

# Call Me a Fool

by Shane Idleman

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*Shane Idleman's sermon 'Call Me a Fool' explores the foolishness of the cross and the importance of preaching the gospel amidst modern church challenges.*

**Duration:** 57:12

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:19-20, John 14:6, Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 1:18-29, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:8-9

**Topics:** "The Power of the Cross", "True Gospel vs. Worldly Wisdom"

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## Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the contrast between the wisdom of the world and the foolishness of the cross in his sermon 'Call Me a Fool.' He explains that while believers are called saints, they can still act carnally, and the message of the cross, which is often deemed foolish by the world, is actually the power of God for salvation. Idleman critiques the modern church's tendency to dilute the gospel for popularity, stressing that true preaching must center on the cross and the necessity of repentance. He encourages believers to embrace their weaknesses, as God uses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and to share the true gospel without compromise.

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## Transcript

The message this morning is out of 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 14. Why are we in Corinthians? Because we need to learn from the church in Corinth.

And as I've been explaining we are called saints when we are believers. Correct? And if you need Bibles there's one behind you as well in the pew. If you don't have one in front of you there's one behind you, hopefully.

Saints, children of God, can sometimes act like sinners. So we know we're called to be saints, we know we love God, but then there's something that pulls us away from God. And we can start to act carnal, we can start to act not like we should be acting.

So 1 Corinthians helps to give us a blueprint on what we should be doing. So the message this morning is call me a fool. Call me a fool.

Now don't do that just to do it, there's a reason behind it. Paul is going to tell us here that the message of the cross is foolishness, but to us it's life. So based on that, call me a fool.

The greatest act of love ever displayed is often called foolish. And this really hit home this week for me as I'm preparing this, thinking about this, that what we think is the greatest thing, the greatest gift ever given to mankind, is it not the cross? The cross of Christ and being saved, it's the greatest gift, but the world calls that foolish. Have you ever heard the term narrow-minded? Have you ever been called that or just me? Okay, there's some head shaking out there.

Narrow-minded, naive, those poor religious people, it's so foolish. Like the concept of us just evolving from nothing is intellectual. That to me seems foolish.

So we're going to look at 1 Corinthians, we can put up on the screen. Paul is writing to the church in Corinth. The church has been established in Corinth, and guess what they had in the church? Sexual sin, gossip, backbiting, complaining, lawsuits, abuse of the spiritual gifts, and we're going to talk about all those things as we go through that.

So you might say, well how is that happening? Well any church that is living and alive with people is going to experience misuse of things. There's no perfect church, and you know the old saying, as soon as you go to it, then it no longer becomes perfect. So there's no church that is perfect.

We're a group of people wanting to love the Lord, wanting to be humble and serve him, but in the midst of that, there's challenges that come out. Should we sue people? Should we take them to court? Should we allow this? Should we be silent on this? And Corinthians talks about all of that. So Paul here says, I thank God, in verse 14, I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius.

Now isn't that interesting? Paul is telling them, hey listen, I thank God I didn't baptize most of you, except for these two people. Lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanus.

So it sounds like he's writing here, and he forgot, oh that's right, remember this is before Delete and Whiteout, even before Whiteout, when you wrote something, so he probably didn't want to go back and rewrite it. So he said, oh yeah, that's right, I also baptized those of the household of Stephanus. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other.

Here's the key, for Christ did not send me to baptize, but what? But to preach the gospel. So this is Paul's primary calling, and it's actually the primary calling of any preacher, is the primary goal of what God has created you to do, is preach the gospel. That's why in the book of Acts, it's very interesting, the writer talks about, or actually the people preaching, said it's not good for us to wait on tables.

And you think, well these guys are kind of arrogant, I mean that's mean. No, they're not saying they're not going to serve others, of course they are, but all their time was being spent in what they're not called to do. For example, I go to hospital homes, I go to the hospital to visit people, I do things, but if that's all my focus is on that, so I come here, I go, you know what guys, I didn't have time this week, let's just do worship.

I mean, let's, I don't know, let's watch a motivational video. See, I spent all my time on things that were not my calling. So it's very important for people to find out, Lord, what have you called me to do? What do you want me to do? And that's really where the thrust of your energy must go to.

But Christ sent Paul to baptize, or not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. Now this is interesting, we're gonna get to something important here in a minute, but I want to talk about this. The priority of the gospel, that's the priority, not

baptism.

Now, here's why I say that. There are churches out there that believe a person is not saved until after they are baptized. It's called baptismal regeneration.

Some of the early church fathers taught it. It's still taught in Roman Catholicism, where they will baptize a little infant. Why? Because that baptism, they say, saves that person.

And then they, then they, then they go to penance, their penance, then they go to confessional each week, and they maintain that salvation by works. That's not good. That's not biblical.

You don't work for, you don't have to keep working on, okay, thank you, Jesus. Now I got it from here. I'm gonna keep, and that's why it's called works-based religion, and it is a works-based religion, whether they tell you it's not or it's not.

