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1 Corinthians 1:10-31
What the Cross Did for Me

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Shall we open our Bibles tonight to 1 Corinthians 1:10.

Paul had spent a year and a half in Corinth on his second missionary journey, but it was probably one of the lowest times in his life when he showed up here having ministered in Europe several places but had been beaten up and falsely imprisoned and chased out of town. And it just....things just weren't going well. He finally ended up on the road for hundreds of miles by himself, without his team, because they wanted to keep him safe. And so Paul went to Athens, where things didn't go too well on Mars Hill, and then now finds himself in Corinth where it was a very perverted, very corrupt city, and he was by himself.

You find Paul, for the first time, not speaking out at every corner. He started working as a tentmaker as a trade. He met some new friends; their names were Aquila and Priscilla. They would become a vital part of his ministry in the years to come. And Paul went to the synagogue, shared on the Sabbath, but he was really hesitant. When Silas and Timothy finally showed up (after months), Paul was very inspired to begin to be bold and far more forthright; kind of the old Paul that we would know. And yet he feared the result would be like everywhere else. And so every step he takes, he does it with trembling, not sure how it's going to go.

Violence and upheaval had followed him everywhere, and so it was here in Corinth that the Lord appeared to Paul and encouraged him of His protection, told him that the fields were white unto harvest, He had many people in that city that He wanted to reach and that no one would lay a hand on Paul; he'd be safe. And, really, Paul needed to hear that. So he ministered there for a year and a half before finally moving along.

Later on, on his third missionary journey in Ephesus – where he would spend three years planting the Ephesian church – Paul began to receive reports about the trouble that the church in Corinth was facing. He would write two letters of correction; you have them in your Bibles. He also wrote one further letter to them that we do not have, that is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:9. We spent a good deal – almost 90% of our study last week – looking at the background of this letter to the church and the church....if you weren't here, may I encourage you to go and listen to the study? I think it's good to have a foundation in the historical setting and background for any letter that you study so that you can receive God's Word in the way that they would in their position. But, needless to say, this church was planted in a very cosmopolitan church. It was a sailors' port. Anything goes and everything went. It is the place of tremendous idolatry. It had tremendous challenges. And it doesn't seem like it was long – just a few years – when Paul had left that he began to hear about the troubles that were taking place in the church as a whole: infighting, a real low level of agape love (if that exists), factions

and pride, the misuse of the gifts, weird ideas about the resurrection, about marriage, about food that you could eat that was maybe offered, at some point, to idols. But the big problem was the carnality of the city had gotten into the church. So the church was no longer affecting the world around them; the church was being affected by the community in which it was founded.

We looked at the first nine verses last week, and Paul starts tremendously hopeful. I think we mentioned to you last week if you knew all that was going on there and heard all that Paul had heard, you might have started the letter off with, "You've got to be kidding me!" But instead he writes with great hope. One of the things Paul was convinced of was that God had begun a good work here. He had seen it with his own eyes. He had been there with them for a year and a half. The saints were weak, certainly, but the remedy was always the same: God could make them strong. And so Paul's first nine verses are "so thankful for what the Lord has done with you, so thankful for seeing how He has poured out His grace that was evident in your lives. I saw it. It confirmed that you had come to know the Lord. He had given you riches and utterances, riches and knowledge. His gifts were in full supply. You were waiting for the Lord to come." Oh, there were problems, but Paul was sure that the Lord would overcome them, and the testimony of the Lord was clear in the lives of many.

So Paul rested in the fact that God would finish the work. But having said that, most of the rest of the letter is very corrective. It is, "Come on, man! Let's deal with this. This isn't representative of our relationship with the Lord and who He is."

So tonight Paul begins on one of those topics. In fact, I think for the next seven or eight, ten chapters, we're going to run into a lot of things that the church has always faced. It's good for us to be reminded. But tonight we begin with the idea of the division that had come already into this church. Rather than Jesus alone being worthy, people were taking sides and getting behind certain people that they favored; and rather than standing together with the Lord, they stood against each other. And Paul's answer is fairly simple: you want to get rid of division, you all should go run to Jesus because He'll make us one. We may have nothing else in common. We have Him in common, and He's the only One that can save us.

