

Camrose Way Housegroup

14th June 2023

1 Corinthians 1:18 – 2:5 – Leaders Version

The main focus of teaching this term is on the book of 1 Corinthians; how it will help guide us to be the church God desires us to be as we plan for the future.

This week we are looking at 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5 where Paul speaks of the wisdom and strength of the gospel which appears foolish and weak to the world around us. This follows the sermon on the same passage on 11th June, which you can listen to at:

<https://www.stmarys-basingstoke.org.uk/pjp/mediaevent/search?id=4066>

Reminder: Acts 18: 1-17 – Paul In Corinth

As was his habit, Paul started by speaking in the synagogue. He devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah.

The Jews opposed Paul and became abusive.

Paul changed his audience. 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.' He stayed there for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

The Jews complained to the Proconsul, who refused to get involved.

Paul write this letter from Ephesus at least 3 years later.

We learned in 1 Corinthians 1-17 that the church in Corinth had gone off the rails and were focussed on personalities rather than Christ. We will learn in future studies that this was not their only problem.

Question 1: Intro Question

Have you ever had an encounter or conversation with someone who felt the gospel message simply doesn't make sense in today's world? What didn't make sense to them about the gospel?

This is a starter question to get us thinking about the unusual nature of the gospel compared to the world around us.

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:18 – 2:5

Christ crucified is God's power and wisdom

Reader 1

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.
19. For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.'

20. Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age?
Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?
21. For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.
22. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom,
23. but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,
24. but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Reader 2

25. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.
26. Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.
27. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.
28. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are,
29. so that no-one may boast before him.
30. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.
31. Therefore, as it is written: ‘Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.’

Reader 3

1. And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.
2. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.
3. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling.
4. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power,
5. so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.

Question 2:

How does Paul describe the Gospel (“the message of the cross) in verses 18-25.

This is aimed to draw out all the different ways and contrasts Paul speaks of the gospel message: foolishness & wisdom, weak & strong.

Foolishness

The Power of God

A stumbling block

The wisdom of God

Question 3:

Paul speaks of Christ crucified being “a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles” (v.23). Why might that be?

The Jews were looking for a “traditional” all-conquering King to overthrow their enemies with force. Crucifixion was the worst form of punishment, a sign of weakness. How could Christ possibly have been the promised Messiah.

The Gentiles (Greeks) believed in intellectual debate and believing in Christ crucified required a leap of faith.

Question 4:

Thinking of the town we live in and the people we know, how and why might the gospel appear foolish and weak to them?

Does it make sense that the ultimate power of the universe would be executed?

Dying and then coming back to life is not something that happens?

The church appears weak with more of a focus on dressing up in silly clothes, so cannot possibly be taken seriously.

The gospel is hidden behind strange customs and rituals.

Many apparent Christians don't appear to believe in the gospel.

Question 5:

How is the gospel the power of God and the wisdom of God to those who trust it?

This question aims to help people see the goodness of the gospel in contrast to the ways the world can operate.

It gives people hope.

It gives meaning to this life.

It is in stark contrast to what people experience every day.

Question 6:

How does Paul describe the Christians in Corinth in vv.26-31?

Lacking wisdom, with little influence, not of noble birth, weak, lowly

What is Paul aiming to help the Corinthian Christians see (vv.29b-31).

Everything they have comes from Christ. They are right with God. They are redeemed. They have a future.

Question 7:

How might these verses be a challenge to us as a church?

They use jargon and words that are not part of people's usual vocabulary. righteousness, holiness, redemption

Look at the Message Everything that we have—right thinking and right living, a clean slate and a fresh start—comes from God by way of Jesus.

They possibly represent a way of living that people don't believe they could achieve.

Question 8:

What does Paul say about himself in 2:1-5?

He was weak, he lacked eloquence, he was fearful.

What do you think his aim is in saying this? *You can refer back to 1:10-17 as this gives some context to the argument Paul is making.*

That their faith would not rest on human wisdom but on God's power in Christ.

That they would focus on the message, not the messenger.

Question 9:

How could we as a church be tempted to move away from the gospel of Christ crucified to things that may appear wiser and stronger?

Make compromises to fit in with the modern world.

Omit parts of the gospel that are inconvenient and challenging to people around us.

Encourage personality cults. Put charisma above biblical truth.

How can we help one another remain focussed on the cross of Christ and therefore boast only in the Lord?

Pray for each other

Meet together

Gently rebuke those who seem to be moving away from the gospel

Test all reaching against the word of God

	NIV	ESV	MSG
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.	For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.	The Message that points to Christ on the Cross seems like sheer silliness to those hellbent on destruction, but for those on the way of salvation it makes perfect sense. This is the way God works, and most powerfully as it turns out. It's written, I'll turn conventional wisdom on its head, I'll expose so-called experts as shams. So where can you find someone truly wise, truly educated, truly intelligent in this day and age? Hasn't God exposed it all as pretentious nonsense? Since the world in all its fancy wisdom never had a clue when it came to knowing God, God in his wisdom took delight in using what the world considered stupid—preaching, of all things!—to bring those who trust him into the way of salvation.
19	For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.'	For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."	
20	Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?	Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?	
21	For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.	For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.	
22	Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom,	For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,	While Jews clamour for miraculous demonstrations and Greeks go in for philosophical wisdom, we go right on proclaiming Christ, the Crucified. Jews treat this like an anti-miracle—and Greeks pass it off as absurd. But to us who are personally called by God himself—both Jews and Greeks—Christ is God's ultimate miracle and wisdom all wrapped up in one. Human wisdom is so cheap, so impotent, next to the seeming absurdity of God. Human strength can't begin to compete with God's "weakness."
23	but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,	but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,	
24	but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.	but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.	
25	For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.	For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.	
26	Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.	For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.	
27	But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.	But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;	Take a good look, friends, at who you were when you got called into this life. I don't see many of "the brightest and the best" among you, not many influential, not many from high-society families. Isn't it obvious that God deliberately chose men and women that the culture overlooks and exploits and abuses, chose these "nobodies" to expose the hollow pretensions of the "somebodies"? That makes it quite clear that none of you can get by with blowing your own horn before God. Everything that we have—right thinking and right living, a clean slate and a fresh start—comes from God by way of Jesus Christ. That's why we have the saying, "If you're going to blow a horn, blow a trumpet for God."
28	God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are,	God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,	

29	so that no-one may boast before him.	so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.	
30	It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.	And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,	
31	Therefore, as it is written: ‘Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.’	so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”	
1	And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.	And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom.	You’ll remember, friends, that when I first came to you to let you in on God’s sheer genius, I didn’t try to impress you with polished speeches and the latest philosophy. I deliberately kept it plain and simple: first Jesus and who he is; then Jesus and what he did— Jesus crucified.
2	For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.	For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.	
3	I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling.	And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling,	I was unsure of how to go about this, and felt totally inadequate—I was scared to death, if you want the truth of it—and so nothing I said could have impressed you or anyone else. But the Message came through anyway. God’s Spirit and God’s power did it, which made it clear that your life of faith is a response to God’s power, not to some fancy mental or emotional footwork by me or anyone else.
4	My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power,	and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,	
5	so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.	so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.	