

1 Corinthians 1:18

by Carl Armerding

The preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to those who are being saved, and God chooses the weak and foolish to confound the wise and mighty.

Duration: 37:54

Scripture: Matthew 11:25

Topics: "Cross of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the transformative power of the gospel of God's grace. He shares a personal story of a young man who was once deeply involved in sin but was changed by the gospel and became a missionary. The speaker emphasizes the importance of believing and taking God at His word. He also highlights that the gospel is not limited to the wise, mighty, or noble, but is available to all who believe.

Transcript

Now, for our heart's blessing this morning, our brother Dr. Carl Armadale from Dallas. Carl Armadale. For our meditation this morning, I'm asking you to turn to 1 Corinthians, chapter 1. 1 Corinthians, chapter 1, and beginning at verse 18, For the preaching, or the word, of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.

But unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God.

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.

But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. And God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty. And these things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are.

That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto you wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. That according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Yesterday morning in looking at the eleventh chapter of Matthew, we noted that our Lord on that occasion turned to his Father and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. In the light of that text, I've been interested in reading through the word of God to see how simple and direct God's statements are.

You don't have to guess at the meaning of so many of the great texts of the Bible. Who has ever been baffled by looking at John 3, 16? You quote this verse to somebody and it's just as plain as day, there it is. That God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoso believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The person looks at that text in any language that you're pleased to quote it, and it comes to you with all of its simplicity, directness, and power. But in this letter to the Corinthians, Paul is dealing with people who are accustomed to philosophical dissertations. They were noted for this very thing, as you read here in this 22nd verse of our chapter.

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks, and of course these Corinthians were Greeks, they seek after wisdom. You notice this is just what characterized them as a people. So when the Apostle Paul came along there with the gospel, this sounded like a lot of nonsense to them.

But you know as he writes this letter here, beginning at verse 18, where we began reading this morning, he uses a word for preaching there. I don't think it's translated preaching anywhere else in the New Testament. But it's the very Greek word from which we get our word logic.

It's the Greek word logos from which we get the word logic. And so this morning I would just like to use this as sort of a basis. Instead of saying the preaching, or as Mr. Darby translates it, the word of the cross, let's think of it as the logic of the cross.

The logic of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. And you can see how that would be. You come to them and you present to them a Savior who never did a thing wrong, who is absolutely sinless and perfect.

And yet he is condemned to die upon a cross. Unless you should think that this is altogether just a mistake on the part of men. Or as St. Peter puts it, I want that through ignorance you did it, as did also your fathers.

But he also reminds them that this was all in the plan of God. That this was God's plan for saving men. To send his beloved Son, absolutely perfect, holy, spotless, sinless, to die in the place of sinful men.

That sounds like a lot of nonsense to the worldly wise. And this is why as the apostle says here in this 18th verse, the logic, or the word of the cross, is to them that perish foolishness. But you know when you take something like this and it does something to you, you are convinced immediately of its power.

And those of us who have known the Lord Jesus for a few years, we're here to say whatever it is, I can't explain it, but it certainly did something not only to me, but for me. Take for instance those who have lived a life of terrible sin, who plunged down deep into it. Then one day the gospel of God's grace reached their hearts and transformed them.

I was just talking to a young fellow, he came to our mission, the Central American mission with which I am connected in Dallas. He and his dear wife applied for membership in the mission to work in Mexico. And each one who makes application in this way has not only to give us evidence of the fact that they have been born again, that they have some reason for believing that God has called them to this work of spreading the gospel in Central America, but they have to give us an autobiography.

That is, they have to tell us a little story of their life. And when I read this man's autobiography, Bob Hutchins, telling me that as a young boy of 17, mind you a teenager right in the middle of his teenage years, 17, he was already a drunkard, an adult fiend on marijuana and even stronger than this, went on to heroin, LSD, what have you, had it all. Plunged down deep into everything and yet a brilliant mind.

At 20 years of age he owned his own business and it was prosperous. Indeed it was the very prosperity of his business, it was his ruination morally. And his wife was one with him in it.

She was 16 and he was 17 when they got married. And here they were living it up. And then the gospel of God's grace got a hold of her.

And from that moment on, of course, she was greatly concerned about her husband, Bob. When she first presented the gospel to him, he used exactly the language we've been using here this morning when he said, That's nothing but nonsense. Don't let anybody fool you with that rock.