So we'll start in verse 10 tonight. If all goes well, we'll finish this chapter since it is kind of one topic. But Paul writes, in verse 10, "Now" (after all of God is faithful, you're going to be fine) "I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." One thing for sure: division in the church is a common and constant problem and one that the enemy has used to hinder the work of God in every generation. Division. The flesh dies slowly, but it can find life in division. James would write, in chapter 4:1-2, "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask."

There's always that flesh that wants to divide, and certainly Satan's grasp into the church is on the flesh of the saints that is left unchecked.

Paul heard the reports from Corinth; we can certainly experience them today. Squabbling, side-taking, camps formed, groups that alienate themselves from another. It all comes from the flesh. None of that is godly; it is certainly all the work of the old man. But somehow it gets the upper hand in the church. When in reality Paul writes here, in verse 10, we should stand together in Christ. He's the One that has brought us together. In Corinth, they had been given some wonderful Christian men as leaders, as pastors, several guys who had really taken the Word of God and taught it to the people. And yet their successes or their ministries had become really a place of division as people gained their following and began to stand with one against the other. It became almost a fodder for division. You know, it's natural, I guess, to draw lines in your life for the ministry of those that God has used. I'm sure there are people you like to listen to and then others that you really don't go out of your way to hear, and yet God has used them both. There are folks on the radio I will go out of my way just to listen to. There are other large-church pastors that if they come on, I go back to KLOS, back to the oldies. (Laughing) It doesn't mean that they aren't anointed. I'm just not gettin' anything. Right? God uses different people in our lives in different ways. God uses them all.

Well here the church was beginning to take sides. Paul had been their founding pastor. Apollos had come to take his place when Paul went home and then went on that third missionary journey. Peter had been around there as far as ministry was concerned. Paul would write, in chapter 4 of this book, "Look, I'm just using me and Apollos as an example to you that you shouldn't think of yourself so highly or take one side over the other because that's really not what this is all about." The church divided about who the best pastor was, who baptized them, who led them to the Lord, and Paul couldn't stand it, and he had heard about it from those who were actively involved in this church when they came to visit him in Ephesus.

Pastor Chuck had a saying years ago that I still remember. It's a little ditty, but it goes like this: to live above with saints we love will certainly be glory; but to live below with saints we know, that's another story. (Laughing) And that's true! It's going to be glorious in heaven.

True unity in the body of Christ is difficult to obtain, but we ought to reach for it by reaching for Christ. It is where the enemy has a field day in the church – where he discounts your testimony, where he steals your joy, where he misfocuses your direction and your attention, where he obscures your words, where he ruins the church. In John 17:11, there at the Kidron Valley as Jesus was heading for the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed out loud with His disciples, and He said to the Father, "I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world. I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them through Your name, all that You've given Me, may they be one as We are one." Ten verses or so later (John 17:21), same prayer, "That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." It was all this idea of unity and the common factor of faith in Jesus that is

supposed to give to us deliverance from and victory over the division that the flesh would like to create.

Now there've been some movements in the church under the title of ecumenicalism, which is ridiculous. Ecumenicalism says this: look, can we just find common ground and then lay aside everything we can't find common ground to? The problem is that sets aside doctrinal integrity which we can't compromise on. So it isn't love for the sake of love. Love without truth is tyranny. But if we love the Lord and then love His Word, then we can have a solution. That's what Paul says.

So he starts by saying to the church, "I plead with you, brethren." He calls them family. Look, first of all, we're a family. The first time that the word "brethren" is used in the Bible is back in Genesis 13:8 where Abraham speaks about himself and Lot as being brethren. It was right before they split up. "I beg you," the word "plead," "*parakaleo*." "I come alongside you and beg you for help. Look, in the name of Jesus our Lord, let's set this attitude and sinful practice aside and let us speak the same thing." It's interesting that more talk just engenders more strife. I think one of the ways you can start to get a handle on it is to just quit talking so much and realize what we have in common in Christ. We should agree on the essentials of the faith. No divisions among you. The word "schism" means tear, and that's what the word is used here. The word "division" means a tear, like in a fabric or a sharp difference among the church that leads to factions, and each group is looking for support, and pretty soon it's us against them and groups trying to organize to defend their position and all. And the body is just weakened. So let's get rid of the tear and instead let us be perfectly joined together. The word "*katartizo*" means to mend a net. It's the word that we read in Matthew 4:21 where the disciples were mending their nets. Rather than tears, let's heal, let's mend the nets. Let's have the same outlook and the same intent and the same action. It was Paul who wrote to the Philippians (1:27), "Let your conduct be that which is worthy of the gospel of Christ, whether I'm there or whether I'm not, that I might hear of your affairs, that you stand in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." Understand that division isn't caused by God. It really is caused by the enemy of God's people.

