



Pastor Hugh Whitfield Jan. 29, 2025 Pearl Baptist Church

Why the Cross? (Part 2)

1 Cor. 1:18-25

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¹⁸ For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to us who are being saved. ¹⁹ For it is written,

I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and I will set aside the intelligence of the intelligent.

²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the debater of this age? Hasn't God made the world's wisdom foolish? ²¹ For since, in God's wisdom, the world did not know God through wisdom, God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of what is preached. ²² For the Jews ask for signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. ²⁴ Yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, ²⁵ because God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

- A. We're going through the book of 1 Corinthians, and we're all here to get CrossFit.

And we have already learned that the Church of Corinth was a mess. And the only way Paul was going to get them to clean up their mess was to get them TO THE CROSS.

- B. Whatever issue you are facing in your church life, personal life, work life, school life, the answer is found at the cross.

And last week, we began answering the question:

"Why the cross?"

Why is the apostle Paul so passionate about the cross?

And why should we as a church build our ministry on the cross?

1. The Cross is about POWER

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

- A. When it come to you and having a personal relationship with God, there is nothing more powerful than the cross of Jesus.

At the cross, you receive:

- Pardon
- Peace
- Promise
- Jesus' Presence

- B. In other words, God does a supernatural, miraculous work for us and in us through the cross of Jesus.

And the people outside the Church of Corinth (the Greeks) thought the idea of God dying on a cross was flat out foolish (what a ridiculous thought) – literally “moronic.” (Who would even come up with such an idiotic idea?)

The Greek gods don't become human and die.

They rule over the earth.

So, for anyone to invent salvation through a dead Messiah (or dead god) has got to be wacko!

- C. So Paul proves the Greeks wrong, by giving them an example in history when God supernaturally defeated the Assyrians.

Paul references and paraphrases Is. 29:14

¹⁹ For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will set aside the intelligence of the intelligent.

- D. That statement was made by God when Israel was being threatened by the Assyrians, and all of Israel's politicians came together to figure out a plan to defeat Assyria.

And their plan was to make Egypt their ally.

Together, Israel & Egypt would defeat the Assyrians.

And they thought they had a smart plan.

And in fact, they even thought they could hide their plan from God – knowing God warned them not to partner with Egypt.

- E. And God said, your plan isn't a smart plan at all. In fact, I'll show you a SMARTER plan.

And to make a long story short, here's God's plan: Assyria surrounded the city of Jerusalem, and God sent 1 angel who in one night struck down 185,000 Assyrian soldiers, and Israel got the victory, not politically, miraculously.

- F. What's the point of that story?

You may think your way to God is smart.

In fact, you may think your way to God is smarter than anyone's way.

But God has outsmarted all the so-called smart people in this world. And just as God delivered Israel from their enemy supernaturally, so God delivers people from their sins and Hell SUPERNATURALLY.

And that supernatural way is the cross.

There's POWER through the cross.

Which is why we must get people to the cross.

There's a 2nd reason for the cross:

2. The Cross Addresses a PROBLEM

²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the debater of this age? Hasn't God made the world's wisdom foolish?

Now, Paul asks the Corinthians 4 rhetorical questions. And the first 3 have to do with those who thought they were so smart and had the answers about life and the afterlife.

A. Wiseman

- a) How many of you are aware that the kings of old would count on wise guys to give them wise counsel?

In Egypt – these wise guys were known as soothsayers, magicians, and mediums.

Ex. Magicians – Jannes & Jambres (2 Tim. 3:8)

Opposed Moses & Aaron.

Turned their staff into snakes.

Turned the Nile River into blood.

Brought frogs on the land.

Ex. 8:9-10

“When shall I entreat for you...that the frogs be destroyed....” Pharaoh said, “Tomorrow” – One more night with the frogs.

But then there was the plague of gnats:

Ex. 8:18

The magicians tried with their secret arts to bring forth gnats, but they could not; so there were gnats on man and beast. ¹⁹ Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.”