I was an altar boy. I went to a Catholic high school. It is Jesus plus doing this, Jesus plus sacraments, Jesus plus this, Jesus plus purgatory.

The cross wasn't enough, so you have to go to purgatory and be purged of your sins. I asked a Roman Catholic priest that last year. We had, sit down, I talked with him.

He said, well, Shane, how do you deal with shame and guilt? We have to go to purgatory. What are we missing here? We're not on the same page. The cross deals with shame and guilt.

When he said, to telestai, it is finished. It's done. It's completed.

The cross of Christ is enough. Listen, folks, you can rest in that. We don't have to go, oh, I've got to do this.

I've got to know, gee, it's enough. That's why you work out your salvation or work for your salvation. Paul said you work out.

It's a work. It's overflowing from a relationship with Jesus. I work out my salvation with fear and trembling.

I do things. I don't work for it. So he's saying here, and this is important because churches teach you're not a believer until you're baptized.

Now there's three scriptures they use, and I don't have time to go into that. One of them is when Jesus said, he who believes and is baptized will be saved. And then he says, he who does not believe will be condemned.

But he doesn't say he who does not believe and then does not get baptized. He was saying, obviously, he who believes and is baptized is saved. The baptism isn't the saving mechanism, the belief is.

So belief saves them. And now when a person says, hey, I'm saved. I want to get baptized.

I want to show the world of what has happened in my heart. So as it represents Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. That's what baptism is.

It's a picture of dying to my old self coming up in the newness of life and being baptized. That doesn't save you because if it did, that means I would be baptizing unbelievers. True? So we've got 12 people signed

up for next week to be baptized.

Praise God. Well, the reason I told you that is because, you know, if some, let's say, aren't saved or recently saved, does that mean they're not yet saved until we go under the water? What happened with the thief on the cross? What happens when somebody dies in a plane crash? What happens if somebody dies on their way to church before they got baptized? Now the churches will say, well, God makes provision for that. But everyone else has to be baptized.

So it's good to know because there are a few churches in our area. One church, it's interesting, we were going to rent their church on Saturday nights, eight years ago, eight and a half years ago when we started. But they said, we can't rent our church to you because we don't agree with your doctrine in this area.

So he said, you'll preach to them Saturday night and I'll have to convert them Sunday morning. It was the most arrogant statement I have ever heard from a pastor and I told them that. Suffice it to say, I've never talked to him again.

I don't think he's there anymore. And some of these folks are good folks. They just don't, nobody's really walked through the Bible with them and said, hey, that verse is really, when Peter talks about it, that the it's not Jesus and then hurry up and get baptized.

It's not the baptizing that saves, it's belief and faith in Christ that saves. And to me, my point was, that took a long time to get to the point, is Paul saying, Christ didn't even send me to baptize. So if baptism was the saving mechanism, Paul would have never said that.

He would have said, Christ called me to preach the gospel and then to baptize. So with that said, if you would like to get baptized, let us know that we've got a signup sheet going for resurrection day. It's going to be a wonderful day to get baptized.

We even baptize people say, Shane, I was baptized as a baby and I've never been baptized before. Do I need to? I would say for sure, as a believer's baptism. I've baptized men that were 75 years old.

Another man that was 65 years old, he was baptized as an infant in the Presbyterian church because they took on, the reformation wasn't quite complete with John Calvin, leaving Roman Catholicism. They grabbed on to some of those still traditions. It's a whole other sermon, but he couldn't get away from that feeling of never being baptized.

Even as a believer, he's a strong believer. He was ordained, but he was as an infant. So we want to give people that opportunity.

And I also believe it's a step of obedience. If a person says, Shane, I believe, I'm a follower, but I'm not ready for that yet. Well, you have to wonder, what are you not willing to give up? What do you think this is? Well, I'm a halfway Christian and that will be when I'm the full Christian.

I'm right now, I'm the halfway Christian, meaning I enjoy the things of the world. And there was a man in Saturday night services about three years, oh gosh, it's been five years now. Supposedly he gave his heart to the Lord that night.

He repented, he believed. I said, hey, next week are baptisms. I'll never forget.

He goes, oh, I'm not ready for that yet. He kind of stepped back a minute and said, I'm not ready for that yet. I'm like, what do you mean you're not ready for that? I'm not ready to get that serious.

See, that doesn't work either. So our church, just so you know, we don't minimize baptism either. It's like, well, we'll get to, like I tell people, we pray for people often that I've accepted Jesus, say, okay, here's our next baptism.

If you can't make that, we'll fill it up for you next Saturday. If you're so excited, you have 45 minutes, we'll turn on the water hose. I mean, there's emphasis there, but it's not a saving mechanism.

It doesn't save you because belief and faith in Christ is what saves. And then baptism is an outward, yeah, that's a good thing to clap for. Let's clap for that.

But granted, many early church fathers, you know, if you think of early church fathers like Polycarp, Irenaeus, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, many of the early church fathers, not everyone I just mentioned, but some of those guys did embrace infant baptism, baptismal regeneration, because there are three scriptures. Actually, if you're interested, if you go to [shaneidelman.com](http://shaneidelman.com) and you just search for does baptism save or something along those lines, it should come up with the article where I deal with each of those three scriptures in light of all of God's word. Because you have to remember, you have to read all of scripture.

