

## 2. Contrasting Godly Wisdom and Human Wisdom

We concluded our last topic by learning that Paul said the Lord had sent him to preach the message of the cross. He was not to use human wisdom to try and impress people with his speech. Instead, he was to focus on the preaching of the cross. As we begin our topic today, we will see why that message is so important. We will also see that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the difference between godly wisdom and human wisdom so that we will help them to understand the importance of sharing godly wisdom with others.

We live in a day when many religious leaders do not want to talk about the cross. As we read 1 Corinthians 1:18-19, we see why they do not want to talk about the cross. Those verses say, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.’” These verses help us to explain to our children why many religious leaders do not like to talk about the cross. God says that the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. As a result, this verse tells us that those who do not like to talk about the cross avoid that topic because they are perishing. They have never placed their faith in Christ and so they have no desire to talk to others about the purpose of the cross because they have never accepted the message of the cross for their own lives.

In contrast, for those of us who have placed our trust in Christ, we understand why it is so important to talk about the cross. We realize our salvation is due to the death of Christ on the cross and the fact that the Father showed He was satisfied with the blood Christ shed for our sin by His death. The Father showed this satisfaction by raising Christ from the dead. As a result, the message of the cross reminds us daily that through the cross Christ defeated sin and provided eternal life to all who place their faith in Christ for salvation. Only those who have received this eternal life can have the wisdom of God in them. 1 Corinthians 2:10 says, “But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” We are able to receive godly wisdom because we have believed in the death and resurrection of Christ.

James 3:14-15 tells us what the wisdom of this world is like. Those verses say, “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic.” We see that God promises one day He will destroy the wisdom of the world. We also see that worldly understanding will be done away with and brought to nothing. The word that is translated “prudent” here speaks of the educated or those who think that they are intelligent. Matthew 11:25 uses the same word when it says, “At that time, Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.” Those who depend on their own knowledge will never be able to stand before God.

1 Corinthians 1:20 goes on to say, “Where *is* the wise? Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” The word that is translated “wise” speaks of those the world considers highly educated. It is used four times in 1 Corinthians 3:18-20 where we read, “Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in

this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, ‘He catches the wise in their own craftiness’; and again, ‘The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.’” Here, we see that God says those thoughts that are based on human wisdom are futile or empty.

The scribes were those who served as recorders or made copies of books of the Old Testament during the time of Christ. Because of the fact that they often copied books of the Old Testament, they were considered those who could answer the most difficult questions. A disputer was a person who argued philosophy. God said He is the One who has made the wisdom of the world foolishness. God is the One who can silence this worldly wisdom. When Peter and John were speaking before the top religious leaders in Jerusalem, Acts 4:13 says, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” The wisdom of this world does not compare with the wisdom of God.

1 Corinthians 1:21-22 says, “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom.” Here, we see that all forms of human wisdom could never help people to know God. That is still true today. Since our children cannot help people to know God through human wisdom, that is why it is important to help our children understand how God has chosen to help people come to the point where they will believe.

We see that God has chosen to save those who believe through the foolishness of the message preached. Paul explained the message that he preached in 1 Corinthians 2:2 where he said, “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” The word translated “preached” means *to proclaim as a herald and includes both speaking publicly and speaking to individuals*. Whether we are speaking in public or talking to individuals in their homes or some other place, we still are to share the same message. That is the message of the death and resurrection of Christ.

We go on to see that different people seek different things in their search for understanding in life. 1 Corinthians 1:22-24 says, “For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” We see that the Jews wanted a sign before they would believe something. That is the reason why God gave signs for the Jews. Hebrews 2:3-4 says, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?” Since the apostles heard Christ and were chosen to be witnesses of His resurrection, God verified the testimony of the apostles about the resurrection by signs, wonders and various miracles.

Since God verified the ministry of the apostles with signs, wonders and miracles, Satan will also try to verify the ministry of the antichrist with signs, wonders and miracles. 2 Thessalonians 2:8-

10 says, “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” We see that Satan is already working to prepare the world to look for signs.

In contrast to the Jews, the Greeks looked for wisdom. Since Corinth was a Greek city, we will see in our next two topics that the Lord used Paul to explain in more detail the source of godly wisdom. Paul said that mature Christians will not depend on either signs or human wisdom for their message to the world. Instead, mature Christians will preach Christ crucified. To Jews without Christ, the message of the cross is a stumbling block. To Greeks without Christ, the message of the cross is foolishness. However, to both Jews and Gentiles that are called by God, the message of the death and resurrection of Christ reveals both the power of God and the wisdom of God. That is why we want to help our children learn to focus on the cross rather than either signs or human wisdom.

1 Corinthians 1:25 goes on to help us understand why God wants us to help our children learn to focus on the death and resurrection of Christ as they share the Gospel with others. That verse says, “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” Here, we see the way that God has chosen to share the message of the cross. The cross reveals the holiness of God because it shows that it is necessary for sin to be paid for by death. Hebrews 9:22 says, “And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” There is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood. At the same time, the cross reveals the love of God because all those who repent of their sin of unbelief are granted eternal life as a free gift. Titus 2:13-14 says, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.” Christ redeemed us from every sin and purified us.

We also want to help our children understand that the weakness of God is stronger than men so that nothing can separate us from the love of God once we place our faith in Christ. Romans 8:37-39 says, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The Lord will greatly use our physical and spiritual children as they share the message of the cross. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to share godly wisdom through the message of the cross.