

Victory Church 8/8/20: The Wisdom of the Cross

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. (1 Cor 1:21)

I. THE WISDOM OF GOD

- A. The Wisdom of the World:** In God's ultimate wisdom, He allows the wisdom of man to operate and search for God. But the wisdom of man cannot find God or know Him. The fullness or totality of the wisdom of the world does not have the ability to know God, the things of God nor receive God's resources.
- B. Man is Made for God:** Inherent in the wisdom of the world is that mankind is made by God and for God. Thus, man is both defined by God and seeks for God. Even man's denial of God is a response to the existence of God.
- C. God Shuts Up all Men Under Condemnation:** Man cannot reach God thus they are stuck in their sins without a way out. The equality of man's foolishness is that they cannot know God by their own efforts which leads to a universal condemnation under God. In God's wisdom, He uses man's own wisdom to condemn them because of their own limitations. This universal condemnation is the backdrop for the Gospel.
- D. The Equality of All Men:** All humanity is equal before God in their rightful inheritance of sin and death. Because they cannot reach God, they deserve the rightful and just consequences of sin - eternal damnation. This is the original right of mankind born in Adamic sin.
- E. Worldly Wisdom - Enemies of the Cross:** The wisdom of the world influences our mind. The scripture calls it having our mind set on the flesh or a depraved mind. These are more than just those who cannot find God, they are actually called enemies of the Cross!

18For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, 19whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. (Phil 3:18-19)

6For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:6-8)

Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (Eph 2:3)

17So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; (Eph 4:17-18)

And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, (Col 1:21)

and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. (1 Tim 6:5)

Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith. (2 Tim 3:8)

15To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. 16They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed. (Titus 1:15-16)

II. THE POWER OF THE CROSS

- A. **God's Pleasure in the Foolishness of the Cross:** Opposed to the wisdom of the world, God's pleasure, more than just His plan, is for the preaching of the word of the Cross which is Christ crucified. This is the ONLY means by which man can come to know God and have relationship with Him. The foolishness of the word of the cross is the power of God to those who are being saved!

Foolishness: silliness, absurdity

...God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. (1 Cor 1:21)

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Cor 1:18)

but we preach Christ crucified... (1 Cor 1:23)

- B. God's Pleasure to Save:** God's desire is to save mankind and redeem him back to himself. It is His pleasure and desire to do so! God used the Cross to reconcile man back to Himself. His heart through the Cross is one that is begging us to come back to Him.

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

¹⁹namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Cor 5:19-20)

- C. The Liberation by the Cross:** The power of the Cross sets us free to overcome our fleshly desires. We join in the death of Christ through His Cross and are raised up in newness of life by the Spirit thus becoming a new creation in Christ. In doing so, the flesh and the world's passions are crucified to us and us to it. The Cross is an invitation to join Christ in His death that we might receive His life.

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Gal 5:24)

But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Gal 6:14)

- D. The Power of the Cross is Available to All:** Anyone who receives the foolishness of God's message can know Him! The only prerequisite to know God is to humble ourselves and believe in the word of the Cross. Humility rejects the wisdom of the world (man's own ideas and strength) and comes under the authority of the Cross and of Christ.

III. THE 3-FOLD PURPOSE OF THE WISDOM OF THE CROSS

- A. The Cross to Defeat the World System:** God has chosen to use the foolishness of the Cross and the message of the Cross to nullify the world system. The preaching of the Cross and Christ crucified is God's weapon of choice, His only weapon, to destroy the world system that is upheld by the wisdom of the world. The world system is the same Babylonian system that began at the Tower of Babel.

Nullify: To render idle (useless), unemployed, inactive, inoperative, to cause to cease, put an end to, do away with, annul, abolish, destroy

²⁷but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, ²⁸and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, (1 Cor 1:27-28)

the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8)

When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him. (Col 2:15)

- B. Saved by Grace:** In condemning the wisdom of the world, God magnifies His grace as the only means to come to know Him. This grace cannot be attained by works thus no one may boast.

so that no man may boast before God. (Col 1:29)

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph 2:8-9)

- C. Give Us What Christ Has:** The Cross was God's legal way of defeating the Devil, freely giving His grace unto salvation so that we can receive all that Christ has for as an inheritance.

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, (1 Cor 1:30)

IV. APPLICATION OF THE WORD OF THE CROSS

- A. The Confidence in the Cross:** We must know and remember that we carry the message of the Cross which is the only message that brings people to God! We will face opposition because it is a foolish message to the world, but we must not be ashamed or intimidated. We have the only answer that can meet the needs of humanity - the Cross! When we preach the Gospel, we are declaring that God is just and true and that His ways are right. It is our humility in agreeing that His wisdom is correct.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)

- B. The Stumbling Block:** The message of the Cross is both a stumbling block and foolishness to the worldly or carnal mind. The Cross is an intentional impediment for anyone looking to establish their own way righteousness. Even for believers, whenever we enter the realm of self or the flesh, we will run into the stumbling block of the Cross which will resist us so as to bring us back to God's ways.

stumbling block: offense, a trap, a snare, an impediment placed in the way

²²For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; ²³but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, (1 Cor 1:22-23)

- C. Nullifying the Power of the Cross:** Amazingly Paul tells us that the power of the Cross can be nullified or made void when we operate in the sphere of the wisdom of the world. Whenever we believe and operate with worldly wisdom, it actually invalidates the power of the Cross. This is not just unto salvation, this includes sanctification and the receiving of God's resources as well.

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void. (1 Cor 1:17)

⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

- D. The Folly of the Secular Narrative (Humanism):** The folly of humanism is that they are trying to create a utopian society of righteousness and justice apart from God according to their own ingenuity and strength. God will allow them to build according to their own wisdom but ironically, their own

wisdom nullifies the very One who can give them what they are looking to build! This same principle works with anything that is built by the wisdom of man!

- E. The Power of the Cross Flows Through Weakness:** 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 is Paul's example of how he lived. The key he mentions is that he focused on Christ and Him crucified and that he embraced weakness so that the power of God would flow in his life.

I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, (1 Cor 2:3)

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. (2 Cor 12:9)