

## Christ – The Wisdom and Power of God

Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1987

### 1 Corinthians 1:20-31

*“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 stumblingblock, 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 ye 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 which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought 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 us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”*

If you would like to follow me in your Bible as I speak this morning, I will be speaking from 1 Corinthians Chapter 1. I will be reading portions of verses 20 through 24. Here is our subject: “CHRIST THE WISDOM AND POWER OF GOD.”

Listen to the Scriptures; Paul is writing to the church at Corinth. Paul says, *“Where is the wise; where is the scribe; where is the disputer, (the debater) of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For the world, with all its worldly wisdom knew not God but God was pleased by the foolishness (or what the world calls foolishness) of preaching to save them that believe.”*

*“For the Jews, (the religious people) seek a sign and the Greeks, (or the Gentiles), seek wisdom. But, we preach Christ crucified unto the religious a stumbling block, to the Greeks (to the intellectuals) foolishness but to them who are called, Christ is the power and the wisdom of God.”* The religious seek a sign, a power, and the intellectuals seek wisdom. When we preach Christ crucified, the believer finds in Christ crucified, the sign, the power and the wisdom of God.

Paul’s day was much like ours. There is not much that changes; things are the same. He found in the city of Corinth the same thing that we find in our cities today. He said, *“The*

*religious people are all seeking a sign;*” they are seeking an outward show and are seeking some outward manifestation of a sign, or earthly kingdom.

They believe that there is power in numbers, power in wealth and power in entertainment. They are always looking for some show or something visible or outward. They are always looking and asking for a sign and saying, “Show me a sign.”

The worldly are interested in intellectualism; they are interested in logic and reason. They want a religion that can be explained to the satisfaction of the natural mind. That is what the intellectuals want and what the worldly want; he deals in intellectualism and seeks wisdom.

Paul said “The religious people of my day are looking for a show, an outward manifestation, some kind of sign from heaven.” They run everywhere looking for a sign, something in the clouds, something in the trees, something in some one’s hands, some kind of outward show.

The worldly are interested in intellectualism. He wants a religion that can be explained. Paul declares, “*We preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified* (and to those who are enlightened of God, by the Spirit of God), *Christ becomes to them both the power and the wisdom of God.*”

I don’t claim to be an authority on the signs of the times but I do have some understanding of the message of the Bible, that message that runs through this Book. I can see and hear what is going on around me in the name of God and in the name of religion. I know this and have come to this conclusion, it is a far cry from the Word of God, a far cry from the Scriptures.

I’m going to give your four marks of this generation and its religion:

First of all: We have a religious, affluent society in the United States; we have a rich religion. We are prone to judge our spiritual state by our fleshly comforts. Did you know that? You might say, “Oh, how God has blessed me; I have two cars, a fine home, good health and my children are in school.” We are prone to mistake and to judge a spiritual success or a spiritual state by fleshly comforts.

What did the Laodiceans say in Revelation Chapter 3:17? They said, “*We are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing.*” But, God said; “*You know not that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.*”

You are probably wondering that if we are so well off on the outside, we must be ok on the inside. Not necessarily! You see; we have a rich, affluent, religious society. America has good health, food, clothing and fine homes.

We live longer lives. We have health care, Social Security and retirement; who needs God? We have need of nothing. This is what we are interested in and this is what we have.

You will hear them say that sick people need God and poor people need God. You will even hear them say that the down and out need God. The average American doesn't need God, that is, until he gets in trouble then he starts calling on the preacher and calling on God. Until that time, everything is all right. Yes sir; it is a rich, affluent society. We are mistaking outward comforts for spiritual well-being. It is not necessarily so.

Second: The second thing that we have in this country is a popular religion in America. It is an accommodating religion; it is "live and let live." See if this doesn't describe America's religion; everybody is right and nobody is wrong. They say, "You worship your God and I will worship my God; you worship your way and I will worship my way." They also say, "You read your Bible and I will read my Bible and we'll all meet in heaven in the sweet by and by."

We have the friendly church, the church where everybody is somebody. We have the church in the heart of the city for the hearts of the city. We have all of those things except the Gospel.

We have a God that is all love but no wrath. We have a God who is all mercy and no righteousness. We have a God that is all grace and no judgment. Men and women can be members of our churches in good-standing and show no interest in Christ, in God, in truth, in holiness or in the Gospel. Is that not true?

We boast about how many people we have on the roll. In our day, in this day of popular religion, we have substituted a decision for regeneration. We don't preach on regeneration; we preach on decision. Salvation is not a decision; it is regeneration, a revelation of God to the heart.