Now Paul didn't just bring up an issue; he told them where it came from. He said, in verse 11, "For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren," (second time) "by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ.'" We learn later on that Chloe was a woman whose family (or her family) were in Ephesus traveling when they came to Paul and began to share about the concern that was going on in this church in Corinth, part of the church which met in their home. And so they hosted the church. It would be a bold move, I think, that you would raise the ire of some. She probably got in some trouble with people. "You don't have to tell Paul! Thanks! He wrote us a letter or two or more." But they were concerned. "I'm of Paul," "I'm of Apollos," "I'm of Cephas." I guess you could say, "I'm a Baptist," "I'm a Pentecostal", "I'm a Calvary Chapel guy." "I only like the high school pastor. I don't like you, Pastor." It's near-sighted, it's carnal, it misses Jesus. I mean, look at these guys

that they named. Paul was a very educated intellectual. He was bold. There was probably no one like him in the first century. The founding father, the church planter. And yet, if you read what he writes, he teaches very simply and very directly; he doesn't beat around the bush much. He's kind of in-your-face. Apollos, from what we can gather from the Scriptures, was a very eloquent speaker. This guy could talk circles around most people. You would just be enraptured by how he could deliver a message. And he followed Paul into the pulpit, and many people came to know the Lord through his ministry. Cephas – that's Peter's Aramaic name (suggests that there were some Jewish converts, maybe from Jerusalem where Peter was held in high regard) – there was still a great contention between the Jerusalem born again saints and the outliers, if you will, amongst the Gentiles because of this whole issue of should I become a Jew first and the whole idea of grace. It took a while to have the early church, in Jerusalem especially, wrap their arms and their minds around grace without the works of becoming a Jew first, being circumcised, keeping the feast days and all. And so Cephas, Peter, was a fellow that might very well have been, at least in part, counted as those with the legalists from Jerusalem as opposed to their Gentile counterparts. And then there was a group that said this (they were the holiest of them), "We're just of Christ." But the way that it's presented, they were no more distinctive than all of the other wicked guys that took sides. This wasn't like, "Come on, let's all be of Christ." No, they went, "Well, you guys are like that. We're just for Jesus."

I think had this been left unchallenged, it wouldn't take long before there was a church of Cephas and a church of Paul and a church of Apollos and a hundred local churches born out of bitterness and all. Sounds fairly familiar. But Paul says, "Come on! Family! We have a job to do, we have a people to reach. We have a world to preach to. This has got to stop!" But he reveals their division and where he heard it. Chloe was bold, but her family was also in ministry, and they didn't like what they saw. So they talked to the teacher.

Paul goes on, and he said, verse 13, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" He ridicules them with three ridiculous questions. He tries to just, "Come on, shake yourself out of this." Right? And he takes them back to the cross. He focuses their attention on Jesus who saved them. Paul used to persecute them. His long-term example was a persecutor, a murderer, a guy beside himself with religious bigotry. It was only after he had come to the Lord that that had begun to change. Jesus had died for them. He alone. He's not divided. His name was what was used when they were baptized. His name was what was claimed when they were saved. Paul might very well have been at the meeting when Peter was put on trial for healing the lame man, and preaching Jesus boldly, he stood his ground there in chapter Acts 4. It's his name, the name of Jesus, and no other name, that by this name, this man stands whole.

There can always be room for different opinions and understandings unless they're doctrinal absolutes. But, look, the way you baptize someone, the type of music you listen to.....let's get right what we have right. J.P. Morgan wrote of this verse, "I've noticed the more spiritual a man becomes, the less denominational he is and the more

accommodating to his brethren on things of no consequence because he truly has the love of Christ ruling in his heart.” So Paul’s argument is, “Look, I hear there’s a big division. You’re taking sides. I didn’t die for you. Jesus died for you. There’s only one hope, then.”

