

Brothers and sisters, **think of what you were when you were called**. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But **God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong**. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him. It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: **"Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."**

You were...the foolish things and the weak things of the world who were used **to shame the strong**.

We **boast in the Lord**, not in our abilities & trophies. We **boast in the Lord**, not in our leaders. We brag on Jesus and what He has done for us!

☀ **N.T. Wright:** "The Christian **good news** is all about God dying on a rubbish-heap at the wrong end of the Empire...It's all about the true God confronting the world of posturing, power and prestige, and overthrowing it in order to set up his own **kingdom**, a kingdom in which the weak and the foolish find themselves just as welcome as the strong and the wise, if not more so."⁴

Paul's Past Foolishness: Paul was trained under Gamaliel, an elite Jewish rabbi (Acts 22:3). This young, intelligent Jewish Pharisee was prestigious and tenacious among his peers. Paul's human wisdom led him to arrest and kill Jesus followers, until he was confronted by the risen Jesus. Paul was cut down to size by the Savior he used to slander, and Paul began to carry the message of the crucified, risen Jesus - to others - both Jews & Gentiles (Acts 22:4-21). Everywhere Paul went, his point was crystal clear...

The message of the Cross is more important than the messenger.

² Cicero, In C. Verrem 2.5.65 (quoted in Fitzmyer [First Corinthians], 154).

³ Derek R. Brown and E. Tod Twist, 1 Corinthians, ed. John D. Barry and Douglas Mungum, Lexham Research Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013), [1 Co 1:18-2:5](#).

⁴ Tom Wright, Paul for Everyone: 1 Corinthians (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 13.

The Simple Message of a Crucified & Risen King

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 (NIV)

And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For **I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.** I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but **with a demonstration of the Spirit's power**, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, **but on God's power.**

This doesn't mean that Paul wasn't trying to persuade these folks, but his hope was in **the Spirit's power** to deal with human hearts through **the message of the Cross, Jesus** the Messiah - **crucified** for our sins.

- Instead of trying to compete with the newest philosophies being introduced in Corinth, Paul was sticking to the Gospel message - GOD, MAN, SIN, JESUS, JUDGEMENT...and trusting **the Spirit's power** to deal with their hearts.

✓ **And that's what WE should do too** - stick to **the Message of the Cross**. (This doesn't mean we never try to answer questions non-Christians have nor does it mean we shouldn't prepare to have Gospel conversations with others. Jesus trained His disciples to do these things.)

✓ Christians should lean and trust in **the message of the CROSS** - we have been forgiven! Ask God to use us to share **the message of the Cross**, always remembering that...

The message of the Cross is more important than the messenger.

❓ Have YOU responded to the message of the Cross?

🌟 **John MacArthur:** "When human wisdom recognizes its own bankruptcy and a man turns in faith to Jesus Christ, whose saving work is **the message preached**, he [she] can exchange poverty for riches, sin for righteousness, despair for hope, death for life."⁵

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives:** Alan & Christy Androski (850-464-1428), Freddy & Joyce Howard (850-973-0047), Tim & Joni Hughey (850-464-1156), Mark & Dot Mancil (850-253-5405), Boss & Amelia Mulkey (850-464-6717), Jim & Derita Pinkard (850-464-6188), or Tom & Martha Waddail (850-973-0011).

discussionquestions

Take some time to discuss these questions with your family, friends, or group.

1. What challenged or encouraged you most from today's teaching? Explain your answer.
2. **Read 1 Cor 1:10-13.** Why is it important that there are no divisions among people in the Church? What's are some of the dangers in choosing favorite leaders in our church? What are some other issue we must be careful to not allow us to divide over?
3. **Read 1 Cor 1:18-25.** Why is the message of the Cross foolishness to those who are perishing while it is the power of God for those of us who are being saved? Why do you think that so many people struggle to believe the simple Gospel message of GOD, MAN, SIN, JESUS, & JUDGEMENT?
4. **Read 1 Cor 1:26-31.** Why is it that people who are not as wise, influential, or noble are more likely to respond to the Gospel? What does it mean to "boast in the Lord"? Let's take a few minutes and do that...brag on Jesus for WHO He is and WHAT He has done in your life.
5. **Read 1 Cor 2:1-5.** Paul is certainly not saying he wasn't trying to be persuasive and his writings make clear that he was very wise and communicated deep, difficult, wise teachings (in fact, 2 Cor 2:6 begins talking about "a message of wisdom to the mature"). In light of the Corinthians desire for newest philosophies, why was Paul stressing **the message of the Cross** over "wise and persuasive words"? While Christians should prepare to answer questions that non-Christians ask, how might we keep coming back to the message of the Cross? Take a moment and have someone role-play taking the talk in a different direction (i.e. "So, how old do you believe the universe is"), while YOU bring it back to the message of the Cross. How does it encourage you to know that the Holy Spirit of God can do what you can't do - He can deal with people at the heart level to convict of sin and see the need for the Savior?
6. PRAY for God to give you an opportunity to share the message of the Cross with others this week. Consider praying for individuals who need to know and follow Jesus.
7. Share other prayer needs. Continue to pray for the Supreme Court decision that could overturn Roe v. Wade. Pray for our governing leaders and spiritual leaders. Pray for Ukraine.

⁵ John F. MacArthur Jr., 1 Corinthians, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 44.