We have substituted emotionalism for worship. You read the Old Testament and the New Testament and you study how God's people worshipped God. They worshipped God in awe, in reverence and in fear.

Isaiah said, *“Woe is me; I am undone; I have seen the Lord.”* Job said, *“I put my hand on my mouth; I abhor myself; I have seen the Lord.”* Daniel said when he saw the Lord, *“My comeliness melted into corruption.”* John fell at His feet *“like a dead man.”* Thomas fell and cried, *“My Lord and My God.”*

What we call worship is running the aisles, walking the pews, climbing the walls, throwing song books, waving our arms, clapping our hands, stopping our feet and hollering, “hallelujah!” Who is this God that we are worshipping? I can hardly stand that stuff, how can God stand it?

We have substituted discussion for preaching. That is right; we are sitting around in circles discussing the Word of God instead of somebody coming along that is anointed by the Holy Spirit preaching the Word of God.

We have a popular religion. This religion will suit anybody’s fancy. They “live and let live.” They say, “You do your thing and I will do mine and God will have to accept it.” No, He won’t either!

Third: I’ll tell you something else that we have in this country. We have a professional ministry. Prophets have gone out of style. That’s right; the Elijahs, the John the Baptists and the Pauls. Men who are definite, determined and doctrinal in their messages are not welcome anymore.

You see; we want a peace-maker and a moderator. There is no voice in the wilderness today. There is no *“disturber in Israel.”* Preachers are excellent compromisers.

People don’t go to the House of God to hear a word from God anymore; they go to fulfill a duty. Most people go to feel good and do not want to be disturbed. Church people today will not endure sound doctrine but, *“they will heap to themselves teachers having itching ears.”*

Preachers are hired and fired by men. Preachers are called and dismissed by boards. Preachers are assigned to churches and are removed the same way. These are not servants of God; these are servants of men. That is how men hire them and fire them. That is how men call them, assign them (“You can enter the ministry now”), and remove them. This is a professional ministry. There was a time when Paul said, *“God put me in the ministry.”*

I will tell you this; now watch this; it moves right into what I have been reading from 1 Corinthians. We have a spiritually ignorant generation because of this religious, affluent,

society and popularized religion with no offense in the message. Our Lord said, "*Marvel not My brethren if the world hate you.*" The world doesn't hate anybody, not preachers, anyway.

This professional ministry has produced an ignorant generation; they are spiritually ignorant. They are "*ever learning.*" They are always reading something, ever learning, "*but never coming to a knowledge of the truth.*"

Fourth: You see; my generation knows practically nothing of the true character of God. "*God is love*" but my friends; God's chief attribute is Holiness; "*God is Holy.*" Read the Old Testament. He does not call His angels His loving angels; He calls them His "*Holy angels.*"

God is not in His loving temple; He is in His "*Holy Temple.*" The Bible is not His loving Word it is His "*Holy Word.*" The tabernacle was not the loving place but the "*Holy of Holies.*" God is Holy and Just and Righteous, as well as love and mercy. We don't know anything about the holiness of God because it has not been preached.

My generation knows nothing of the true character of sin. We know nothing of the fall and its consequences. What happened in the Garden? What happened when Adam ate the forbidden fruit? Well, "*Death, judgment and condemnation came upon all men,*" the Scripture says. They died in Adam and are dead in trespasses and sin.

My generation knows nothing of Covenant mercies. I was in Florida one time. I wanted to go to a church. I looked into the yellow pages and I found the Covenant Baptist Church. I called this church and the secretary answered. I asked her why she called her church the Covenant Baptist Church. She said, "I don't have the faintest idea."

There are not many people who know anything about the Covenant, although it is mentioned in the Bible 300 times. The Scripture says, "*The Everlasting Covenant, God's Covenant.*" He made a covenant with Noah, a covenant with Adam, a covenant with David and a covenant with Abraham. There is a covenant of grace in which Christ is the Surety. My generation knows nothing about that.

My generation knows little or nothing about the person and work of Christ. Who is He? Who is this Jesus Christ? Why did He come into the world? What did He do? Why did He do that? Why did He have to die on a cross? Why such a cruel, ignominious death? Why the perfect obedience, why live 33 years on this earth? Why not just run down here, die and go back to glory? My generation doesn't know why. They don't know where He is now or what He is doing or why He is there.

