

1Corinthians 17-12-10b

We continue now our study in the book of 1 Corinthians 1. We pick up here at verse 20. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? The wise, the secular argument, the scribe, the religious argument, the debaters of this age, Paul ties their objections, their alternatives, their debating finesse to the age in which they live. It all makes so much sense at the time, in the context, and yet God renders it foolish, the wisdom of the world, because God is dealing at the level of eternity, the long view, the broad sweep.

And so many of these things that seem so urgent and so important vanish with the passing of the generations. I've mentioned before, I was never so struck by that principle as when I was in the Philippines and took an afternoon and rode a bus for a couple of hours down the Bataan Peninsula and then rode a bunga boat across to the island of Corregidor. And back then it was less than 40 years since the time of MacArthur and General Wainwright and the U.S. forces that were overtaken and captured and then marched back up in what has become known as the Bataan Death March to camps where hundreds of them died.

And walking around the military base and seeing the barracks and the theater and the commissary and the emplaced guns and so on, overgrown with jungle weeds, at that time, when I saw it back in around 1980, there was no tourist development of any kind. Nobody ever came there. And it was just returning to the jungle and walking into the barracks and seeing, like every government barracks that's ever been, the two-tone paint, part of it mint green on the inside, and yet the roof is gone.

It's blasted and destroyed. There's plants growing up in it. There are trees in the theater where the screen ought to be and the seats are there rotting away and the little ticket office.

And it was such a point of contention. You walk a battlefield at Gettysburg or anywhere in the Virginia and Pennsylvania area and see the monuments and so on, so fiercely contested, men spilling blood to gain yards of ground to seize control of a hilltop. And now it's a park.

It's a place where people bring their kids and take pictures of them sitting on the cannons that once were designed to inflict deadly harm. And you think, how could it be that it was so important as to fight and die over at one point and now it is of no importance other than a place to visit and think of history? What changed? It's the passing of time. It's the shifting of circumstance and what seems so persuasive and so vital and so incredibly centrally important at one moment is shown in the larger sweep of time to be momentary and to be just a nexus of the moment that doesn't last and doesn't persist.

And Paul is moving in that direction as he talks about the message of the cross. The message of the cross tells us about the power of God and the work of Christ at the central point of history. Everything before that leads up to it.

He is the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. God had that as the focus point

before creation. It is looked back to forever.

He will be the light in the eternal kingdom of the Father. Who will be? The Lamb. The Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world will ever be the light in the eternal kingdom of the Father.

Everything centers on the cross. It is the one most timeless, most central event in all of angelic or human history. It's the biggest thing God has ever done of which we have any ability to understand.

That's what Paul is focusing on here and he says these debates where you're dividing up and taking sides and wrangling over words and positions and which guy is the better speaker. He says you need to get over the foolishness argument. And that's why foolishness is used so many times in the book.

I've already mentioned the times that it's used here in the first chapter, but it's used elsewhere in the book. Look ahead to chapter two, verse 14, or you can just listen to me read it. The natural man does not receive the things of the spirit for they are what? Foolishness to him.

Your King James talks about the carnal mind. The natural man does not receive the things of the spirit. They are foolishness to him.

If you're operating in the momentary wisdom of this age, you're not going to get there by logic. The next chapter over, chapter three, verses 18 and 19, let no one deceive himself. It's such a commonplace.

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Jeremiah 17, 9, one of the first verses I ever memorized when I was a tiny child with my mother looking at those Bible memory cards. The heart is deceitful above all things.

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, if anyone seems to be arguing for phlogiston and making a really good case in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. You've got to back up and let God impart eternal wisdom, transcendent understanding.

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, for it is written, he catches the wise in their own craftiness. There is a way that seems right. The next chapter over, chapter four, verse 10, Paul says, we are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ.

We are weak, but you are strong. You are distinguished and we are dishonored. Talking to these religious and secular debaters that have crept into the Corinthian church.

Now, let me ask you in the long view, when it comes time for the judgment, who do you think is going to stand when God judges the living and the dead through Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul or some guy in Corinth that was making a persuasive argument? Paul says, you think we're

foolish now and you're wise. You think we're weak and you're strong. You think that you are distinguished and we are dishonored.