- b) In Babylon – wise guys were known as magicians and conjurers (or astrologers) who gave counsel to kings by “reading” the stars.
- c) And in fact, God raised up Daniel in Babylon to become one of the king's wisemen. But he didn't look to the stars for answers. He looked to God for answers.

And guess how God spoke to Daniel? Through visions & dreams.

And Daniel's saved the lives of all the other so-called “wisemen.”

And proved they are not so wise as people thought.

- d) In fact, Jeremiah the prophet said this about the wisemen:

Jer. 8:9

The wise will be put to shame;
they will be dismayed and snared.
They have rejected the word of the Lord,
so what wisdom do they really have?

- e) When Paul asks, "Where is the wise man," he is not asking about people who are wise to the ways of God. He's about people who are labeled wise, but their wisdom is not from Heaven. It's from Hell.

In fact, I think the wise men Paul's talking about here are of the Occult.

And believe me, Satan is fueling many beliefs and practices in our country today.

- f) DEI (diversity, equity, & inclusion) training
Transgenderism (including Gender Affirmation Surgery)
LGBTQ rights & practices
Drag Queens & cross dressing
White privilege
Systemic racism
Accusation of Xenophobia & Gynophobia (foreigners & women)
Deconstructionism
Refers to the process of critically examining and questioning the core beliefs, doctrines, and practices of Christianity, often leading to a reevaluation or even rejection of certain aspects of the faith
– Church is just trying to control us.

Do you know what all those agendas really are?
Doctrines of Demons

1 Tim. 4:1
But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,

- g) And their claim to fame is they are making the world a better and safer place.

Right!

B. Religious Man

- a) Paul asks, "Where is the scribe?"
Scribes were lawyers. They knew the OT law, which include the Mosaic Law (10 Commandments & all the rules given to Moses by God). And they knew the oral law, which were the rules to follow so you would not break the Mosaic Law.

The religious leaders were strict with their rules.

Ex. Sabbath Law

Ex. 20 – Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.

Oral Law – had 39 categories to follow for Sabbath rest.

- No kindling a fire or use of electricity on the Sabbath – so no matches, lightbulbs, no electricity
- No work on the Sabbath – and that includes any creative energy – so no use of computers, ipads, cell phones, working in your garden, or exerting energy.
(That even includes tearing toilet tissue! You can pre-tear before the sabbath)
- No traveling more than $\frac{3}{4}$ mile on the Sabbath

- b) The religious leaders claim to fame was they were given restriction after restriction so you can be acceptable to God.

But instead of making them acceptable, it was making them miserable.

C. Philosophical Man

- a) The Greeks were known for their debaters who would present their philosophical views about man, this world, gods, the afterlife, and so much more.

Paul debated these philosophers in Athens, just down the road from Corinth.

- (1) Epicureans: atheists, no life after death.
So enjoy life for tomorrow we die; live for the experience.

- (2) Stoics: followers of Zeno; pantheists; their motto="endure life." Just take whatever comes; "Grin and bear it."

- b) Here are the philosophies of this world in a nutshell:

Atheism = No god

Agnosticism = No Knowledge of God

Pantheism = all are god

Panentheism = god is in all things

Theism = belief in God

Polytheism = many gods

Monotheism = only one God.

- c) What's the claim to fame of philosophers?

We have the answer to the questions you're asking?

Where did I come from?

Why am I here?

Where am I going?

What about God?

And once again, many people pick up what they are putting down, because they think what they hear makes sense.

D. And Paul asks a 4th question:

Hasn't God made the world's wisdom foolish?

In other words, just listen to all these guys.

Listen to the wisemen with all their demonic doctrines, listen to the scribes with all their rules & restrictions, listen to the philosophers who say there's no god and no afterlife.

E. And here's the most concerning part of them all.

None of these guys are smart enough to give us the answers about life, the afterlife, and God.