My generation knows little or nothing of the Old Testament pictures and types of redemption. Christ said, "*Moses wrote of Me.*" The Scripture says, "*Abraham saw My day and was glad.*" He quoted Jonah, Isaiah and all in connection with His own ministry and life.

My generation knows nothing of true salvation or true regeneration. Oh, they get religion and they turn over a new leaf. They will quit a few bad habits and join the church. They will have a young people's program, a social organization that makes them feel good. They will have an experience but they know nothing of a new creation in Christ Jesus.

They know nothing of the inward well of living water. They know nothing of the oneness of the True Vine and the branches. They know nothing of the oneness of the Head and the body. They know nothing of that new birth or that coming to know God in an everlasting relationship.

They slip into church and slip out about as quickly. They get religion and they don't know that they have it and lose it and don't miss it because it is just something that they do for God.

My generation believes and preaches like the Galatians, a mixture of grace and works. I listen to preachers and I try to hear the note that they are sounding. Are they sounding the note of free grace? No, they are not! They are sounding a mixture of, "God has done all that He can do, the rest is up to you."

They say that God is in the background wanting you to do something, but He can't violate your will or make you do anything, so you will just have to volunteer. I wonder if Noah volunteered to build that Ark or if God told him to do it.

Did Abraham volunteer to leave his father's house or did God tell him to? Did Moses decide to offer a lamb in Egypt or did God command him to? Did Zacchaeus volunteer to come down or did Christ tell him to come down? What about Lazarus in the tomb? Did he just decide he would get up and walk out or did Christ command him to come out and give him life?

My generation has a "*form of Godliness but they deny the power thereof.*" They are always talking about God, but He has no power. They think that He can't do anything. They say, "That He would like to save everybody but they won't let Him." They think that God's hands are tied and there are no hands but your hands. That is what they tell me.

They say that God has no feet (He is an odd God). They say that He has no eyes either, except your eyes. He has no hands but your hands and no tongue but your tongue. This god can't do much can he? This sounds like an idol to me.

The Living God says, *"My hands are not short that I cannot save; My ears are not heavy that I cannot hear (He can hear)." "None can stay My hand or say unto Me what doest Thou?"*

My generation has got enough religion to make them miserable and not enough to do them any good. But, in face of all this, the religious are still looking for a sign. They are not looking for a person, but a sign. The worldly is still seeking his wisdom, logic and all of these things.

I will tell you this, in Christ crucified, to those who hear, to those who believe, they see the power of God and the wisdom of God.

"At the cross, at the cross,  
Where I first saw the light,  
And the burden of my heart, rolled away,

It was there by faith,  
I received my sight,  
And now I am happy all the day."

Do you know why I am happy? I am happy because at the cross the true character of God is revealed. There at the cross you see the love of God demonstrated. *"God so loved the world that He gave His Son."*

At the cross, you see the justice of God demonstrated. God must punish sin. In the person of His Son He is punishing our sins. God must be holy. At the cross you see the holiness of God because He turned His back on His Son. Christ said, *"My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"* It is because of God's holiness that He cannot have anything to do with sin. *"Christ was made sin for us."*

At the cross is where we see the character of God. At the cross you see the love of God; you see the justice of God; you see the holiness of God and you see the righteousness of God. For God fulfilled the law, honored the law, satisfied the justice of God and gave to us a perfect righteousness with which God can be pleased and which God can accept. That's the power and wisdom of God.

Also, at the cross, you can see the true nature of sin revealed. There are two charges against our race. In the Garden of Eden we tried to throw God off of His throne. We said, "We will be like God." When His Son came down to this world, we spit in His face and nailed Him to a cross and said; "We won't have this man reign over us."

When you stand at the foot of that cross, look there hanging, there is true holiness on that cross. He went about doing good; "*He knew no sin; had no sin; did no sin.*" He healed the sick, raised the dead and fed the hungry. There was true holiness personified and what is man's reaction to it? They nailed Him to a cross. There is the true nature of man!

You probably think that if a perfectly holy man came to this earth, everybody would follow Him. But they spit in His face, nailed Him to the cross and buried Him in the grave. That is what they did to Jesus Christ. There is sin!

When you talk about how good you are and how good people are and how there is a spark of goodness in everybody, go to the cross and see how good people are. They hate God. They don't hate their god and they don't hate their idols. They don't hate their interpretation of God but they hate the living and true God, the holy God, the just God and the righteous God.

When He stood on this earth in human flesh they spit on Him. They put Him on a cross and chose a thief in His place. Huh? That's right; you know that's right!