You can't just go, well, look at this verse in Revelation and form a doctrine out of it if there's other things supporting scripture. Also, the Bible talks about, or theology talks about the law of first mention. How was the scripture, how was first mention? What does all of scripture talk about? For example, do you believe you can lose your salvation or do you believe you're always saved once you become a Christian? Now, I've taught on this before.

I'm not going to go into that right now. But if you just grab a scripture, you can support any side. You know, he who turns a sinner from the error of his way saves a soul from death.

If you turn from God and the great falling away, and then you have others. God says, I've given you the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit seals you until the day of redemption.

He's been given to you as a guarantee of your salvation. So those, I mean, that sounds, you're not going to undo the seal of the Holy Spirit. I'm sorry.

You're not going to break that seal. You're not, it's not a partial guarantee. And so see, so that's why you have to look at all of scripture, all of scripture.

Well, what do you think, Shane? Well, search, can I lose my salvation on [shaneidelman.com](http://shaneidelman.com) too. And that whole article will come up. That's where we're posting all my articles on this topic, or on all topics is under that.

So there's more there if you'd like that. You can find it. I don't want to get into that right now because we're at a on a different topic.

And then he said, here's something interesting. The wisdom of words, I came to preach the gospel, not with the wisdom of words. But that doesn't make a lot of sense.

Well, wouldn't you want to use your words and wise words and wise choices, but really what he's talking about here is a wordsmith. Do you know what that is? You ever talk to those people, they're just so smart. And after 10 minutes, you go, I like what you said, I just don't know what you said.

Like, sometimes I'll talk to atheists. And they'll say, well, the inter philosophical philosophies, studies and the the the conjoint part of this universe and the concrete absolute of this abstract. And then if you take this into consideration, the moral fortitude of some, it's like, what do you talk about their words? I mean, but they're very good with their words.

So you don't have to drape the cross with all the scarlet with all this, you don't have to go and paint it all these nice colors. It's the same way you wouldn't paint a diamond. You just let it shine.

You just let that not this, this is a \$10 ring. But you know, you have the I've caught a ring before a few things. So now I get the rubber ones that just just break off because there's a resident here in Leona Valley, he's missing a finger asked him how guess what? He got his he's got his ring caught on a ladder.

Another guy, Jimmy Kimball, they pronounce his name, right? The late night, Jimmy, I think he did the same thing as finger wrapped. And that was a whole that was a side note. So it's back on track.

So not with the words, not with wise words, like you don't have to go but let me tell you the cross and this eloquent and painting this picture and trying to I'm trying basically what they're trying to do is they're trying to take away the ruggedness of the cross, the power of the cross, the authority of the cross, the blood stained aspects of the cross. And Paul says just preach the cross for what it is. Let it shine like a light.

Let it show man, there's sin. And that's why in the morning, when we put on worship, we turn on off the lights, we allow those lights to stay on. So you can just look at the cross, point me to the cross, the simplicity of the cross that you just saying the simple gospel, all the gospel isn't so simple, where a 10 year old can say, God, I need that.

Yet it can be so complex that the smartest minds on the planet don't know what to do with it. The simplicity of the gospel, the power of the gospel, and the cross. Now, there's nothing wrong with apologetics, you know what that is being able to explain the cross and, and giving people a reason for the hope that's in you and, and building your arsenal, building your theological arsenal.

There's nothing wrong with that. But when you try to soften the cross, or remove the force of the message, it makes it of no effect. I'm going to try not to go into rabbit troll here.

But that is the problem with many churches in America. Do you know that? Soften the cross. We have to have the lights and the camera and the message.

It's smooth. It tastes good. It's palatable.

It's not marketable. Listen, I can't tell you, I've talked to book publishers, I've talked to a lot of different people. And they're like, man, Shane, your message is not very marketable.

I told you this story, I think some of you remember, but I wrote a book a few years ago, desperate for more of God. And I, I, here's the funny thing, God is just in his humor. I was praying, God, I know you want me to write this, but I am not motivated.

And then out of the blue, I have one of the top, I don't remember who it was, Thomas Nelson, or, or one of the big publishing Christian companies, emailed me and said, hey, I've watched some of your sermons. Are you interested in writing a book on this? I was, boy, am I ever. Absolutely.

That's my motivation. So two months, got it to him. And he goes, Oh, Shane, I'm sorry.

Because this does not address, it does not address a felt need. The chapter, first chapter was the desperate need for absolute truth. And he said, Shane, people aren't desperate for absolute truth.

I said, I know that's what they need. Of course, we just, I just printed on my own and did it and got it. I just hired the same covered design people.

I hired the same interior design people. So it looks the same as Barnes and Noble. It's you save a lot of money and you can do it yourself.