That's the wisdom of the moment. That's what somebody is arguing. But how tragically wrong, how eternally short-sighted that is.

So this idea of foolishness is going to persist and continue because Paul is arguing against those who want to dismiss faith in Christ, belief in the message of the cross and seeking and finding the power of God for life by reason, rational argument, appeal to conventional wisdom, what has always been known, what people think is common sense. Let's pick up now in the letter in verse 21. 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.

In the wisdom of God, God said, you know what? The path to eternal life is not going to depend on how smart you are, who can persuade you with science, with philosophy, with how much sense it makes to have a sacrifice. In the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom does not know God. What is the witness? We've talked about this before in the mouth of two or three witnesses, the truth is established.

What are the witnesses to every man? Are they logical arguments? What would be known of God is manifest where? In creation. I look up in the sky and I see order and balance and the results of the exercise of great power. When I look around me, when I look at living things, when I look at the incredible diversity and sophisticated design in nature, it argues for the activity of a mind that is possessed of incredible.

Super natural power in my own heart, I recognize. This has been the source of manmade religions down through the ages. There is something more to life than meets the eye.

What is it? I can either seek and find the truth or I can invent or adopt a substitute. But people are universally spiritual. They are universally elevated in their thought.

There is something beyond the momentary and the immediate and the instant of gratification. There's something else. I sense that there is more.

And mythology and astrology and so many other things, belief in the spirits of the dead that persist or whatever, that there is an invisible world beyond our reach with physical tools that somehow impinges on our own. There is a sense of that in the heart of every man. That is the sense of the eternal, of the beyond the moment.

These are the witnesses. And notice they are evidences of power. I sense the action of a mind.

I sense the implementation of a power greater than anything we can comprehend or understand or explain. Even science with all of its accomplishments quickly reaches the end of its abilities. Well, what happened before the Big Bang? Well, it's such a thorny question.

They finally had to get Stephen Hawking to provide them with a theory that says, well, it's the wrong question. There is no before. It's like saying, what latitude is north of the North Pole? It just doesn't exist.

And therefore, the universe doesn't have to have a beginning. It just appeared out of nothing. It doesn't have to have a cause.

And that's why he got the prizes and awards that he got is that he provided physics with the non-answer by making it a non-question. Since we can't answer the question, we deny the question type of thing. And this goes for abiogenesis.

Where did life come from? Well, evolution is only the study of how life developed, not where it came from. They just define it away. We don't have to explain where it came from.

We're only explaining what happened once it was here. And it's such an obvious dodge. But you have to do that because you quickly come to the limits of human ability.

It's like trying to get yourself to see ultraviolet light or see infrared light. We have to convert those things with a scope or a meter or something into something we can perceive because we just do not have the ability to see the invisible. We acknowledge the invisible.

There are radio waves in the air all around you and all around me. We don't see any of them. We don't hear any of the radio and television broadcasts that are passing through at various frequencies this very moment.

And for centuries and centuries, the angels could have been having 611 channels and all of mankind would have never known the difference because they had no equipment. So it pleased God. Through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe, notice it pleased God through the message preached to save those who believe the message is preached.

It is communicated. This is the third witness. There are people who have already heard the witness of nature.

There are people who have already heard the witness in their heart and they have already begun to form a response. I either sense that there is a creator and I want to know him. I want to find out more about him.

I want to connect with whatever this greater power is, or I don't. Those who do get that third witness. Which is the message preached the in another place, Paul talks about how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard and how shall they hear without a preacher? How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? They sense that there is a him, but to put their trust in him.

They need that message and you notice that God never uses angels for this. He always uses

people. He sends Peter to Cornelius.

He sends Paul a messenger. There is always a preacher. Those who got the baptism of John, Paul comes and meets them.

They don't get an angelic visitation. They don't have an impartation of glorious heraldic announcement from angels. People are God's instrument for delivering the truth.