He goes on, and he says, in verse 14, as a conclusion to this, “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.” It’s almost like Paul let out a sigh of relief and said, “If this is how you’re going to act, I am sure glad I wasn’t at those baptism services. Praise the Lord I only baptized a few of you.” I read that, and I think, “No wonder Jesus didn’t baptize people.” He made the disciples do it. “I got baptized by Jesus!” “Well, I got Paul,” and, “I got Matthew.” (Laughing) “Judas baptized me!” (Laughing) “I’m so glad I didn’t baptize many of you.”

Crispus was the ruler of the synagogue that got saved as Paul began to minister there; you can read about it in Acts 18. Gaius, according to Romans 16, was the homeowner with whom Paul stayed there in Corinth where he ministered. Acts 18 tells us he has a fuller name; you can look it up there. And Stephanas and his household were early converts and also hosts of another part of the fellowship in Corinth, according to chapter 16 of this letter. They were founding fathers. It was Stephanas, by the way, and two of his brothers who traveled from Corinth to Ephesus to again go to Paul and say, “Look, we got problems in Corinth,” and they told him about the struggles that Paul will bring up as we go through it.

So he’s had more than one church leader, more than one home fellowship director, more than one founding fathers, founding saints, who were concerned that the church wasn’t doing well. But Paul said, “Look, if you’re taking sides over this kind of stuff, I’m so glad I wasn’t your baptizer.” And I bring that up because I think it’s an important statement for anyone that wants to teach you you have to be baptized to be saved. If that was true, Paul would have baptized everyone because his interest was souls. In fact, that’s what he says in verse 17, “I wasn’t sent to baptize. I was sent to preach the good news of Jesus.” So, I think it’s a phenomenal statement that once and for all should lay to rest any idea that you have to be baptized to be saved. Baptism is an important act of obedience for a saint to outwardly identify with Jesus – with His death, with His resurrection, with their old life being put to bed by the blood of the Lamb and our new life being fueled by and empowered by the work of the Holy Spirit. If it was more, like I said, than that, Paul would have baptized everyone.

I was on a plane – maybe 15 years ago – we were flying to Europe, and there was a fellow sitting next to me, and we started to talk. And he told me that he believed unless you were baptized, you couldn’t be saved. So we went around and round. You know, there’re plenty of verses to look up. But he just wasn’t giving an inch. So I said to him, “You know, if this plane has a problem and is about to crash, you would have no

message for its passengers. I could still tell them with Jesus they could go to heaven. But you have no message unless you could somehow get some water and baptize 'em on the way down." (Laughing) That still didn't work with him, but I tried, you know. (Laughing)

When Jesus was traveling with the boys around the Galilee, He said a couple of times to them, "Let's go to the next town that I can preach there because that's why I've come. That's the reason I've come forth." To do what? To declare the way of salvation.

So baptism is something you should do. But not to be saved. To be obedient. And not some gain in it. It's just obedience brings God's blessing. It's an important part of the church, but it doesn't rely upon baptism to save you.

Notice Paul says here, in verse 17.....and, by the way, Paul, I think, was glad he hadn't been involved with these baptisms because, "Apollos prayed so much better than Paul." I can just see where this is headed. "I came to preach the gospel," but then he said, "not with wisdom of words." "I didn't come to win souls with clever arguments or confidences in well-structured arguments." He wasn't glib. Paul was smart. Apollos was glib. He was very good in speaking. He could take you in with words. But his confidence was still in Christ. So you use the gifts you're given, but, look, the simple presentation of the cross is what God uses to save people. Right? It is the cross. And anything else that you rely on makes the cross of no effect. "Let me just tell it to you in words that you'll understand." No. I'll read the Bible to you. God's Word blesses. It brings life.

Trusting a presentation rather than the powerful message is to say that I don't know the Word of God or the cross very well. Look at the Philippian jailer that Paul came across, there in Philippi (Acts 16:30-31). He came to him and said, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul didn't say, "Well, sit down, and let me take you through the Old Testament." He just said this, in the middle of the night, bleeding from his beating, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved and your household." Wow! You're so profound, Paul. No. It's the power of God's Word. And he preached it.