But so he, but it's not marketable. But see, what are they looking for? Thousands and thousands of cells. Not, is it accurate? Will it change lives? The largest church in our nation right now will not talk about sin.

They won't talk about repentance. They won't talk about the blood of Christ. Can you imagine the largest church in our nation? Millions of people are listening.

Millions watching. I'm not going to talk about any of that. Well, then you're not a pastor.

You're a motivational speaker. Change your title. And it's funny, people will email me, they'll say, Shane, you're being mean spirited.

You shouldn't put down people. No, I'm not being mean spirited. They depart.

And we are called to call out those in love and say, listen, you've got the voice of America listening. Or you've got the ears of America listening. You've got to be that voice and tell them the truth about the gospel.

Yes, it's bloody. Yes, it's a mess. You might lose.

You might lose half your audience. You might lose half your audience, but you gain the favor and the power of God. Do you ever hear those guys? They preach.

Do you ever hear those guys? Oh, they preach a false gospel, a watered down gospel, and they have no power, no spiritual authority. They tickle the ear. They never challenge the heart.

Let the cross do its work. Let it cut. I remember a man, I even gave him a hug afterwards.

We really hit it off in Palm Springs. He was gay, and I was jogging, and he was checking me out. I said, what are you doing? He goes, oh, you're new to the area.

I go, yeah, I'm new to the area. And we talked. I missed lunch with my wife or breakfast.

I don't remember what it was, but for 45 minutes, I listened and listened. I said, but have you ever thought about this? The Bible says that none of us are good. We all need the cross of Christ.

Okay, if you say that's not a sin, what are you gonna do with all your other sin that is a sin? Oh, and I would listen and listen. By the end, he said something I'll never forget. He said, I've never heard someone tell me this.

You've gave me a lot to think. Now, don't clap, because I usually blow it. But he said, I've never heard someone tell me this.

That gives me a lot to think about. So you didn't have to, you didn't have to, you know, and make it soft to hear it. Oh, no, I understand.

And we all struggle with something. Good luck. You say, I tell Christ died for that sin.

So I can never react. I can never be be be affection again. I'm like, let God deal with that.

All I'm telling you, you got to take this into the cross, let Christ deal with it. And some people here's the mistake. Some people still struggle with the same thing they took to the cross.

You ask alcoholic what happens if he takes a drink again. But brother, I thought you've been set free. Oh, just keep it away, though.

I have, but I don't want to open the door. And so you tell people the truth. There's power in the truth.

That's what's going to set people free. That's what's going to give people hope. But it's not necessarily the message and the messenger have to go together.

See, you have too many arrogant Pharisees screaming at people and yelling at people and grabbing a bullhorn sometimes in their face at them. And not being loving and gentle. There comes a time where you can preach.

Stand on the corner, preach. Ray Comfort does a good job of that. He's speaking here mid-May, May 19th, I believe it is.

He does that and could do it wonderful. The heart is right. But you can't just yell at people and get upset in the same way you can't compromise the gospel.

The power of the cross comes through somebody who's broken and humble before God and truly loves others and wants to help them. Then they can let the cross shine. And stop worrying about what people think.

You can say we are sinners. We need the cross. Without Christ, you're dead.

The wages of sin is death. Let me tell you what, you'll give them something to think about. They'll be tossing and turning.

But you don't be mean-spirited about it unless you don't believe that's the truth. Then we have another problem. Then we have to do a theology.

But if we truly believe that Jesus said he's the only way, the only truth, the only life, nobody can get to God the Father except through him, which means through the cross, which means through repentance of sin. If we truly believe that, wouldn't we share that with people when we have the opportunity? That's why we said let the cross be made of no effect. That's what happens when we dumb it down.

The simple gospel is Christ bore our sins upon the cross. And if the cross is missing from our preaching, we are not preaching. Now, of course, it's every sermon.

Charles Spurgeon was good at this. He brought the cross back to every sermon. And it's hard to do sometimes.

I'll be honest with you, sometimes I, oh, this is more for believers. But you have to give people the opportunity. But if a person's, if the cross is missing, in other words, if redemption is missing and repentance is missing in the blood of Christ, the importance of it, if that's missing, that's not necessarily preaching.

You might be giving a good talk. You might be helping people and that's okay. But the primary goal of preaching is to shine the cross, put it up, put it up on the pedestal.

A.W. Tozer said something, I think it was in the 1960s. He said, there has come in modern times a new cross. Did you know that? Into popular evangelical circles, a new cross.

It's like the old cross, but it's different. The old cross slew men, the new cross entertains them. The new cross condemned, the old cross condemned, the new cross amuses.

The old cross destroyed confidence in the flesh, the new cross encourages it. The old cross brought tears and blood, the new cross brings laughter. And what he's saying is, you can imagine 50 years ago, now it's the same thing.

The churches can try to dumb down the message of the cross. And he said something interesting as well. He went on to say, any objection to the carrying on of our present day gold calf lukewarm Christianity is met with the triumphant reply, but we are winning them.

In other words, when you go to people or to churches, you say, listen, this is dumbed down. The message of the gospel is dumbed down. There's no power in it.