In fact, look listen what Paul said:

1 Cor. 1:21 (NAS)

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God,

F. In other words, all those smart people that are out to convince you that they have the answers about life, the afterlife, and God Himself (some even saying, there isn't a god), none of their smart beliefs have led 1 person to God.

Why is that? Because there is only one Who can lead you to God. And His name is Jesus.

G. Do you know how many religions there are in this world? Some 4,200 religions.

Top 4 are:

Christianity

Islam

Hinduism

Buddhism

How do you know which one is true?

They can't all be true?

H. Which one is true?

Let me give you an answer, by giving you this 3rd thought:

3. The Cross is about PREACHING

²¹ For since, in God's wisdom, the world did not know God through wisdom, God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of what is preached. ²² For the Jews ask for signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles.

A. It all comes down to what's being preached.

And every religion is preaching something.

But not every religion is preaching the truth.

Of the 4,200 different religions in our world, 4,199 are preaching lies.

- B. And the only who is preaching the truth is the One who is preaching the Cross.

That is: You have a sin disease

You can't get rid of your sin disease.

And your sin disease keeps you from
God/Heaven.

But God loves you so much, He came personally to deliver you. He was born miraculously of a virgin, given the name JESUS.

And never once did Jesus sin

(He didn't have a sin disease).

And He preached that He was the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to God but through Him.

- And the people hated Him and His message.
- And the Jews & Romans nailed Jesus to a cross.
- And God put upon Him all your sins – and Jesus became sin for us.
- And Jesus paid the penalty for your sins with His blood, and God accepted that as full payment for you and me.

And anyone who puts their trust in Jesus as their personal Savior & Lord, God says all your sins are forgiven. Welcome to the family of God.

And you don't just give Jesus your life. He gives you His.

And for the rest of your life, Jesus lives His life in you and through you.

That's the Gospel.

- C. And all the "smart" people of this world say that's ridiculous; that's foolishness; totally absurd to believe in the gospel.

And in fact, Paul said v. 22

- (1) Jews want signs (miracles) – and God's given it to them.

What's Jesus greatest miracle?

Jesus died on the cross.

Buried in a tomb.

But 3 days later, He arose.

Seen by over 500 people at one time.

- (2) Gentiles want wisdom.

But no man can have wisdom about God unless God reveals it.

And no man can have wisdom to live in this world, unless He has the mind of Christ.

- D. V. 24 – And Jews and Gentiles want nothing to do with Jesus.

And can I tell you why? **PRIDE**

They think they know more than God!!
And that's why all the "smarties" can't/won't handle Jesus.

ILL. Skeptic said, "How can the blood of Jesus wash away all our sins?"

Christian: "How can water quench your thirst?"

Skeptic: I don't know. I just know it does.

Christian: Neither do I know how the blood of Jesus washes away all our sin, but I know it does."

And that brings me to this final thought:

4. The Cross is about POINTING

²⁴ Yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, ²⁵ because God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

- A. Why the cross? Because it POINTS to the only ONE who can forgive us and give us life everlasting.

And to all who are "called" – and accepting Jesus as your Savior and Lord is a calling.

And I believe God's calling all to be saved.

And **all who receive God's call GET IT.**

- B. GET WHAT?

Get Jesus is the POWER of God

Power to:

- Pardon
- Peace
- Promise
- Jesus' Presence

Get Jesus is the WISDOM of God.

I don't know anything about God, but what I do know I get from Jesus.

And here's what I also get: v. 25

If God were to have any foolishness or weakness (which He doesn't), it's wiser and stronger than whatever wisdom & strength man has.

It's wiser and strong than the smartest of men.

- C. And the only way you can get that is by looking at the cross.

And the cross will forever point you to the ONLY one who can save you from your sins and give you more life than you have ever had.

Conclusion:

The world and it's Smart people don't have the answers for you about life, about death, about afterlife, and even about God.

There's only ONE who has those answers:

And His name is Jesus.

And He want you to save you tonight.

And deliver you from your sin disease and from your pride and give you what you really long for – a life full of God and His joy.

And you can have that right now!