But you know, as he watched her life, she went off the drugs, she went off the drinks, and she appeared to be much happier than she ever was when she used all of these things. He was convinced. He said, There must be something to this.

And sure enough, he tried it for himself. He came to the Lord Jesus. And I don't know when I've ever seen a more radiant soul than Bob Hutchins and his wife.

Both of them soundly converted. A living proof of the fact that that which is foolishness to men is to us who are saved, it's the power of God. You know, dear friends, this is one of those incontrovertible things.

This is one of those things against which no man can argue. I remember years ago, the late Dr. Ironside telling a story of how he was preaching in an open-air meeting in, I think it was either San Francisco or Oakland, one of the two cities in the Bay Area. And in his audience in that open-air meeting was an atheist who was heckling him.

And finally, Dr. Ironside stopped. He said, Sir, he said, I challenge you to bring to this meeting next Sunday afternoon one person who has been saved from a life of drunkenness and debauchery through your atheism, and I'll bring you ten people whom God has saved from just that kind of a life through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. He said, Do you accept the challenge? The atheist simply turned tail and went.

He had no answer for that. They don't have any. And so however clever their arguments may be, how convincing it may sound sometimes, you've got the living proof before you, perhaps in your own case, or

perhaps in the case of some others.

Thank God for those of us who never knew what it meant to get right down into the depths of things. There's a hymn written which I can't truly sing. All my life was wrecked through sin and strife.

Mine wasn't. And yet I was a sinner lost in my sins. But I couldn't say that my life was wrecked through sin and strife because I was born and brought up in a Christian home.

My dear parents lived Christ before me, and they preserved me from many of the things that others have plunged into and for which they regret and will live to regret the rest of their days. Thank God I was preserved from all of that. In fact, one of the reasons was that as a young lad, I wasn't able to enter into these things because of sickness and so on.

In fact, nobody expected me to live beyond my twenties. But God in his marvelous grace reached down and showed me that underneath this exterior there was a heart that was just as wicked as any other, for as in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man. And I needed to be saved just like that drunkard down in the Pacific Garden Mission or wherever he is.

But these are demonstrations of the power of God. Again, I come back to this, dear friends, that Paul was here writing to a people who had had the benefit of these great schools of philosophy to which we referred yesterday morning. To them, the word Epicurus or Epicureanism, these were by words.

They knew them. They knew how to explain the philosophy of Epicurus and the philosophy of the Stoics of which you read in the book of the Acts. Those of us who read that today, we need a dictionary to tell us just what does it mean by the Epicureans and the Stoics.

But they didn't need any dictionary. You mentioned the name of Socrates to them and Aristotle and Plato. They knew exactly what these men taught.

They knew their philosophies. And some of these philosophies are still being taught in the schools of today. The philosophy of Aristotle has had a vogue for many, many years.

And a thoroughgoing theologian these days doesn't consider himself fully prepared unless he's had a few courses in philosophy. And I suppose some of you who are still going to school, perhaps in college, taking a course in philosophy, you'll be introduced as I was introduced to these things in college when they began by presenting certain problems to us. The problem of evil.

How do you reason this out? The problem of God. I remember when the professor announced that we're going to speak tomorrow morning about the problem of God. I went to him and I said, Sir, God's no problem to me.

I'm sure I must be to him. But he's no problem to me. You see, God has made foolish the wisdom of this world.

See, a very poignant history that we were talking about yesterday morning. Our blessed Lord Jesus came into the world and thanked his Father that he had hid these things in the wise and prudent and had revealed them unto me. Even so.

And then used that simple language that we were talking about yesterday when he said, Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. And so the apostle here goes down the list. In

this chapter here, as we've already said, the Jews seek after a sign.

That's what characterized them. They had to have signs. The Greeks seek after wisdom.

Wisdom. But he says in verse 23, But we preach Christ's truth, and unto the Greeks foolishness. How was Christ's stumbling? Ignoring the fact altogether that he was to be born of a virgin, that he was to be born in the humble little village of Bethlehem.

And as we'll be hearing in the readings on... And all three of these things converging over one blessed person at one particular time, in one particular place, giving us incontrovertible proof that this is he of whom the scripture speaks. And yet, the Jew not seeing in Christ the fulfillment of those Old Testament scriptures, the blessed Lord who was born a helpless babe in Bethlehem's manger, was a stumbling block to him. And of course to the Greeks who looked for some great worldly wise person to see an infant lying in his mother's arms, this to him was utter foolishness.