Look, you can spend your lifetime digging into the riches of God's Word for deep treasures for your life, and you should. But the lost only need to hear the simple gospel. It's all they need to hear.

Martha, when Jesus confronted her about who He was – that He was the resurrection and the life – said to her, "Martha, do you believe that?" "I'm the resurrection and the life. If you die, you're still going to live. If you believe in Me, you'll never die. Martha, do you believe that?" In John 11:27, she said, "Yes, Lord, I believe You're the Christ, the Son of God who's to come into the world." That's all it takes. Hear the gospel, respond to the gospel.

Peter stood before the Jerusalem Council, and he said to these wise guys who were gathered together to argue salvation by grace versus salvation by Jewish works, and he

said (Acts 15:6-11), "Look, we believe that it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that we will be saved, even as they now have been saved." It is the simplicity of the gospel that brings life. What did Jesus say to Nicodemus? "Unless you believe in Me, even if you die, you live." It's that simple. Right? God so loved the world, if you believe in Him, even if you perish.....(John 3:16).

So, "I'm sure glad I didn't baptize any of you guys, but I know you're saved because I told you clearly. Not with wisdom of words but with the power of God's Spirit how you can come to know the Lord."

Well, then, having gotten off on that tangent, Paul then turns that whole idea of stick with the message, stick with the simplicity of the message. And he says, in verse 18, "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." Look, church, the message of the cross is only foolishness if you're dying. It isn't if you see it for what it is. His answer to their so-called wisdom was to declare his confidence in Jesus' work. Jesus is the One who gave us life. You know, in Greek culture, where Rome was, the Greeks had come up with some of the wisest men in the areas of poetry or philosophy or arts or science or mathematics. I mean, you can make a list of them. Homer came from the Greek culture. So did Socrates and Plato and Aristotle and Euripides and Euclid and Archimedes. I mean, the world loves worldly wisdom, and they had plenty of it. But Paul wanted them to love the Lord in faith, and that would bring them together. It wouldn't be claiming one over the other. It would just be hanging on to Him. So the message, the "*logos*," the word of the cross and the message of His salvation, your faith in His work, are contrary to everything man teaches in regards to relationship with God. The cross is foolish only to the worldly wise. You tell them how you get to heaven, and they're gonna go, "That's all? That's it?" "That's it." "Well, you've lost your mind." "No. Actually I just came into it. I had lost it for many years." Foolish. The Greek word "*moria*." Silly. Clever, worldly people regard the message as nonsense.

When Paul was in Athens before he got here, he went up to Mars Hill (Acts 17), and he tried something different. He tried to use the cultural examples rather than the Bible. He started to quote their poets, started to point out to their unknown god. Nothing worked really. They called him a babbler. The wise guys up in Mars Hill, who lived to always learn a new thing and tell a new thing, called Paul a babbler. That's how they responded to his teaching as he talked about Jesus.

Your opinion of the cross will show you where you stand. Now think this through for a minute. In Paul's day, the cross carried the stigma of being the lowest way that the lowest died. It was the lowest way that the lowest died. You couldn't crucify a Roman. You couldn't crucify a common criminal. That was reserved for the most brutal, ugly and most hated in society. Greek gods were made in the image of man or the image of man's beasts, and they were always at war. The idea of a god becoming man was not strange to the Greeks at all; they had plenty of those stories. But one born in a reeking barn into poverty and meekly responding to insults and false accusations, and then

stumbling into some disgraceful death – unheard of. “That’s not the way our gods work. Our gods are victorious. Gods take care of business.”

Modern man has much the same response. You go to our colleges today – if you can get in ‘em – humanism. Faced with society’s problems, they turn to science and technology and sociology and psychology and government programs and the occult. It never occurs to them that God’s answer for the ills in society is salvation. It’s foolishness. And that the cross changes people and changed people change society, and the weak are made strong, and the crooked is made straight. It doesn’t occur to them. The cross is foolishness. To whom? To those who don’t want to hear it, who don’t want to follow, who don’t want to listen.