And that comes to those who are seeking the grand question. We've talked about this before. People, especially, you know, arguers, the debaters of this age want to say, well, if they have to hear about Jesus, then what about all of these people that have lived in China and South America and Africa and all of the continents of the earth? And they went on for generations and centuries and millennia, and they never knew anything about the God of Israel, never heard anything about Jesus.

So what about them? God just consigned them all to hell because they didn't happen to be close enough to hear. Not at all. It's blindingly obvious that if it is not the will of God that any should perish, but that all come to repentance, then all who are capable of coming to repentance, all of those who are willing to believe are going to get this third witness.

They are going to get the message. It's very simple to work backward and say, if there are whole continents full of people for generations who never got the message, why would that be? It is because God organized the placing and the timing of souls into areas where there are whole civilizations of people who reject the first and second witness. They're not interested in finding the creator from the witness of what's in their heart and what's in the witness of nature around them.

They prefer some other alternative. These are those that are given to the God of this world. God says, you can have, I will create billions of souls.

All of the ones who have no interest in me or relationship with me or future life with me, you can have them. You show me how those who are just like you, who are not interested in life and connection and humble subordination to me who are not willing. You show me how you are going to create an alternate life that is godless and that succeeds, that doesn't implode, corrode, become cancerous and malignant and ultimately destroy itself.

Show me how you're going to do that. People always say, well, why would God create so many people when he knows that they're all bound for hell? Step back. The wisdom of the ages says there is a proof.

There is an experiment. There is a demonstration. God creates creatures with free will and lets them freely choose.

But all of us have our free will constrained. I could make a free choice to fly, but I can flap my arms till I die and I'm not going to lift off the ground. I could make a choice to walk through a

wall, but I'll bump into it and fall down every time.

My free will is constrained by my environment, by my time and my place. I can't be a 17th century farmer. I don't live in the 17th century.

I can't be a 22nd century astronaut. I don't live in the 22nd century. I've been assigned a place and a time and my free will functions within prescribed limits.

And operates on specific opportunities that come my way in my particular circumstance, given my heredity and my environment and my previous choices in the short span of my life. So all of us have free will that is circumscribed by time and space and circumstance. So God is free to dictate that.

He chose when you would be born. He chose when I would be born. He chose where.

He chose with what genetic makeup and with what family and with what childhood experiences. God arbitrated all of that. And within those walls, if you think about a laboratory, I was watching something last night.

They're doing research on memory. It's really fascinating. There was a NOVA program on, it was called Memory Hackers.

If you get a chance to, I think it's on their website. But at one point there, they are experimenting with how memories are formed and how they are reprocessed over time. And so they had these lab rats and mice and they shave their heads and they put little tubes into their brain where they can do various things.

But they'll put them in an environment. And they let a mouse explore an environment that was very friendly. He had bedding.

He had a place to hide. It was an ideal mouse environment. And so they let him wander around in there and experience it.

And he formed a happy memory of this place. Well, this lady's done really brilliant work. She took a light sensitive algae, which most of them are.

But she found the part of algae genes where light sensitivity is programmed. The proteins that are created, that are generated to make something sensitive to light, like a photoelectric cell. She found that piece and she spliced it into the mouse's genome at the place where it forms neurons.

So that basically these neurons are light sensitive. They are sensitive to light. They can detect light the way algae does.

It's genius work. So then what she can do is by turning on light. And there's actually little lasers, little LED, what do you call it, fiber optic cable going into the top of this mouse's skull.

She shines light on the brain while the happy memory is being formed. So when these neurons fire and create their new connections and so on, they are light sensitive, where the ones that were inactive at that point are not. So the memory neurons storing the happy memory are sensitive to light.

Well, then she put that same mouse in an empty box with a harsh light, no place to hide, no bedding. And the mouse just crouched in the corner and froze because it's afraid. Then she turned a light on into the fiber optic and shined it on the mouse's brain, which caused those happy memory neurons to fire.

Well, suddenly the mouse is happy and he starts wandering around and grooming himself and doing all of the things that are associated with a relaxed, happy, peaceful mouse. And anyway, they go on to talk about the influence of memory on behavior and that when you bring a memory back up, it is editable. Your memory can change every time you bring it up.

And anyway, I recommend the thing. It's called Memory Hackers on Nova. And it's a fascinating program.