This is a gold calf lukewarm Christianity. And the churches say, but we're winning them. Winning them to what, if you're not presenting the right gospel? He said, winning them to true discipleship, to cross carrying, to self-denial, to dying of self, to separation of the world, to the crucifixion of the flesh, to holy living, to nobility of character, to despising the world's treasures, to self-discipline, to a love for God, to total commitment for Christ.

The answer is no. Normally when now many churches, when they don't paint the cross in the right light, they're winning people to a type of popular Christianity that doesn't bear any resemblance to Jesus's sobering call to repentance. So it looks like this.

Hey, what's your name? Just, just, just accept Jesus. Life will be good. Life will be easy.

You'll prosper. That's where the prosperity gospel comes from. Have you heard of that term? Nobody in the 11 o'clock service? You know, the prosperity gospel.

Believe in Jesus. You're butler. Believe in Jesus, the genie in a bottle.

You get three wishes that Jesus is going to prosper you. The prosperity gospel, that is a lie from the pit of hell, because that is a false message. The message of the gospel says, God, no matter what I'm going

through, like Paul, I will be content in all things.

Like Job, though he slay me, yet will I trust him. You, you might take me through hell and back, but I'm holding on to you. You might bless me with a nice house, but it's yours.

You might do, I might be sick, but God, I'm holding on to you. See, you're holding on to Christ regardless of what's happening. That's why many people fall away.

This is getting difficult. Yeah, welcome to true biblical Christianity. The seeds of the martyrs, the seeds of the martyr's blood is what built the church.

Have you read early Christian history? Early Christian history, it's a movement of death, not glamour, not rock star status. And you have to be careful for some of these people, with some of these people. Like Benny Hinn, Creflo Dollar, Kenneth Copeland, I'm just telling you because I love you, watch out.

That is not healthy doctrine. Creflo Dollar, Jesus bled and died for us so that we can lay claim to the promise of financial prosperity. But of course, it was taken off Facebook.

But that's what these guys believe, many of them. What do you tell the millions still struggling financially, or with cancer, or their children's never healed and they bury their child? You just didn't have enough faith. God help us.

Jesus would heal people without any faith. He went to the pool of Bethesda and said, what do you want to do? I heal you. Another man said, I believe, but I help my unbelief.

Don't tell that to positive confession, people. That's honest. God, I believe.

I believe you, God. I believe that I know you can, but help this unbelief in me. Help this flesh that hates me.

Help this flesh that doubts. I believe in you. And even if you don't heal, or you don't set free, I'm going to hold on to you because you're the rock that will never leave.

You're the anchor that will never let go. You're holding me in place. And you have to denounce the gospel that's prosperity.

You have to denounce, name it, and claim it. If I just can claim it and believe it. I said that the first service.

Somebody says, boy, you're going to hear from people on that one. Why am I the one hearing when Benny Hinn should not be living in million dollar mansions and spending \$20,000 a night at hotels and doing all these things, picking certain people to be healed that clearly you don't even know if they're sick or not. Now, I want to be careful because I know people, there's different views, but you have to look at the whole message.

Some of these people are not preaching a biblical message. Take time and watch American gospel, Christ alone. It just came out recently.

American gospel, Christ alone. And if anything they say, if anything I'm saying is incorrect, let me know. But the truth is people are taken advantage of and they need to be called out.

They should be answering. They should be answering to us, not us having to worry about what we say to them. And hopefully I'll send it out with the email this week, but I did a podcast for about 30 minutes talking

about this whole area.

These people, Bethel, like with Bill Johnson, Todd White, Francis Chan speaking at one of their events. I'm not going to do it here, but I have it recorded, 30 minutes worth. I'm going to send it out to those on the email campaign or Facebook.

So it's coming out hopefully this week. I'll give you more information on that. And you have to hear my heart.

It's not for, and I mentioned to you guys, I talked to Francis Chan last weekend. We went back and forth a little bit in person. And our heart's not to be mean-spirited to people, but our heart is to point out false doctrine.

Our heart is to be united, but only on the essentials. If you start to go in a dangerous direction, people should call it out. You should be open for constructive criticism.

What person doesn't need constructive criticism? That's how we grow. When iron sharpens iron, there are sparks flying. It doesn't feel good.

It hurts. And a compromised cross leads to a compromised message. When I was in construction, one of the worst things you wanted to hear was your foundation is compromised.

Time to get a bulldozer, depending on how bad it is. The foundation, the most ugly thing on the piece of property, big square of concrete with metal coming out of it, is the most important. That holds your house together.

You like your blinds, plantation shutters, and painting, and crown molding, baseboards. Oh, no, no. The most important thing is that piece of concrete underneath, that concrete foundation.

When you compromise the cross, it leads to a compromised message. How do you tell people to come to Christ if you don't talk about the reason why? Believe in Jesus. He'll make you richer.

Believe in Jesus. He'll make you feel better. Believe in Jesus.

You'll have your best life now. You'll get down your way home. And God dealt with me a lot this week on pointing these things out.