I will tell you something else; at the cross you learned the covenant mercies at the cross. Jesus Christ was the lamb slain at the cross? Yes sir, "*before the foundation of the world.*" What God does in time, He did in eternity. God always has a plan.

These preachers keep talking about God's plan. If you knew anything about God's plan, you would know something about God's covenant of grace and covenant of mercy. He said, "*I purposed it; I will bring it to pass. I willed it; I will bring it to pass. I've spoken it; I will do it.*"

Everything that is done in time is decreed in eternity. That's right! When they cast dice at the foot of the cross for His garments, God said hundreds of years before then that is what they would do. You see; we carried out the determinate council and foreknowledge of God when we crucified His Son. We did what God determined before to be done.

What was done at Calvary was willed, decreed, purposed and planned by God, before this world began. God left men to their own depraved, wicked, bound-free wills to do what their will would do. We acted according to our nature. We always will unless we are interrupted. We always will unless we are arrested by God. We will go down the slippery slide to hell unless God stops us and changes our will and gives us a new heart.

You see, covenant mercies are at the cross. Christ's death was not an accident. Christ's death was purposed and planned by God before the world began. At the cross, you see the person and work of Christ.

Who is on that cross? That is the Son of God. As man, He suffered and as God He satisfied. As man He bore our sins; as God, He put them away. He is the God-man. The work that He accomplished at that cross was to redeem a people. He didn't attempt to do it; He did it.

You see, salvation is accomplished. When our Lord died on that cross, He said; *"It is finished. All that the Father gave Me to do I have accomplished it. I have finished the work You gave Me to do."* Christ paid the debt:

"Jesus paid it all,  
All the debt I owe,  
Sin has left a crimson stain,  
And He washed it white as snow."

I will tell you something else that you see at the cross. Paul said, *"I preach the cross; I preach Christ crucified, the Power and Wisdom of God."* In the cross you see all of the Old Testament patterns, pictures and types fulfilled.

As you stand and look at the cross, your mind goes back to Abel and his brother Cain. Cain brought of the fruit of the fields and Abel brought a lamb and shed its blood by faith. That is what you see at the cross.

As you stand and look at the cross, you see Abraham and Isaac walking up that mountain, Mt. Mariah, to sacrifice and worship God. Isaac looked at his father and said, *"Father, here is the wood, here is the fire, where is the lamb?"*

As I stand at the foot of the cross and Jesus Christ is dying on the cross, I hear the words of Isaac, echoing over those thousands of years, *"Father, where is the lamb?"* Abraham answered, *"My son, God will provide Himself a Lamb."* There He is!

When I stand at Calvary's cross and I look upon Jesus Christ suffering and dying, my mind goes back to Egypt. Israel was in captivity and bondage for 400 years. God said, *"I will pass through tonight at midnight and slay the first born, but you, my people, select the lamb, the firstling of the flock without spot or blemish. Put it away four days; observe it; slay it; put the blood upon the door. When I see the blood I will pass over you."*

As I see Christ on that cross, I see the blood of the Lamb and God's Passover. *"Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."*

Go through the whole Old Testament; it is fulfilled at Calvary. *"Moses wrote of Me."* My generation does not know that. Do you know why? Nobody has taken the time to preach it to them. They have been too busy playing ball, entertaining people, trying to get folks down the aisle. They are telling them to believe, not what to believe or whom to believe or why to believe.

I will tell you this, at the cross, *"Mercy and truth are met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed one another."* The cross enabled God to be Just and Justifier of all who believe in Jesus Christ.

Oh, the religious world seeks after their show and their signs, emotionalism and entertainment. The world seeks after wisdom. When a man is ever taken by the Spirit of God to Calvary, where Christ is crucified, he will see there the power of God and the wisdom of God and the character of God. He will see the nature of sin, the mercies of the covenant fulfilled and the person and work of Jesus Christ not attempted but accomplished.

The patterns and types of the Old Testament will be seen richly fulfilled. You will see salvation accomplished. You will see mercy and truth met together and a Holy God enabled by the sacrifice of His Son to justify the ungodly.

We preach the glory of His person; we preach the excellency of His character; we preach the power and efficacy of His blood. What do I mean by efficacy? It means, He got the job done. Our Lord didn't try to save anybody; He saved them. There is no sin too black, no guilt too great, no life too vile, no heart too evil, and no mind too corrupt, that the blood of Christ cannot cleanse white as snow.

We preach the continuation of His intercession; *"He ever liveth to make intercession."* We preach the promise of His glorious return, *"Christ crucified, the power and wisdom of  
God."*

