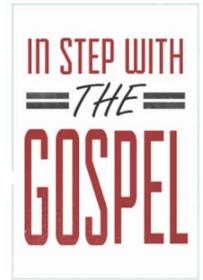


Gospel Wisdom

September 3, 2017



Open: What makes the Gospel a story worth listening to?

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:17—2:5.

Discuss:

1. In verse 17 Paul expresses concern that relying on “eloquent wisdom” when preaching the Gospel diminishes the power of the cross. Why would this be a concern of his? (*See 1 Corin. 2:1-5.*) Why might we be tempted to embellish the Gospel when we present it to others?
2. Why would the proclamation of the cross be “folly to those who are perishing” (v. 18)? (*Read 1 Corin. 2:14.*) Was this ever true in your life? Explain. How should this truth affect the way we understand and practice evangelism?
3. According to verse 19, what does God intend to do with the wisdom of the world? In verses 17-23, what are the different ways the Gospel is described? How will God use the Gospel to prove the folly of human wisdom according to verses 21-24? How is this further confirmed in verses 26-28?
4. From verses 26-29, what have believers who feel intellectually and spiritually superior to others forgotten about their past and why God chose them? As you reflect on your past, what reasons do you have for being humble regarding your salvation rather than proud?
5. What is God’s purpose in the way He brings about salvation (v. 29)? Are there ways you tend to take credit for some aspect of your salvation? Explain. Why would this be wrong? What does it mean to instead “boast in the Lord” (v. 31)? How can genuine humility on our part help to authentic the Gospel message as we proclaim it to the world?
6. In what ways does Paul describe what Christ is to the believer in this passage? (*Note especially verses 24 and 30.*) How would thinking about Jesus in this way deepen and strengthen your spiritual life?

Apply: As you think about ministries you’re involved in, are there ways that your methods might be diminishing the power of the cross? What would it look like for you to decide as Paul did in 1 Corinthians 2:2 to know nothing except Christ crucified?

Pray: Pray that God would increase our humility before Him and others while giving us confidence in the power of the Gospel to change lives and hearts for the glory of Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:17-31

¹⁷ 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."

²⁰ 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 did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,²⁴ 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 men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

²⁶ 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 what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ 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 human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

¹ 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. (ESV)