But the apostle says here, verse 24, But unto them which are called... Yes, God calls. And how wonderful it is to hear his voice when he calls. But to them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Two wonderful things brought together. Never divorced in the person of our Lord Jesus. Sometimes we see power in the hands of a man these days, but not much wisdom.

And again we see a man who perhaps is noted for his wisdom, but not much power. But here is a wonderful combination in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, who not only has all power, indeed it was on the basis of this that he gave what we generally call the Great Commission. When he says, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

So ye therefore make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and preaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Christ the power of God and Christ the wisdom of God.

The one who offers us wisdom. He says, Come unto me and you can buy it without money and without price. Answering the question of the 25th chapter of the book of Job, where is the place of wisdom to be found? It's found in a person, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But now sometimes the thing that stumbles people is the kind of people that God saves. And this is the question that the Apostle Paul takes up next here. You'll notice in verse 26, oh I mustn't pass over verse 25, because it has some startling statements in it, when it talks about the foolishness of God and the weakness of God.

You know, these are expressions taken out of context which sound most irreverent if not sacrilegious to use them of God. But here the Holy Spirit is giving these words to the Apostle Paul. And of course, what we see in this verse is that what looks like foolishness to you and me is wiser than men.

And what looks like weakness, and our Lord was crucified through weakness, as we learn elsewhere in this same epistle. Crucified through weakness. Look at Him hanging upon the cross between two thieves.

Absolutely helpless. Nailed to a cross. But the weakness of God is stronger than men.

And we've got the evidence. Now, He wants the living proof of it. And this is what we're going to take up now for the next few minutes of our hour this morning.

The living proof. You know, you can argue about the gospel, how wonderful it all is. But now we're going to look at some of the results.

And this, the Apostle brings forward here in the 26th verse, when he says, You see your calling, brethren. And what does he say? Oh, he's almost talking about this conference at Britain. There are not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.

I understand there was a lady of noble birth in the old country who thanked God for the letter M. She was thankful it didn't say not any noble. Because she was of noble birth. But she also had to take up a place as a poor, lost, ruined sinner.

But you notice this is not many. There are a few. Yes, we read about them in the book of the Acts.

And we see some of them in high places these days. We like to think, we like to think that our present president is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. At least I would take that charitable view in spite of some things that have been said against him, the Lord Jesus.

Although his close personal friend, Billy Graham, has never affirmed this to me. But I noticed that Billy Graham did come out boldly and say that he believed he'd meet General Eisenhower in heaven. So these are things which give us courage.

And the fact that the man would plan a worship service in a thing to do in a day like this, we thank God for that. God for every evidence of the fear of God which we see among those who are in high places today. But you know the most of us are in this same category of which we read here, not many noble, not many wise.

And it was God who did the choosing. He didn't have these things pushed off on him. The Lord did the choosing.

That's what the apostle talks about here in verse 27. He says, God has chosen me. Gives you a reason for choosing.

And incidentally I might just point out that the word here translated chosen is basically the same word that you have elsewhere in the Bible, elect. You know this is a word that some people are afraid of. I remember when I was a teacher at the Moody Bible Institute some years ago.

I had in my class a young man who came up to me after one of the lectures and he said, Sir, if I have to listen to any more of this election stuff, I'm not coming back to this class. I looked at him for a moment. I said, Just a moment, please.

I said, Is election in the Bible or is it not? Well, he says, I have to admit it's in the Bible. Well, I said, Then I strongly object to you referring to it as stuff. I said, To me this is one of the most precious doctrines in the book.

And I said, Oh, I hope God will forgive you for referring to it in this disrespectful way as this election stuff. Well, he stood there rebuked. I said, You don't like the doctrine of election? He said, No.

I said, Why don't you like it? Well, he said, It doesn't leave anything for me to do. Well, I said, That may be a moot question. As far as election is concerned, no, it doesn't.

But I said, Are you married? He said, Yes. What's that got to do with election? I said, You say you are married? He said, Yes. I said, Who proposed, you or your wife? He said, I'll have you understand I was not married in leap year.

I said, Well now, you mean by that that you did the choosing? Yes, you did the choosing. I said, You didn't consult her or her parents had time? You just simply said to her, to yourself, Maybe I'm speaking out of personage first. But that's all.

You got your eye on her, but she's hard to get. She makes herself hard. If they only knew how much more attractive they are when they make themselves hard to get.