Note that being saved and perishing both speak of the condition of the soul. Either you’re lost and perishing or you’re believing and being saved. And Paul says that truth is supported in reality. Verse 19, “For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.’ Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” Now Paul quotes out of Isaiah 29. It was spoken by the LORD through the prophet at a time when the Assyrian army was rolling across the world, had wiped out the north, and had set Judah and Jerusalem in its sights. Isaiah urged the king to trust in God. Instead, he sent to Egypt and said, “We’d like to make a deal. If you could just send us some chariots, make an alliance, protect us.” And Isaiah came, and he denounced the king; the king supported him. Isaiah would say to the king, “Egypt will be like a broken reed. You try to lean on it, it’s going to break, it’s not going to support you.” Well it got bad enough to where the Assyrians surrounded the whole city of Jerusalem, and it looked like they were done. No one in, no one out. People were eating their children. It had gotten so bad. But one night God miraculously delivered the people by just the work of an angel (2 Kings 17). And Paul applies this story here to this area of salvation. Until you come to the end of yourself, lay aside the wisdom of the world – let’s make a deal with Egypt – until you lose the cleverness of yourself and see the danger that you are in, you will always look to the wrong place to be saved. “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise. I will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.” “Where is the wise?”

Paul asked three questions related to those being wise by the world’s standard. He says to them this, “Produce for me a scholar and a scribe and a skeptic.” What kind of answers are they providing to the culture and to the individual that will help their life? The fourth question spoke of God’s work and its effect on the wise of the world. “Has God not made foolish the wisdom of the world?” And the answer is, yes, He has. How?! Because He’s decided to save you by faith. The world wants to teach you He saves by goodness and performance. That is no more obvious than man’s religious pursuits where he represents God without even knowing God.

One thing about the religion of man that unifies them – and whether it’s feasts or fasts or pilgrimages or penances or sacrifices or suffering or rituals or rules – all of them apply to man’s work for God. God has made it all foolish because His way of life is faith and a free gift. Man says do; God says done. That’s the difference.

Just look at the presentation today of the scientific community – the false idea of evolution. Their models keep changing. When I was in 10th grade, I was taught that the world was 500 million years old. When I got to my fourth year in college, it was 12 billion years old. That's quite a big difference. I didn't think I'd aged that much. (Laughing) The theories continue to be revised as new methods and ideas are formed, but with all of their wisdom, no solution for your suffering, your sin, your future, your hope. The Word of God doesn't need any revisions. It's the ultimate revealed truth of God. It's not the relative truths of man. God uses ordinary people to confound the wise and the worldly wisdom they rely upon. God has brought the wisdom of the world to shame.

D.L. Moody was an uneducated shoe salesman. Not very bright, not very good at language, didn't speak very well. And yet he went and began to share the truth in his meetings, inviting the atheist and the agnostic and the free-thinkers to debate him openly and publicly. He shared from his heart. Thousands upon thousands of people were saved. He wasn't clever. He just believed the Scriptures, and he laid them out for the people, and his one verse that he loved – and it was his favorite verse – was Deuteronomy 32:31 which says this, "For their rock is not like our Rock." They're standing on the wrong strength. Their rock's not like our Rock. That was his driving heart.

Jeremiah would write this years earlier (Jeremiah 8:9), "The wisemen are ashamed, dismayed and taken. They have rejected the Word of the LORD. So what wisdom do they really have?" As long as man views the revealed Word of God's wisdom as foolishness, you're going to die. It'll be too late. God has taken the wisdom of the world and made it foolish.

Verse 21, "For since, in the wisdom of God," (or, if you will, by God's wisdom) "the world through" (their) "wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." God's wisdom of salvation, which brings us unity, by the way, eliminated the world's wisdom as the method through which man could find salvation. You're not going to get to heaven through your prideful pursuit, through your great accomplishments, to your kindness. The way you get to heaven is to hear of God's simple solution and come to Jesus at the cross and thank Him for dying in your place. The wise men of the world will not know God. A child can.

Did you know that the word for "agnostic" in Latin is the Latin word "*ignoramus*"? (Laughing) That doesn't sound too sophisticated. God makes no concession to the prideful wisdom of man when it comes to salvation. You know that fellow, Zophar, one of Job's counselors, spoke up, there in Job 11:7, and he said, "Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find the limits of the Almighty?" Or, really, "Can you understand God on your own?" And it was a great question because there's no way

you and I will ever find God starting from an earthly base. Study all you want. You're not going to find the Lord from here, headed towards Him. It just will not work. God must reach out to you and to me if we have any hope at all. He has to come and save us.

