

## Christ Crucified – 1 Cor 1:18-25

1 Cor 1:18-25 (Thank Garth); We're in a message series called **Issues**, from 1 Cor  
Slowly working our way thru this letter fr the apostle Paul, to the church in Corinth . . .  
In order to discover the issues of their day, and avoid them in ours

↓And the issue we find in these verses, is **Christ Crucified** – *that* was their issue  
It wasn't an authority issue, or feelings of insecurity, or fighting amongst themselves as  
we've already seen – it's Christ crucified  
Some of them had a problem w/ the fact that Jesus *died*, and **did so a cross (Intro)**

That was their issue – not unlike the issue many still have today  
Oh, maybe not quite so overt or in the same terms, but it's still around  
And if you find yourself thinking, “that's me, that's what I think” – I hope you resolve it  
in our time together, or at least walk out of here one step closer  
And if it's someone else's issue that you know of or run in to – I hope you walk out of  
here better able to help *them* overcome it (1 Cor 1:18-25)

The first thing I want you to see here is that Christ crucified is . . .

### It's foolish to some (v18, 22-23)

That's their issue; V18 says that the word of the cross, the gospel, the fact that Christ was  
crucified for us – *Is folly to those who are perishing*  
IOW it's silliness or foolishness to those who don't believe that his death on a cross can  
help them  
And b/c of it, they continue to die spiritually, just like they're dying physically

That would be like a cancer patient who refuses radiation treatment, b/c they think it's  
foolish to believe in something they can't see or don't fully understand  
So they continue to perish  
But for those in the second half of the verse, CC is the source of God's power to *save*  
them from perishing, and give them life

To the one it's powerful, to the other, like the Greeks and Gentiles in v22-23, it's foolish  
They were the ones, much like us, who looked for life's answers in logic, or something  
that sounded good, or something that made sense to them  
And they associated their heroes and saviors with people of *power* and *status* – not with  
people of weakness and suffering, like a crucified criminal  
It just didn't make sense; It was pure folly

- On top of that, they could not understand how they could ever receive *life*, through *death*  
Especially the death of another person; Especially if that person was a god  
It didn't make sense, and it still doesn't to a whole bunch of people in our day  
They can't get past the fact that God had to die, in order for them to live  
It's an intellectual issue that's due in large part to lack of understanding

To make matters worse, we've been conditioned culturally, to expect that people of  
power, use it – they don't withhold it, they wield it  
Which makes Christ crucified seem all the more foolish  
Why would a person of such power, succumb to such weakness?

Some people have intellectual issues; Some have cultural issues . . .

- And everybody has a spiritual issue  
Where they think CC is foolish b/c they *don't* see their need for it, or *can't*  
They *don't* b/c their hearts have been hardened by the deceit of their own sin . . .  
Or they *can't* b/c their minds have been blinded by the deceit of Satan

That's what Paul says in his *second* letter to the Corinthians in 4:3-4  
*Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the  
god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing  
the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*  
People sometimes think Christ crucified is foolish b/c their minds have been blinded, and  
they can't see its significance and power for their lives\*\*\*\*\*

- That's a problem; That's an issue  
And the only way to overcome it is through faith and repentance  
The only way to overcome your intellectual, or cultural, or spiritual issues with Christ  
crucified – is to repent of your sin and wrong thinking, and step out in faith to believe  
You will not, nor *cannot* understand it until you do  
That's what 1 Cor 2:14 says

Apart from faith and repentance, you lack the spiritual insight necessary to overcome your  
issues  
Short of belief and confession of your sin, Satan will continue to cloud your judgment,  
and you'll continue to succumb to whatever thinking you deem best  
Making CC seem all the more **foolish to you**

### It's a stumbling block to others (v19-23)

That is, it's an impediment to seeing, and receiving, and embracing the gospel  
A barrier to belief; A roadblock to salvation; A hindrance to faith

And Paul gives us at least 4 reasons for it, the first of which is that . . .

#### 1. B/c it exposes the weakness of their thinking (v19)

That's the idea of v19, which is a quote from **Is 29:13-14**, where he writes . . .  
*The Lord said: “Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with  
their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment  
taught by men, therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people,  
with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the  
discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden.”*

God's like, there's going to come a day when I take some drastic measures b/c of your  
fake faith . . .  
And do some things among you that are so amazing and so unbelievable – like crucify  
your Savior . . .  
That it's going to expose the utter weakness, and bankruptcy, and error of any other  
teaching or thinking

That's what God said he'd do 700+ years before Christ . . .  
And Paul cites it here, 20 years *after* Christ's death, as a fulfillment of that promise\*\*\*\*\*  
That in the cross, in Christ crucified – the weakness of worldly thinking and worldly  
wisdom is exposed, and shown for what it is – *useless*  
Useless to *know God* (21a), and useless to be saved

In that sense, the wisdom of the “wise” and the discernment of the “discerning” – is destroyed and thwarted

- There’s no power to change lives in smooth talk or pleasant platitudes  
There’s no power to heal the broken hearted in man-made religion  
There’s no power to cause the blind to see in nebulous spirituality; None at all

But there is in the *blood* – in Christ crucified  
There *is* power, power, *wonder* working power – in the precious blood of the Lamb  
Exposing the weakness of everything else  
And creating a stumbling block to those who don’t like it . . .

## 2. B/c it’s hard on their ego (v20-21)

That’s the 2<sup>nd</sup> reason CC is a stumbling block to others, and the implication of v20 where Paul says . . . (20a)  
Paul’s like – “hey, step up to the plate and be a man”  
If what you have to say is so good and so true and so powerful – then how come you’re so silent?

