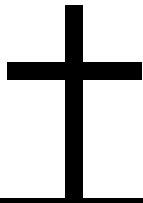


THE TESTIMONY OF GOD



THE FOOLISH MESSAGE OF GOD



VERSUS



THE WISDOM OF HUMANS

1. Christ sent Paul with a singular purpose—→to preach the gospel, 1 Corinthians 1:17-19.

- (1 Corinthians 1:17–19 ESV) **For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.** 18 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. 19 For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”
- A. Christ sent Paul to preach the gospel, not to baptize.
- B. Christ sent Paul to preach the gospel absent words of eloquence and wisdom.
- C. It was essential that the message be kept simple and foolish so as not to empty the cross of its power.
- D. The gospel doesn't change and so the effect of the gospel does not change—it will remain foolish to **those who are not being saved** and the power of God to **those who are being saved**.
- E. When the message of the cross is made un-foolish to those who are not being saved, then it is no longer the power of God to save.
- F. The un-foolish (*wise*) gospel of those who are not being saved is wisdom that God will destroy and discernment that God will thwart and frustrate.

2. Christ gave Paul a gospel that leaves everyone out but Christ himself, 1 Corinthians 1:20-23.

- (1 Corinthians 1:20–23 NLT) So where

does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. 21 **Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe.** 22 It is foolish to the Jews, who ask for signs from heaven. And it is foolish to the Greeks, who seek human wisdom. 23 So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense.

- A. The reality is that God makes the world's teachers, scholars and philosophers look foolish.
- B. Only the foolishness of the cross saves—never human wisdom.
- C. However to the Jews and the Greeks it is foolish to accept the simple message of the gospel.
- D. And the message of the cross is not only foolishness to them but offensive and ridiculous.
- E. But we preach Christ crucified—God's message.

3. Christ was the only source of the gospel that he sent Paul to preach, Galatians 1:11-12.

- (Galatians 1:11–12 NLT) Dear brothers and sisters, **I want you to understand that the gospel message I preach is not based on mere human reasoning.** 12 I received my message from **no human source**, and no one taught me. Instead, **I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.**

Paul emphasized three things about the gospel that Christ sent him to preach.

- A. The gospel he preached was not based on human reasoning.
- B. The gospel he preached had no human source.
- C. The gospel he preached was not taught to him by any human but received directly from Jesus Christ.

SO WHAT IS THE GOSPEL THAT CHRIST GAVE PAUL TO PREACH?

4. The gospel that Christ sent Paul to preach is revealed most clearly and succinctly by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 15:1-5.

- (1 Corinthians 15:1–5 ESV) Now I would remind you, brothers, of **the gospel I preached to you**, which you **received**, in which you **stand**, 2 and **by which you are being saved**, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I **delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures**, 4 **that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures**, 5 **and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.**

Paul reminds/rebukes them—this is the gospel that he preached to them which they received, in which they stand and by which they are being saved ... unless they believed in vain.

- (1 Corinthians 15:2 NLT) It is this Good News that saves you if you continue to believe the message I told you—**unless, of course, you believed something that was never true in the first place.**

A. Paul addresses the integrity of transmission of the gospel.

Paul emphasizes the integrity of the transmission of the gospel—**he delivered** (speaks to content) **what he received** (speaks to origin).

B. Paul sets the priority of the gospel.

It seems this could mean that delivering the gospel message was of first importance and the gospel message itself was of first importance ... as in ... this message is most important ... so the care and priority in delivering his message is most important.

C. Paul lists the four essentials of the gospel.

(1) Christ died for our sins. [*In accordance with the Scriptures.*]

(2) Christ was buried.

(3) Christ was raised on the third day. [*In accordance with the Scriptures.*]

(4) Christ was seen after his resurrection.

5. Paul did everything in his power to honor Christ's commission for him to preach the gospel, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.

- (1 Corinthians 2:1–5 ESV) And I, when I came to you, brothers, **did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom**. 2 **For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified**. 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, 4 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 in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.**

Paul came to them with the overriding goal to do everything in his power to preach the gospel of God that would cause them to rest their faith solely in the power of God. His full intent was to honor Christ and the gospel to which Christ had commissioned him so that their faith and thus their hope of salvation were not misplaced in the wisdom of mere humans.

- A. He came to them proclaiming the testimony of God.
- B. He proclaimed the unadorned testimony of God.
Unadorned ... not decorated, or not made to look more attractive; without embellishment or decoration; plain, simple.
- C. He was resolved to focus only on the one essential of the testimony of God—Jesus Christ and him crucified.
- D. He proclaimed God's testimony to them from a position of weakness and fear.
- E. He chose not to build a case for the gospel with words of persuasion and wisdom.
- F. He chose words that demonstrated his reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit.
- G. His purpose was "so that" their faith would rest in the power of God alone.