Verse 18, for the message of the cross is foolishness. Call me a fool. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, what is it? It is the power of God.

So the message of the cross in all its fullness, all its splendor is foolishness. But wouldn't you think just the opposite? The message of the cross, it's salvation, but why is it so foolish? That's what's hard to believe sometimes for Christians, especially new believers. They're so excited about sharing their faith, they go out and they share it, and they're slapped down.

They're kicked to the ground. Nobody wants to hear this. It's foolish.

Why? Shouldn't this be the best news? Well, it's because it doesn't make sense to our intellect. So when you try to explain, say, something to an atheist or an agnostic, there's something in their mind called the carnal mind. And the Bible says that this mind, the mind without Christ, the carnal mind, is at enmity with

God.

It means it is at war with God. The fallen Adamic nature from Adam is at war with God. It wants to fight God.

It doesn't want to submit to anything that God wants. It loves its darkness. So you try to bring the light, and they say, that is foolish.

It doesn't make sense to my intellect. That doesn't make sense. That doesn't make sense.

But you think coming from a single cell of amoeba and becoming a tadpole, and then our DNA switches, and you become this little creature, and then you evolve into something, and then now you evolve into a male, and now you evolve into a female, and now the bodies know how to have a baby, and that makes sense. It all comes from nothing. To me, that's foolishness.

Who in their right mind is going to say, this all just came together? Wasn't that cool? Home Depot had an explosion. Nobody. The architect designed, the contractor built it, the ushers put the pews in, somebody built this.

You would actually be stupid to say this all came together. Wouldn't you? Let's be honest. If I said, guys, I think all this just happened one day.

But see, isn't that what we do when it comes to creation? Not us, but unbelievers who believe in, say, evolution, or there's no God. To say, in the complexity of life, the universe, that takes a quantum leap to believe that. So they don't believe it because it doesn't make sense.

Also, it crushes their pride. It doesn't reinforce it. Do you know how man reinforces his pride? Intellect.

Wordsmith. Tell me words, and what I think, and what I believe, and philosophy. Their intellect is crushed by the cross.

So is their pride. And rebellion is at the heart of rejection. People are in rebellion.

If you're in rebellion towards God, do you want to hear about God? If you're loving sin, do you want to hear about confessing and turning from it? So rebellion, and this heart against God, is why the gospel, it's so hard to penetrate. That's why you have to pray for unbelievers. You can't force feed it.

I tell people a lot, don't argue with them. Sure, present your case. Educate them if they're open.

But ultimately, you need to go to God in prayer. And let the Holy Spirit open their eyes. Remove the blinders.

Listen, I've prayed for people, and people say, it's hopeless. And I've prayed, and I've prayed, and they start asking, you know what, I'm curious, I might try to come to church. Or, I'm from atheist.

Or, no, the Bible, why do you believe that again? Ah, see, there's that door that God begins to open. And open, and removes the blinds from their eyes. And then it goes on to say here, right afterwards, it is to us, to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

How great is our God? Have you ever thought about that? The ocean, the winds, and the sea have to obey the voice of God? Earth, God holds Earth, the gravitational pull, He holds that in the palm of His

hands. Even the universe is held by His sovereignty. Anyone have any idea how big the universe is? We don't even know.

All these guys out there, well, I think it's this, I think it's this, I think it's, that's why people crack me up who want to date the universe. We don't even know how far it goes. Expansion, radioactive dating, all these things are questionable because it's flawed man.

But God holds the universe together in His sovereignty. The Bible, I mean, it's not literally, but He sits on the circle of the earth. Things are a footstool for Him.

He holds the very waters of the earth in the palm of His hands. That's how great our God is, and we're to shout it out, the greatness of the cross. That's why you can say, devil, how dare you? Is He coming after anything in your life? One person.

You guys are doing good. You don't need death, what am I thinking? But you can, devil, how dare you come after my family? How dare you come after my kids? How dare you come after me? I've talked about this a few weeks ago, but I wanted to bring it up again. You with the authority of Christ as a believer, you can say, how dare you? My God is an all-consuming fire.

My God is going to hold me. My God is going to see me through. I'm going to praise that God, even in the storm.

I'm going to look to Christ and Christ alone. Yes, you might be winning, but the battle's not over. Devil, how dare you come against the one true and living God? They're not equal.

Satan has to walk around like a defeated foe, asking for permission. Even the book of Job. Have you considered my servant Job? Well, you have this.

You won't let me do anything. That's right, you snake. God is sovereign.

I see so many Christians living defeated because they forget there's God before you. Who can be against you? And we think, but this is happening to me. Yeah, hold on to the anchor.

Hold on to the cross. See, in America, we've been taught that life should be good and easy. Just go try the prosperity message in China.

In Syria, there's worship mornings. They'll go at four in the morning. You think they have a microphone on? Meeting somewhere in a dark and damp area, and they start singing psalms.

They start praying, they start worshiping, and the Spirit of God comes upon that place. That's true biblical Christianity. They might lose their life.