And Paul answers his rhetorical questions with a rhetorical one of his own, saying – *Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?* (20b); Yes he has  
As shown by the fact that (A), it didn’t work – that’s the first part of v21 . . .  
And (B), God used something totally different to accomplish his purposes  
Something considered foolish by those who are all of a sudden silent (v20b-21)

IOW the proof’s in the pudding – Christ crucified *is* the power of God for salvation to all those who believe, b/c that’s where the power is  
The power to save, the power to raise a dead Jesus from the grave, and the power to help us *live* for him on a daily basis

- From PNG to the Middle East, I’ve heard almost all of our global partners say . . .  
That one of the main differences between believers in Jesus, and Muslims . . .  
Or believers and Hindus; Or believers and Buddhists; Or believers and animists  
Whoever it is, one of the main differences is the *power* to live what we believe  
Believers have it, and the others don’t

And the same is true for *anyone* who believes falsely – whether it’s subtle secularism, or well-meaning spirituality; There’s no power in it  
Which makes you wonder why more people don’t renounce it  
Why more people don’t renounce that which is power-*less*, and turn to that which is power-*full*

↑One of the reasons, is that it’s hard on a person’s ego  
To admit that you’ve been wrong about Christ crucified – is hard on your pride, and therefore a stumbling block to do so  
Unfortunately, many people would rather save face and die, than lose face and live  
I hope that’s not you

The 3<sup>rd</sup> reason Christ crucified is a stumbling block to people, is that . . .

## 3. B/c it’s the opposite of what they’re looking for (v22)

22 – *Jews demand signs . . . (23) but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews*  
Why? Why was Christ crucified a stumbling block, or a hindrance to faith, for Jews?  
B/c the last thing in the world they were looking for was *weakness* in their Messiah  
And the cross was a major sign of weakness

Surely he wouldn’t die on a cross, he’s supposed to sit on a throne; It didn’t line up  
It was the exact opposite of what they were looking for . . .  
And therefore a stumbling block to receive/embrace the gospel; And it still is in our day

Christ crucified is a stumbling to people b/c it’s the opposite of what they’re looking for  
Especially for those who are looking for a *powerful* leader, instead of a *meek* one  
Or those looking to piggyback on someone’s *authority*, instead of their *servant-hood*

Fourth, it’s a stumbling block to others . . .

## 4. B/c it’s offensive to their sensibilities (v23)

Not only were the Jews looking for signs of power – they thought, and rightfully so, that someone who died on a cross was cursed by God  
Deut 21:23 says that a man hanged on a tree is *cursed by God*  
So it defied their sensibilities, their concept of right and wrong – to think that the promised one of God would suffer such a thing – it just didn’t seem right

Kind of like those today who advocate that Christ’s death on the cross was a sick form of cosmic child abuse – and therefore don’t accept it  
When in reality, it’s the most loving thing God ever did  
Not to mention the fact that Christ went willingly  
But that’s largely ignored, b/c the whole thing is offensive to their pre-conceived sensibilities

- That’s the 4<sup>th</sup> reason that Christ crucified is a stumbling block to others\*\*\*\*\*  
And if any one of them describes you, keep working to resolve the issue  
Assess your thinking, drop your pride, and start w/ a clean slate  
But whatever you do, don’t dig in your heels – there’s too much at stake

That brings us to the last point, which is that CC . . .

## ↓It’s good news to many (v21b, 24-25)

It’s foolish to some, a stumbling block to others, but good news to many  
Referring of course to *those who believe* (21b), and *those who are called* (24)  
Two sides of the same coin of salvation that Paul seems to use interchangeably

The one, *those who are called* – referring to the sovereignty of God in *choosing* us for salvation . . .  
And the other, *those who believe* – referring to the free will of man in *receiving* it  
Both, obviously necessary for salvation, but how they work together we don’t know

How it is that God is sovereign in calling people to salvation, without forcing them to believe against their will, we don’t know; the Bible doesn’t tell us  
And how man is free to believe or not, without thwarting or frustrating the will of God, which is impossible – we also don’t know  
We just know that those whom God calls, believe; And those who believe, are called  
Two sides of the same coin of salvation, made possible by the good news of CC

- Good news, b/c we're powerless to save ourselves (24)

To those who realize they are powerless to save themselves – CC is good news; Just like –

His righteousness for my sin, is good news; His death in my place, is good news  
 His forgiveness for my guilt, is good news; His pardon for my plea, is good news  
 His punishment for my penalty, is GN; His redemption for my bondage, is GN  
 His suffering for my salvation, is GN; His brokenness for my wholeness, is GN  
 His grief for my joy, is good news; His rejection for my acceptance, is good news  
 His oppression for my freedom, is GN; His power for my weakness, is good news

To those who realize they are powerless to save themselves – CC is good news

- And it's also good news b/c apart from God's *wisdom*, apart from his design, his means of saving us through the death of his Son – we could *never* figure it out on our own  
 We not only lack the power to make it happen, but the knowledge, the wisdom

And even if you consider it foolish or weak . . .

According to v25, it's still stronger and wiser than anything *you* can bring to the table

That's not to say that God is weak or foolish . . .

But that his methods, though foolish or weak to some, are still stronger/wiser than ours

So no matter how you cut it, Christ crucified is good news to many . . .

B/c it's the wisdom and genius of God to save our souls when we couldn't . . .

Even if we knew how, which we don't

- ↑The question is – **What's it to *you*?**

Christ crucified is foolish to some, a stumbling block to others, and good news to many

But what's it to *you*? That's the most important question

Do you think it's foolish like the ancient Greeks and so many others since?

If so, you're flirtin' with disaster; Perishing

Or is it a stumbling block to your thinking, or ego, or your expectations, or sensibilities?

If so, your way may *seem* right, but the end is death the Bible says