I recorded it a few weeks ago, but I watched it last night. But the point we're making here is that the wisdom of the world is temporary and is negotiable. It's editable.

It is changeable. It can be manipulated. The power of God that has been expressed in Christ, the message of the cross, is not.

It is timeless. It is the power of God. So when you look at verse 21 and it says the world through wisdom did not know God, you can work with mouse brains and analyze memory all you want.

But what they've come to discover is it is so we are so limited in even trying to understand our own brain and the network of neurons that make up thought and memory. They're looking at the physical and it's sort of a ham-fisted, sledgehammer science where they're chopping the tops off of mouse heads and shining lights in there. And it's going to be looked at even in the near future as very primitive in the same way that early medical surgery is looked at as very primitive and using leeches is primitive.

And it makes so much sense at the time, but later wisdom proves it of the moment and short-sighted and uninformed. And as far as the physical can ever go, it can never touch the invisible and the ephemeral. Even science will tell you that less than 10% of the universe can even be observed because it's dark matter and dark energy.

And what little we know of the universe and the Big Bang and what happened before the Big Bang and all the rest of it, we're never going to know because it would be like the mouse trying to analyze his own brain and trying to splice his own algae genome in and we can never get there. We have to trust and the essence of the message is if you are a seeker, if you respond and recognize that God is out there and you seek for him and search for him with your heart, he will be found. When we do that, we are being saved.

We're going to get back to knowledge. We're not going to be dumb. We're not mystical.

We're not illogical. We're not, you know, the dumber you are, the more likely you are to be a Christian. This is a common atheist argument.

What it means is people aren't looking to knowledge for their life definition. And there are a lot of people who are maybe not as college educated and who don't score as high on IQ tests who are Christians. It's a statistical fact and atheists love to give us a drubbing with it and say, so you got to be stupid to believe in Jesus.

No, people who don't believe, who aren't Christians are pursuing happiness in another way and they're going down the secular route and they think that the higher they climb in that tower of intellectual babble, they're going to find happiness up there somewhere. And so many of them wind up jumping off to their death because they don't find it and they're miserable. You don't have to be smart.

God has made again in verse 21, the world through wisdom does not know God. It pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. We talked about the tense in Greek here and it's those who are believing.

This is a present active participle. It matches that passive participle. Uh, those who are being saved previously in verse, uh, 19, us who are being saved.

It's, it's a present passive participle. Here is the present active participle. We are not saving ourselves in the present.

What are we doing? We are believing. It doesn't say those who believed it could so easily have been an heiress. Once saved, always saved.

I believe in Christ and now I'm, I'm being saved. It says those who are trusting those who are actively believing who keep on believing. It pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save, to deliver those who are believing, believe, and keep on believing.

And this doesn't mean that if you're not an active believing person, if you're not trusting day by day that you're, you have no eternal salvation. What is this saving? What is this deliverance? It pleases God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who are believing. There is a new birth.

There is a being created as a new creature born into the family of God that never changes. You can't be unborn. You can't be plucked out of the Lord's hand, but you can be saved and not be saved.

You can be saved and your salvation does you no good. The message of the cross has no power. The power of God isn't active in your life because you are not believing.

You're saved in the sense that you'll be here when Jesus comes back, but you're going to be in

the far distant realms waiting for somebody to cart the leaves of the tree of life out there because you aren't being saved. You're saved, but you're not being saved. This is like having a lot of money in the bank, but never writing a check, never, never using it.

You're living like a pauper. You're living in squalor and misery and starvation. You've got all this money in the bank, but you don't bother to write a check.

You don't access it. You don't use it. It doesn't mean you don't have it.

It just is of no benefit to you. You can have money to deliver you out of poverty, but if you don't spend it, you're not delivered. You possess it.

You don't benefit from it. There are many, many believers who possess salvation, but do not benefit from it and are not saved by it. They're not delivered out of this present evil age by it, and that's why even as large as it is, the new Jerusalem is relatively small and the kingdom of the father is relatively large.

Most of us will be in the darkness, which is outside saved, but playing catch up for all eternity. The wisdom of God is foolishness to the world. It pleases God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who are believing.