They might not have a lot. We have to remember that the American gospel is not the true gospel. The American gospel, health, wealth, comfort, convenience, that actually hurts true biblical Christianity.

That's why very few Christians really grow in the American church. We're blessed here, don't get me wrong. There's a lot of wonderful churches, but that's why you'll find a person who's been a Christian 20 years, and they're not growing because they're immature in the faith.

When a challenge comes, I think it's somebody else's fault. If they're not being blessed by God, they think they get disgruntled. And so just like there are no more powerful words have ever been said about this than Job.

Though he slay me, yet will I trust him. Job's wife said, curse God and die. What boldness.

Though God kills me, I will trust him. Though he leads me into the pack of wolves, I will trust him. Though he has my enemies taunt me, I will trust him.

And I think when the 23rd Psalm talks about he will make a table for me in the presence of my enemies, it's there in the midst of battle. Even in the midst of the enemies taunting me, and the battles that rage in our lives, he will sit down, he will spread out a table. He said, my son, you enjoy fellowship with me.

I have you. What else does that mean? He will make a table for me, present a table for me, set a table for me in the presence of my enemies. And it says, for it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

Isn't that powerful? God says that. It is written, I the Lord your God, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and I will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. All those people who think they're wise in their own eyes, you'd be amazed at how easily a wise, arrogant man turns into a crying baby on his deathbed.

I've seen it and it's sad. Fortunately, their hearts are more tender. And I don't know who's hearing this, but don't wait till your deathbed.

Because there's no guarantee that a lot of those conversions are genuine. They've done studies of people who've come back. So they say, I've come back from death and not everybody walks with the Lord, even though they experienced death.

God said, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and I will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. And he really is quoting there from Isaiah. And he mocks Egypt.

God can mock. It's okay for God to mock. He's basically saying, Egypt, you will come to nothing.

There's nothing you can do against me. And that's why my great hope is, on one hand, we see how far our nation has drifted. We see people in office who shouldn't even be on the local school board.

And they're running and they're in office. And we're like, Lord, what is going on? Why are they? I didn't share this in the first, I even thought of it again. It's kind of hard for me to even talk about.

But I saw as soon as my child was born, baby's given to Morgan, and the thought crossed my mind, one minute ago, it could have been killed in New York. Some type of righteous anger just rose up in me. I said, how dare they? How dare they? How is that even? Lord, how is this possible? How have we drifted that far? You know that, right? If they keep it in the womb, partially in the womb, partial birth, abortion.

They can kill it if it's not yet delivered. Shane, why do you talk about this often? Because it's very important. You think God would rather have the pulpit talk about superficial things, seven steps to financial freedom, when you've got innocent children being slaughtered, just like giving our children, like they did in the Old Testament, giving their kids to the hot arms, searing arms of Molech and sacrifice.

It is child sacrifice. Let's just be straight, that is child sacrifice. I don't want to be inconvenienced with this.

But what about this situation? Got it. But rape or incest accounts for a very, very, very, very, I'm not even okaying that, but I'm saying it's a very tiny, minute thing. What about with the life of the mothers? Of course, but there's doctors say that never even happens.

At that stage, those do a C-section. These things just break my heart to see how far we drifted. My point was that God will bring this to nothing.

In verse 20, where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Basically, where are your clever arguments? Nothing is going to hold water. Nothing is going to hold water. Has not God made the foolish the wisdom of this world? For since in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to those who believe.

You might say, what is he talking about? He's basically saying, I've used the foolish things of this world to confound the wise. I'll take somebody with no education, with no petty degree, and I will preach the gospel through them so I get all the glory and all the credit. I'm not going to save Mike Trout and LeBron and Tom Brady and let them bring the gospel.

Let's bring, if we could bring Jordan out of retirement, come on, advertise it. Michael Jordan out of retirement, he's preaching the gospel. And they say, oh, no wonder the church is full.

No wonder the altar called. No wonder Jordan is in the house. God says, no, I'm going to use the foolish things like he did with Billy Graham.

He raised up a farm boy from Carolinas and he gave him a platform. He said, preach my truth and look to the cross. Why? Because then God gets all the credit, all the glory.

When we look at what God has done at this church, we just say, God, God is the answer. Who can take credit? Who can take credit for what God does? No flesh should glory in his presence. Human wisdom fluctuates, but God's wisdom does not.

In verse 22, I'm going to close here shortly. The Jews request a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom, meaning the Jews are looking for a sign. God, show me, show me, give me a sign.

And it cracks me up because they should have followed Jesus around. Look at all the miracles he did. If you're saying that this morning, give me a sign.

Just walk out tonight. Look at the black sky. Look at how, look at, just look around and there's your sign.

The Bible, I think it's Romans 1, says creation is the invisible attributes of God are clearly seen in creation, clearly seen. But for the Greeks, they seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified. So to the Jews, it's a stumbling block, and to the Greeks, it's foolishness.

