

¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Dawkins & Ayaan Hirsi Ali

- “You are starting from a place of nothing. I am now starting of a place where there is something.”
- “I don’t mock it anymore. I’ve come down to my knees.”
- “There is so much wisdom.” “It’s not stupid. It’s in fact clever and wise.”
 - What we believe is folly to the world - STUPID.
- This is a tension we all carry - “I know this sounds crazy, but it has changed me forever.”

INVERSION 1: GOD WORKS DESPITE OUR WANDERING (1 Corinthians 1:19)

¹⁹ For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

- Remember - this is an argument being made to the church.
- Called to follow and revere Christ, thus unifying under the same banner, not to follow based on sophistry (wisdom) or preference.
 - “yeah, yeah, yeah, I know God is good, BUT...”
 - Have you read the newest John Mark Comer book?
 - Have you heard John Macarthur preach on worship?
 - Have you seen what Francis Chan says about the church being authentic?
 - Have you heard whoever preach on what’s going on in the Middle East?
- Voices are helpful, not speaking ill of these names, but we can get so caught up in what our preferred voices are saying that our worship drifts. Happened to them, happens to us.

Hyperlink:

God’s people are in a season of cold, rebellious indifference. Dead worship, political alliances for protection.

Isaiah 29:13–14 - ¹³And the Lord said: “Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, ¹⁴therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden.”

God - I am going to refine you and use you despite you.

Don’t miss the simple - fundamentals.

- Paul is reminding us - beware of the seduction of wisdom.
 - Are we wise in our own eyes? How’s our love for him? Are we so good at doing church that we’ve forgotten why we are here?
- We don’t deserve it.
 - God works through us by the power of his “stupid” message, but to us who know it and are being changed by it the power and weight of reality is undeniable.
 - We either get to enjoy and participate or let it all pass by.

INVERSION 2: GOD WORKS DESPITE OUR STRIVING (1 Corinthians 1:20-21)

²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

Think of the things humanity used to be sure of:

1. Earth as center of the universe - Galileo
2. Four bodily humors - blood, phlegm, black bile, yellow bile
3. Bad air caused disease - flowers not germs
4. Heavier objects fall faster than lighter objects
5. Smoking
6. Phones
7. AI? No matter where you fall, we adopted that quickly didn't we?

- Humans are incredible - God made us and said "very good."

- And yet, every time we have thought higher of ourselves than we ought, suffering follows. God makes foolish the wisdom of the world, ultimately.

Does this mean that intellectual strength and pursuit have no place in the faith? Certainly not! Milk/meat.

However, we can't rely on reason and wisdom alone to bring us to a place of understanding and relating to God. Pride.

God picked an absolutely wild way to save us. Let's talk about this cross...

David Garland - It was not yet the "old rugged cross" sentimentalized in hymns, embalmed in stained-glass windows, perched on marble altars, or fashioned into gold charms. Cicero (Roman statesman, lawyer, scholar, etc.)... decries the crucifixion of a Roman citizen, exclaiming, "The very word 'cross' should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears."

Not just gruesome and humiliating, but scandalous!

All we have to do is repent and believe? Even mass murderers can receive Christ on their deathbed, etc.

We can't contain it - it's not tidy, and that's kind of the point. It's not our message, not our rules.

Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Humility.

It pleases God to use an offensive message of radical, scandalous grace to save the undeserving, of which we are members.

If it were up to us, we would do it differently...

INVERSION 3: GOD WORKS DESPITE OUR EXPECTATIONS

²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

God does not need to work on your terms. And just because it's not on your terms doesn't mean he's not working.

Don't take this personally - it's how it's always been.

○ Consider his disciples.

○ Consider the Pharisees:

- Matthew 12:38 - ³⁸Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you."
- Matthew 16:1 - ¹And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven.
- Luke 11:16 - ¹⁶...others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven.
- John 2:18 - ¹⁸So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?"
 - * Stumbling block - the Messiah should be more like this and less like you. We won't believe.
 - * Isaiah 8:14-15 - ¹⁴And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁵And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken."
 - * Is Christ a sanctuary of a stumbling block to you? He can't forgive those people. He can't ask me to give that up. He can't say that there's a hell for those who reject him.
- Consider the Greeks. Here in Corinth. Athens 50 mi.
 - * Acts 17:21 - ²¹Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.
 - * Folly, stupid - doesn't stand to reason? Isn't how we'd take it or design it?

Don't leave your brain at the door, but lead with your heart and let your brain follow.

Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown - Christianity begins not with solving intellectual difficulties, but with satisfying the heart that longs for forgiveness.

The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. Is God foolish, and is God weak?

It sure seemed that way at Calvary.

David Garland - The gospel transforms the cross as a symbol of Roman terror and political domination into a symbol of God's love and power. It shows that the power of God's love is greater than human love of power.

The power of God's love is greater than human love of power. What power are you seeking, envying, striving for, is it making the cross and the gospel look small?

Henri Nouwen - Surrounded by so much power, it is very difficult to avoid surrendering to the temptation to seek power like everyone else. But the mystery of our ministry is that we are called to serve not with our power but with our powerlessness. It is through powerlessness that we can enter into solidarity with our fellow human beings, form a community with the weak, and thus reveal the healing, guiding, and sustaining mercy of God. We are called to speak to people not where they have it together but where they are aware of their pain, not where they are in control but where they are trembling and insecure, not where they are self-assured and assertive but where they dare to doubt and raise hard questions; in short, not where they live in the illusion of immortality but where they are ready to face their broken, mortal, and fragile humanity. As followers of Christ, we are sent into the world naked, vulnerable, and weak, and thus we can reach our fellow human beings in their pain and agony and reveal to them the power of God's love and empower them with the power of God's Spirit.