He said, So you deny God? I said, Yes, but she didn't. And I thank God I didn't say no. When he came and proposed to me, with the same hand that spread the feast that gently else I had still refused to taste and perished in my sin.

Back to class. A lady came to me in Florida some years ago, greatly troubled in soul, I'm referring to. I'd like to have a little talk.

What do you think would constitute the elect? Oh, she said, They'd have to be a lot better than I am. As we say down in the Southland, she was to the man of all. Every movement, every about the elect.

I sat down here to verse 27. And I explained to her that the word elect here, God has elected the foolish things of the world. Her silence and where it says, And God has chosen the things which are my things.

In other words, that lady, thinking about the elect, thought the elect were some choice individuals who had made a great name for themselves in the world. And he took them. And instead of that, you read in this picture here about people that are foolish, people that are weak, people that are despised and base things of the world.

And how many of us qualify here, don't we? Yes, we all qualify. We'd only admit it. Aren't you glad? Oh, I'm so glad when I think of this.

Because there was no promise in the home in which I was born, apart from the fact that my dear parents were both Christians, but they had a large family of ten. We didn't know anything about having two cars and a boat and maybe a private airplane. My dear friends, that which is much more precious than anything we could mention here.

The apostle here goes on to, first of all, to say why God did this, that no flesh should be gloated. That you or I got there because we had the least right to be there. But, verse 30, to show that we've got everything in Christ.

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom. And I agree with the translators who think that the next three words, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, are parts of that wisdom. So that the text could read, who of God is made unto us wisdom, even righteousness, and how we need it is.

Without it we'd have no standing in his presence whatever. But you and I who are ungodly, he has justified us, cleared us of every charge of guilt, and imputed righteousness to us, as we read in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Yes.

Christ is righteousness to us. And thank God for this. And on the page where nothing but my sins could stand before, everything blotted out, and the righteousness of God in Christ put to my account.

Oh, what peace. Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Wonderful.

This I have in Christ. Then the second word, sanctification. And don't be afraid of it because of the misuse of it in these days.

Don't be afraid of the word sanctification. It means simply this. One who is set apart for God.

And surely God has a right to set apart those whom he has saved in such a manner so that we're his and only his. Set apart to him. Oh, if we realize this in our spiritual lives, dear friends, there'd be less problems if I realized that I'm not my own, I belong to another.

And set apart to him. And then the third great word here, redemption. Looking on to the day when this very body of mine is going to share in the fruits of Calvary and I'm going to have a body likened to his own body of glory.

What a wonderful thing it is to be a Christian. Am I speaking to somebody this morning who perhaps is only a Christian in name but you've never been born again? You don't know what it is to have a personal faith in the Lord Jesus? As your Savior? Look at what you're missing. Just look at what you're missing.

We who are saved this morning, we who are called this morning, we who are chosen by God's grace this morning, who have responded to this call, look at what we've got in Christ. In him we have not only wisdom personified, but all these things go with the righteousness. Nothing can be laid to the charge of God-delayed.

Sanctification set apart for him. And looking on to that day of complete redemption. Yes? This is what it means to be a Christian.

And dear friends, coming back to our original thought this morning, we'd just like to emphasize this, that God reveals this to people for simple enough to believe it. He reveals these things unto babes. As we were pointing out yesterday, that term is not one of reproach.

It is one that indicates that these people are unspoiled by the wisdom and philosophy of this world. They're willing to take God at his word. And dear friends, I'm here to bear witness this morning, after 65 years of being a child of God, for I too was saved as a teenager.

And after 65 years, I know of nothing that brings me greater comfort and peace in my life than simply to take God at his word. Oh, may God, by his Holy Spirit, take us from this conference if we're spared to go. Take us back to our homes, our local assemblies, as those who are going to communicate to troubled hearts, perhaps our own among them, the joy of simply taking God at his word.

When God says something to believe it, when I went to the mission field as a young man in my twenties, just turned twenty, when I went to the mission field, and my dear father saw me off at the wharf in New

York City. He said, Son, I'm sorry I haven't got a sum of money to give you to relieve your financial anxiety for at least a year, but I can hand on to you something that's been a great blessing to me. And he named the number of years that he'd been a Christian.

He says, I've found God to be absolutely reliable. Friends, how that stood me in days of trial. I've found God to be absolutely reliable.

Oh, thou blessed Son of God, thou is willing to pick up those who are so worried.

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