

THE WEAKNESS OF THE CROSS IS WISE 1 COR 1:18-31
THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT MAR 8, 2015

¹⁸ 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 He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

Paradigm change is: what was wise doesn't work anymore.

In business, new paradigms tend to make old ways worthless.

For example, in business of information & entertainment,

money was made by selling hardware: TV, radio;

to receive content broadcast free, paid by advertising

Model now changed so even most content is paid for.

Now cell phones sold relatively cheap, which seems foolish

except money is made not on hardware but service plan

Now more and more apps and online content is free

because money is made not on hardware or service

but on eyeballs of customers sold to advertisers.

Paul is writing about what it takes for us to receive something

more important than information or entertainment:

eternal salvation.

He says what may work or seem wise in other situations

is worthless in this situation

where salvation is provided for free by the seemingly foolish

death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

WORLDLY WISDOM IS WORTHLESS FOR SALVATION
JESUS' WEAK DEATH HAS GOD'S WISE POWER
GOD GIVES WISDOM BY THE WEAKNESS OF FAITH

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The paradigm of worldly religion is constantly evolving.

When triune God revealed his eternal power in creation,
and people honored him by returning sacrificial offerings,
Satan sold the counterfeits of animism & polytheism:
primitive beliefs that forces of nature controlled by spirits
who must be kept happy by sacrifices.

When God showed he was one God & gave commandments
about how to use his blessings,

Satan sold Buddhism & monotheistic Islam with strict rules
about how to be saved by righteous religious behavior.

When Jesus proclaimed the gospel of grace & forgiveness,
the world bought the counterfeit of universal tolerance
as if nothing is really right or wrong.

The indication of worldly religion and reason it is so appealing
to humans is that it always depends on what humans do,
some sacrifice or ritual we perform, some good deed we do,
some insight or understanding that makes sense to us,
or some feeling we have or decision we make

The problem with religion based on human wisdom
is not the wisdom but the human.

It fails to take into account the foolishness of fallen man
who is too short sighted to see what is truly right
and who insists on depending on what can be
observed and understood, even though our mind is
too clouded to observe spiritual things
and too small to understand God.

and fails to take into account weakness of our sinful nature
which is unable to do what is right even when we know it.

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Paradigm of how to fight & defend against enemy has changed.

Depending on large numbers with swords and clubs
becomes weak when big walls & armor are developed.

But walls and armor became a thing of the past
when explosives were developed.

Now it doesn't matter how big your bombs or warships are
as secrecy & subversion & cybercrime are key weapons
and it is hard to even see who or where enemy is.

In defending truth, Greeks put up carefully constructed wisdom
as a wall ideas had to measure up against.

To defend against depending on the simple number
of people thinking something is true,

To defend against claims that simply sounded good,
Jews looked for powerful signs & miracle to blow them away
But the real enemy snuck past them both.

What is the enemy which cuts us off from God
and destroys our security and hope for eternity?

It is sin, which is ingrained in our very human nature.

For it to be defeated, battle must be fought in human flesh,
but because we are too weak to fight for ourselves,
God himself became flesh in Jesus Christ.

We fail to be saved by keeping commandments in O.T. reading
but Jesus kept them perfectly for us & so was innocent.

We fail to be saved by performing religious rituals & sacrifice
which Jesus exposed in Gospel as corrupted
and making the temple more filthy than pure,
but Jesus once and for all sacrifice pays for all our sins.

Jesus' unjust condemnation is foolishness of God
which is wiser than men's attempt to escape our own sin.

and his death on the cross is the weakness of God
which is stronger than men's attempt to defeat sin.

because it is the only way to combine both God's perfect
the perfect justice of God which must punish sin
and the perfect love of God for us

Recently, an L.A. area girl's basketball team, Gauchos,
wore pink on jerseys to support cancer awareness,
This violated league rules that only official team colors
can be worn to prevent the display of gang colors
So they were suspended from play in section championship.
Until coach said to suspend her instead.
Which league officials agreed both satisfied spirit of rules
and allowed the girls to play.

Jesus taking punishment of sin in our place
combines both the perfect justice and perfect mercy of God.
To both Jews and Greeks it is silly that salvation could come
through a horrific form of execution for worst criminals.
It is still offensive to many today that God would
willingly allow his own son to suffer and die.
But we are so corrupted that God needs to go
to a ridiculous extreme to save us.

Jesus' death and resurrection is ultimately the required sign
of God's love and his wisdom and his power to save us.

So, how are we know and believe this is true
and to benefit from what Jesus has done?

Are we convinced of it by a great sign or wise reasoning?

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written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Paradigm of how we get things has changed from time
people first needed what they couldn't make for selves.
Local stores were challenged by mail order catalogues
which could offer more selection.

then catalogues declined when big box stores were able
to offer things on the spot for cheaper.

Now online shopping and shipping is on upsurge
because it is easier than even going to a store.

Popular paradigm for how to get not stuff but truth has changed.

In ancient times it was what was figured out by reasoning.

In medieval times "truth" was handed down in classics.

Modern times said "no," truth is what can be observed
and figured out in experiments.

Post-modern times says "no," truth is what we each see
through our own experience.

But complete and lasting truth is the wisdom revealed by God.

Reasoning can only point us to the angry God of law.

The grace of God is revealed only in the weakness
of Jesus on the cross.

Humanity challenges God to prove it or explain it
but instead he simply causes us to believe it.

Paul says it comes by seemingly powerless words of preaching.

which we are able to receive and believe

not because we are born better/ more noble than others

not because we are so smart or understanding,

not because we are sensitive enough to feel it,

but simply because of the living power of God's word

and the work of his Holy Spirit which enlightens us,

as God also gives and strengthens faith through the

seemingly foolish and weak means

of washing with water in Holy Baptism

and eating and drinking Holy Communion

Simply because God's word brings to nothing things that are
and brings into being things that are not.

So, both the way we are saved and the way we receive it,
through faith, gives us no reason for boasting.

Pastor Michael Kasting of Casey IL, points out

we are compulsive competitive braggarts

we boast proudly about sports teams, vehicle brands

and other things we identify with

although we can't take any credit for them.

But God's word gives us a new paradigm, new view of our self

so that be boast not in anything about ourselves

but only in cross of Christ which we can't take credit for

but is reason God credits to us the righteousness of Christ.

WORLDLY WISDOM IS WORTHLESS FOR SALVATION

because human ways of salvation depend on our
wisdom and power which are so foolish and weak
this is the reason we need salvation in the first place.

JESUS' WEAK DEATH HAS GOD'S WISE POWER

God, in his wisdom, saw that the only way for us to be saved
was for Jesus to take on our weak mortality
and die in our place to pay for our sins
and then to rise again as the ultimate sign
of God's wisdom and power.

GOD GIVES WISDOM BY THE WEAKNESS OF FAITH

When we abandon our efforts and human understanding
to rely totally on God's word, revealed by His Spirit,
we find the wisdom of how to be saved
and the power that transforms our lives
and how we see ourselves, God and others.