But to those who 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. Now, he's not saying God is weak. He's saying the weakness of God, meaning what you perceive as weak about God, no matter what your argument is, the weakest argument you have about God is still stronger than the highest argument that men can make.

The foolishness of God, in other words, he's saying what doesn't make sense about God is still wiser than anything we can come up with. Isn't that true? What doesn't make sense? Why did God have to send his

son? Why is there sin entered the world? But we do know there's sin in our hearts. We do know we need help.

We do know we need a savior. Even though it doesn't make sense, it still fits the picture much better than what can men offer. Do you know they asked the smartest man on the planet, it was either Dawkins or Hawkins, one of those guys, I get them all confused.

Well, they pressed him, they pressed him. So where did human life come from? Back in the corner, what did he say? On the back of, by aliens on the back of crystals. Yeah, what? That's what I said.

What? You're the smartest man on the planet right now. That's all you got? I got a Bible beginning in Genesis 1 that tells us exactly what happened and it makes sense. It lines up with scripture.

There's proof for a cataclysmic event. Is there a reason why billions and billions of fossils are found and why it appears that they've been buried? Even atheists will say that what appears, obviously some cataclysmic event happened. Look at billions of fossils are just buried like something happened.

It's right here. It just, it just, oh man, I got to settle down. It drives me crazy, doesn't it? It's so clear, it's so evident.

And then I'm just going to close. He said, for you see your calling, brethren, that not many are wiser 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.

God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty. The reason is so no flesh should glory in his presence. I didn't read the whole thing there, but here's my encouragement to you.

God will take the weakest thing. If you say I'm an unknown, I'm weak, I'm stupid, my family doesn't appreciate me, I failed at this. God says, I want you.

I want you. I want that because I want to take, you know my history. I've told you, barely graduated high school.

I'm proud of a 1.8. I don't know how that happened. My mom had a speech teacher, silly Sally sucked seven suckers, and all speech impediment, learning dyslexia. And God said, yeah, get broken before me because you empty yourself.

Then I'll fill you with my spirit. Then the spirit of the living God can move because now I get all the credit. No flesh is going to glory in my presence.

Who in the world is going to say look at what I have done when every breath that you breathe is a gift from God? So God will use the weak things. So if you're here this morning, even if you're a young adult, if you're a young adult teenager, you feel hopeless, you feel useless. God says, but give me that.

You ever read throughout the gospels, do you say, what do you have? Or Elisha told the one, what do you have? I have an empty jar. Go find more. Jesus said, what do you have? I have a few pieces of bread and a fish.

What do you have? All he wants is you. So stop feeling, I don't know anything. I haven't studied the Bible.

I don't have a degree. I haven't this, and I'm weak in this area. I'm sick sometimes.

God says, good, good. Now when I do something mighty through you, there might be people here that could pray for people, and they'd be healed. They could start a homeless ministry, and then God gets all the credit.

Because when people say, look at what God is doing, you say, but God, God did it. God built it. God restored our marriage.

We are on the brink of divorce, and God came in and restored it. We are on the brink of, some people say, I was on the brink of suicide, and God says, we came in, and God saved them. I was on the brink of giving up or leaving Christ.

So it's in that weakness that you become strong. Remember Paul said that, I believe, when I am weak, I am strong. And the stronger you become, self-reliant, self-exaltation, all about self, the weaker you become spiritually.

You listen, there's pastors, like when Brian spoke here, Leonard Ravenhill, Wilkerson. I mean, I can name a lot of men filled with the Spirit of God, and they are weak inside in regard to puffing themselves up. They say, God, I need your strength.

If it wasn't for you, I could not do what I'm doing, and they mean it. So that's the closing application for you. God's going to use the foolish things to confound the wise.

Give him your heart. Give him your life. Give him everything.

No flesh will glory in his presence, meaning we cannot take credit for what God is doing. So a couple things, I want to end on that note. Number one, if you've come in here defeated, you came in here, haven't done anything for God, and how long, maybe you've never done anything for God, you feel weak, you feel inadequate, you can't live up to it, you're not educated, welcome to the club.

That's actually who God uses. And listen, I meet people sometimes, they'll come up and they'll go, here's my business card, I'm a professor, or I've got a divinity, or I've got a Ph.D. in church history. I'm like, I don't care.

Because see, no flesh should glory in his presence, having been filled mightily with the Spirit of God. That's what I want to know. So if you came in defeated, you can leave built up, because God wants you right where you are, with that brokenness, with that pain, with that weakness, with that hurt, that's where he fills us.

We empty ourselves and he fills us. Another person I want to talk to, and just leave you with this, is if you don't truly know Christ, if you've never truly, what do you mean truly, Shane? The American gospel is, well, I'm a good person. No, the true gospel is, no one is good, no, not one.

We repent of our sin and we believe in Christ, who was the perfect sacrifice. Thank God for the cross. If it wasn't for the cross, there would be no redemption.

So if you need salvation, you simply say, God, I repent, which means I change my mind. I see sin the way you see it. And I repent to that and I embrace, through faith in Christ, Christ alone, I embrace salvation and God will save you.

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