Jews request a sign. Greeks seek after wisdom. If you're going to overthrow our tradition and our law, we need to see something that just rolls our course.

I guess they didn't wear socks, won't roll their socks down, blow their sandals off. Show me a sign. Well, there's no sign sufficient.

Jesus worked signs and miracles for three and a half years, and they were still mocking him when he hung on the cross. And they and they felt vindicated when he was on the cross. The wisdom of God was Christ crucified to the Jews.

That just proved that he couldn't have been the Messiah. It's a I saw somebody compare the foolishness of the cross to fried ice. Because Christ crucified is is an oxymoron to the Jews.

The Messiah crucified is just a non sequitur. Messiah is the conquering king. That makes no sense.

It's moronic that the Messiah would come and be crucified. Jesus says, you place your faith in the scriptures. You think you have eternal life in them.

They testify of me and you missed it. How is that possible? The wisdom of the wise is fallible. It's partial.

It is subject to error of all sorts. The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. If if getting the argument just right was how you got to salvation and got to God through Christ, most of us would miss it because most of us aren't good at figuring out what's right.

Why aren't we all wonderful financial investors? Why didn't we all end up with a big balloon retirement plan? Why are we not all living in the lap of luxury with wealth and success and fame and all of that? For various reasons, we have made decisions that did not result in that, right? We either didn't seek it or we weren't smart enough to figure it out. It pleases God through the foolishness of the message priest to save those who are believing it. Anybody can believe anybody can sense that God is there, can seek with their heart, can make an appeal.

God, I sense that you're there. Show me what I need and God will absolutely do it. It's the foolishness of the message preached, and it's a matter of belief, not of logic, not of a reason not to say that it is illogical or unreasonable, but you're not going to get there with the wisdom of the world because the wisdom of the world does not have as its object eternal salvation.

Why am I not rich? Am I a dumb guy? Am I too dumb to have made myself rich and to have provided myself with vast holdings that would produce all kinds of money and sustain me in a palatial mansion? I like to think I could have done that, but I did not bend my intellectual abilities, whatever they may be, toward a financial empire. That wasn't my goal, right? Most of us didn't start out going to college and saying, I'm going to build a financial empire. My whole goal is to have just a tremendously blissful, well-financed retirement.

Most of us have had other goals. I really want to meet somebody. I want to have a relationship.

I want to have children. I want to, maybe I'd like to travel a little bit. I'd like to experience some things.

I'd like to, I'd like to do. We don't just single-mindedly pursue financial well-being in our late age. We don't even know if we're going to live that long.

So we pursue something else. Guess what? The wisdom of the world doesn't have as its object finding God. So how through the wisdom of the world are you ever going to find God? That's not its purpose.

That's not its goal. How can you find God through the wisdom of the world when it is aimed at something entirely different? We want to make technology. We want to make inventions.

We want to be able to predict what the universe is going to do next. It doesn't have as its goal, the message of the cross. What does it have as its goal? That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

That's the power of God. That's what the whole creation has been about since before God created it. The land slain from before the foundation of the world.

This is what Paul is going at. The Jews request a sign and Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified. We preach an oxymoron, moros.

We preach foolishness. We preach the conquering king slain and dead at the hands of puny

humans. To the Jews, that is a stumbling block.

It's a scandalion. It's a scandal. They're scandalized.

You can't say that our Messiah was crucified and that we had a hand in it, that our religious leaders encouraged it and engineered it. That's scandalous. He couldn't have been the Messiah.

That would have never happened. He's the conquering king. He would never let himself fall into the hands of men.

Why? Limited human perception, limited understanding of God's plans and purposes. God's plan is so much bigger than anything those religious leaders could envision. Remember in Acts, it says if they'd known what they were doing, they'd have never crucified the Lord of glory.

They didn't know. The wisdom that drove them was limited and fallible. Jews request a sign, Greeks seek after wisdom.