So, forget smart. Just listen for His voice and begin to follow what He has to say. Man is dead in sin, but God comes looking for him by the work of the Spirit and the preaching of the cross which, as Paul said, "That's all I'm interested in. The simple Word of God brings life, and, by the way church," and that's what he's going to end up with, "we're one here because of that." Forget Paul, forget Peter, forget Apollos. Jesus brought us in, and He gave us life.

Once you see yourself as poor in spirit and recognize your spiritual bankruptcy, then you'll be able to turn to the Lord and discover God's plan. Look at the religions of the world and how they developed their wisdom. Mormons are taught a doubtful character named Joseph Smith found some gold plates inscribed by Egyptian hieroglyphics. So an angel came to give him some magic glasses so he could translate those tablets into pseudo King James English and produce the Book of Mormon. Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. It's probably what it is. They are taught that one day they'd be gods which, by the way, was the oldest and first lie of the devil. "Eat and you can be like God" (Genesis 3:4). Look at the delusions the Christian Science community teaches, the untruths that the Jehovah Witnesses want you to believe, the distortions of liberal theology, the darkness of spiritism, the gross immorality of Hinduism, the fierceness of Islam, the rationale of humanism. Look, the world's religions stand exposed. That is not the wisdom of God. God's wisdom makes them all foolish. "Beware lest any man cheat you through the philosophy and empty deceits, according to the traditions of men, not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

Notice, in verse 22, that unbelief is at the root of man refusing God's plan. The Jews want a sign. Now all you have to do is.....we've been going through the gospel of Luke for quite some time on Sunday mornings. And I'll tell you what: for 3½ years, anybody wanted a sign, they could find one. The sick were healed, the demons were cast out, the lame could walk, even the dead were raised, Jesus walked on the water, fed the multitudes. Give us a sign! Man, you had plenty of signs. Really? Give us a sign? The Greeks, they just want human wisdom because that's all they know – the wisdom of man.

And Paul says, in verse 23, "Our message is Jesus has been crucified. It stumbles the Jews, it brings the Greeks to conclude that we're foolish. But as the message that we preach – Christ crucified – for the Jews, a scandal." The word is "*skandalon*." It means embarrassment. It outraged them that a criminal could be called the Messiah, one so unwilling to fit into society and do their bidding. The Greeks saw it as senseless. "How can He be a God? He's dead! Some God. He was weak and killed."

But Paul goes on, and he says, in verse 24, "but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks," (whatever background you have) "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of

God.” You hear the message preached, it transforms you. The word “power” is “*dunamis*.” The changed heart of the Roman centurion standing by the cross (Mark 15:39), “Surely this was the Son of God.” The sun gets darkened, the temple veil tears, the earth quakes, the rocks tear, countless graves are opened, and the Roman centurion comes to his senses. “He’s the One.”

The world in which we live has little use for Jesus. U.S. classrooms – the Bible is pretty much banned. Educators love Marx and Machiavelli and Dewey and Darwin. Jesus not so much. Yet the wisdom that comes from Jesus, found in His Word at the cross, will give you eternal life.

So, look, as a church don’t get too put off by the wisdom of the world. They don’t know where they’re going, and they don’t know what it is to know the Lord. But the way you can communicate to them is stick with the preaching of the gospel. Believe it with all your heart. Share it with all your might.

God’s ways stand alone. Look at verse 25, “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” God at His worst is way above us. Paul says man cannot see God in his own wisdom, and yet what they perceive as foolishness and weakness is really wiser than everything they know.

So here’s the illustration, verse 26, “For you see your calling, brethren,” (now he goes back to this division issue) “that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.” I think the best explanation of God’s goodness is just to come to church and look around who He’s saved. Look around here. (Laughing) Amazing. Amazing. We certainly can’t take credit for being here, can we? His method of salvation eliminates the pride of man, for He’s paid the price, He just caused us to trust Him. His glory is our glory. His glory is our glory. Had He chosen the wise of the world, the powerful, the noble, we might have honored them and recognized their strength, but He instead chooses those things that can’t laud themselves. He chooses the weak, the foolish, the base, the despised and so we can say, “Well, only the Lord could do that.” Why? Because He doesn’t share His glory with anyone. But it is His way.