We preach Christ crucified. It's a stumbling block to the Jews and it's moronic to the Greeks. What? You're going to hang a guy on a cross and suddenly I have eternal life? What kind of sense does that make? But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, what have we learned about the called and all of the previous studies where we've talked about calling in Romans and in Ephesians, what does calling represent? Patty and I stand out here daily and call the names of our dogs every day.

Millie, Major, come. Why? We let them out. They smelled something.

They're off in the woods. They're out of sight. So we stand out there and we call them and they come.

They're really good dogs. When they hear us calling, even when they're on the hot trail, I've seen Major on a dead run after a rabbit that is in sight. And when I call him, he will stop.

It's the most amazing thing I've ever seen. Every wolf instinct in his body wants to pursue that rabbit. But when I call him, he stops and he returns.

That's a called dog. If you call your dog and he doesn't come, it was not an effective call. Why? There wasn't anything wrong with your call.

There was something wrong with the volition of the dog that heard the call and did not respond. When the Bible talks about those who are called, they are those who have responded to the call, who heard and changed their mind, changed their path, changed their direction. It is not the will of God that any should perish, but that all come to repentance.

So to whom does God issue the call? God so loved the called. God so loved the elect. God so loved the world that he sent his son.

But who are the called? They are the ones who show up when God issues that call. Jesus said, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men to myself. All three members of the Trinity are said to make a universal appeal.

Have you thought about that? No man can come to me except the Father draws him. It is not the will of God that any should perish, but that all come to repentance. God draws all men.

The Lord Jesus said, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men. Jesus said in John 14, the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, not convict the elect or the called. The world, the same world that's in John 3, right? All three members of the Trinity are making a universal appeal.

But who are the called? They're the ones who hear and say, that's what I was listening for. By the way, why did the dogs come when we call them? Because with that call and with that return comes reward. They are petted and then they are fed.

And I suspect that it is the, oh, yes, it's that meal that I need. It's that food that I'm unlikely to get by continuing to pursue this squirrel who's going to climb a tree. But if I return, I am going to be fed.

I'm going to be cared for. There will be water. There will be warmth.

There will be affection. There will be things that I need. That is the source that is calling me.

And that's where I'm going to go. My needs will be met. I need thee is the fundamental cry of the called soul.

Those are the ones who respond. Paul says, you're not going to get there by logic. The dog is not going to reason his way to coming back here.

He's going to follow the call. Jews seek a sign, Greeks seek wisdom. It's a stumbling block to some Jews and it is foolishness to some Greeks.

But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Power. Back to verse 18.

It is the power of God. The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. God's foolishness winds up being wiser.

What is labeled foolishness, your faith being labeled foolishness, is wiser than anything man is ever going to dream up. I don't care how much research he does. Science is never going to science its way to the kingdom of the Father.

It's never going to science its way to Christ. Even when science demonstrates that there is information in the universe that can have no source but intelligence. It is an affirmation that we saw in Zachariah that God is the author of three things in the universe.

Do you remember that? In Zachariah chapter 12, verse 1, the burden of the word of the Lord against Israel, thus says the Lord who does three things. He stretches out the heavens. That's all of space and invisible energy.

He lays the foundation of the earth. That's matter and the tangible, visible portion of the universe and forms the spirit of man within him. What defines the spirit of man? We think.

We have content of thought. We reason. We are capable of abstract formulation of propositional truths.

That's information. We can create information. We can transmit information.

We can receive information. We can process the message preached. You can preach to my dog until he dies and all he's going to do is wonder what is this vocal noise and when am I going to get fed or let out.

The spirit of man, information, the three things that define the universe are the visible, the invisible, and information. Science says, well, it was some unexplainable big bang that created the first two and the third. The Bible says God created all three of those.

The information that's in your genome, the information that drives the equations and that is the data behind all of scientific calculation. God created those constants and those variables. God created those entities with their properties and their limitations and their interactions.

God invented gravity. God invented electromagnetic energy. God invented photons and quarks and the macroscopic and the microscopic in the universe, those elements of space and matter and time itself.

And God is the author as the one great mind, capital M of information. Well, that is the message and it transcends human wisdom. It transcends what the wisdom of this world can invent or substitute.

The foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men. So in conclusion, when we're talking about the truth of God, you're not going to get there by debate. You're not going to get there by apologetics, by justifying the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

You don't have to justify it. You don't have to explain it. You don't have to teach a doctrine of redemption or reconciliation or propitiation with all of its points and its ties to the Old Testament and its illustration in the animal sacrifices.

What is the power of the message of the cross? It meets our need. We cannot save ourselves. We cannot improve ourselves.

We are corrupt. We are fallen. We are temporary.

And we can't do anything about it. We cannot make ourselves better. We cannot purge our own

sin and our failure and our sinfulness and our propensity to be destructive.

If you live in the world, you are destroying and you can't help it. There's nothing you can do about it. Show me any path and I will show you where you are destructive just by your very existence.

The only way you can stop corrosion and destruction and causing harm is to not be here. It's the only way. If you're here, you are part of a fallen cosmos and there is only one deliverance.

And it is outside ourselves. It is the power of the cross. It is the message of the cross.

We can be created new. We can enter into a new creation. We become new and we transfer to a new creation.

This world with its forms is perishing. It will be rolled up like a scroll. The elements will melt with a fervent heat.

Anything you did, anything you thought, anything you accomplish in this world is transient and short-sighted. You can be the author of the wonderful doctrine of phlogiston and it will all be meaningless in a very short time. We have to be delivered passive by actively believing the power of God.

That's Paul's message and he's going to carry it through this letter. And it is true at the point of our salvation and it is true in our daily lives. We can say, if I just stage my house right, it will sell.

If I just eat the right foods, I'll be healthy. If I just follow the right course, I will succeed. If I just do the right things, I will advance.

Nothing wrong with trying to be wise in this world, but it is not what we depend on. Nothing wrong with being smart and being logical. That's how we understand the scriptures.

The case I have made to you is based on a lot of analysis and a lot of logic and a lot of data and information. But we don't start there. We start with the message of the cross.

We start with the power of God. And we believe that all of these things are added to us. What did Jesus say? Seek ye first a really good course of action.

Seek ye first a wonderful rationale. What? Seek ye first the kingdom of God. How visible is the kingdom of God? When Jesus said seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, could he point to it? I saw somebody making an argument about time being a dimension, just like up, down, and depth, and so on.

That time is just a fourth dimension. We have three spatial dimensions and time. And time has the same properties as other dimensions.

It has direction and so on. And somebody said, oh, really? So I can point in a direction. So show

me how you're going to point time, point to the past, point to the future.

Time is not a dimension. It's not like spatial dimensions. Well, the kingdom of God is not something you can point to.

Jesus said the kingdom of God does not come with observation. And yet it's in your midst. The kingdom of God is in your midst.

We access it by belief. Belief comes first. All of the sense that it makes, the wisdom of God, follows.

The carnal mind is never going to understand God's wisdom because it's spiritually discerned. Belief precedes the making sense. Acknowledging need and trusting in the creator and trusting specifically when the message is preached in Jesus Christ comes first.

All of these things are then added. And it makes transcendent sense. It is more rational.

It is more logical. It is more eternal than anything the world can come up with. But you can't bypass the belief gate.

You can't walk past the way, the truth, and the life, and placing ongoing trust in him and ever get there. It'll never make sense. God says it's the foolishness of preaching that's going to get you there.

You have to realize that it doesn't come from you. It comes from God. That trust precedes everything else.

Well, we'll close here in a word of prayer. And then we're going to have a special Christmas presentation from our wonderful musical ministers in the Godbold family. Let's go to the Lord.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for how powerfully it refutes the strongest cases that are made in the world. We thank you that your power is greater than anything that is presented to us by human minds and human hands.

We thank you that we are delivered, that we are being delivered, that we have the absolute assurance of your presence and your power both now and in the ages to come. We thank you for the Lord Jesus and the central truth of his work on our behalf and your love expressed through him toward us. We pray that we can be worthy of that gift and that potential, that God the Holy Spirit will motivate us and encourage us through the things that we've learned here this morning and seen in your word, that we can be those who love you and who love one another.

And by this, it will be known that we are disciples, that we are followers, and that our hope is a transcendent and eternal hope. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.