Remember how the Sanhedrin viewed Peter and John, there in Acts 4:13, when they saw their boldness and “they perceived that they were” – I love the line – “untrained and uneducated men.” The Sanhedrin said, “These are a bunch of dummies, but they’ve been with Jesus.” Those are the folks that God saves.

So what are you doing taking sides? Notice verse 26 says “not many.” So there are some rich and wise and, praise the Lord, they were delivered from all of those things. I think it was the Countess of Huntingdon who wrote, “I thank God for the ‘m’ else it would

have read 'not any.' ” When Pharaoh had decided to exterminate the Jews by killing all the male children that were born, his Hebrew captives were in no position to fight back. But God takes a defiant couple and a newborn baby who, according to Exodus 2, seemed to cry on cue, and was able to become their emancipator.

Verse 28, the word “base” means without family. It’s an interesting word. It literally means he has no powerful lineage. The word “despised” is a Greek word that means to value as nothing, to come up with a big zero, without fame, without fortune. The things which are not, the non-entities, those things that as if they didn’t exist, who the world sees that way, those are the ones Jesus will use. “Father, thank You that You’ve hidden these things from the wise and from the prudent, but you’ve revealed them to babes” (Matthew 11:25).

I think the Old Testament is full of examples of who and what God will use to bring deliverance – things that are despised, ill fit in the society. He uses left-handers. I know it’s not a big deal today, but it was a curse in those days. A feeble woman. A pitcher and a trumpet. An ox goad. David with a sling and a stone. A little maid to teach mighty Naaman a thing or two. A dose of insomnia to overthrow Haman. Raindrops to slow down Sisera’s murderous charge. Make a list. God uses the weak to confound the wise. To Him be the glory. Gideon had 32,000 men to fight the Midianites, and God said, “Way too many.” Through a series of events – you probably have read the story – He whittles the army down to 300, and then he says, “We can do it with 300, but I’ll break you into three groups of 100.” “No, don’t break us up!” But by the time he had gotten there, no one could have been too confident. And yet, in the very next battle, Joshua, filled with self confidence, rather than learning the lesson, sends a handful of men to Ai because it’s a small city, “We can take care of them,” and he lost sight of the fact that it was the LORD who gave him strength, not his army. And he had to learn the lesson again. Peter gloried in his own flesh, telling the Lord he would never forsake Him. Boy what a lesson he learned in the few hours that followed. Same thing with salvation. Same thing in our relationships to each other in the church. We’re to focus on Him not find ourselves divided from one another in our desire to serve Him.

Verse 30, “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption – that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.’ ” We derive all we are and have from Jesus. It is all about Him and because of Him. Look, a man who is born blind has no idea what a sunset looks like. Neither does a person that’s not saved know anything about God. Blinded by his sin. You come to Jesus, your eyes are opened, you begin to see. He becomes your wisdom, transforms your mind from the ways of the world to the ways of the Lord. He becomes your righteousness. The word “righteousness” – the basic definition – that which pleases God. Your life becomes pleasing in His sight. You’re holy, you’re set apart, you’re declared legally not guilty and given credit for His faithfulness. It’s the way God works. Sanctification – set apart as holy for His use. Redemption – to one day find these bodies transferred, changed, purchased with a price. The Bible says God has given you His Holy Spirit as a down payment. The word

“down payment,” “*arabon*,” translation = engagement ring. Let’s put a ring on it. I heard a song about that. So the grace of God to deliver us from the penalty of sin to make us righteous, from the power of sin to sanctify us, from the presence of sin to one day redeem us.

So Paul says, in verse 31, instead of taking sides, “Look, if you guys are going to rejoice, let’s sing His praises, let’s honor Him.” This is a summary verse. The quote, there in verse 31, is a portion of Jeremiah 9:23-24 which says this, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the LORD.” Know that. And quit gettin’ on each other’s nerves. Quit being a Paul and an Apollos and a Cephas. Go back to your Bibles, and learn to glory only in the Lord. You focus on Him, the division will go away, and you’ll be a lot happier as a result. And so the world will get to see who He is, in fact. Yeah?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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