

1Corinthians 17-12-17a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is Sunday the 17th of December 2017. And we continue our study of 1 Corinthians, we're in chapter 1 and we resume this morning at verse 26.

1 Corinthians 1 verse 26. Let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer. Thank Him for our many blessings and the opportunity we have this morning to fellowship together in His Word and in the benefits of the gifts that He has distributed.

We have wonderful music, we have a great producer, I think everybody is glad Matthew is back to orchestrate the broadcast and it adds so much to our worship and our fellowship and I really, really appreciate all of His largely unseen and unsung work in not only getting us on the air but also the archives and weaving in beautiful music and pictures and allowing us all to enjoy God's creation and it's something that I think all of you know is a wonderful and essential component of our church. So let's go to the Lord in prayer and then we'll begin. Father, it's a wonderful thing to be ever reminded that You are our strength and our Redeemer and how fully the Apostle Paul brings to light those two concepts, strength and redemption in this portion of Your Word that we look at together.

We thank You for that. We thank You that we have the privilege of coming before You and representing ourselves through the high priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus, our Savior. We thank You for Him and for His amazing and inexhaustibly wonderful work on our behalf.

It is something that never becomes a commonplace. We never tire of rejoicing in it and appreciating it. We thank You for Your plan and purpose in sending Him and in drawing us to Yourself through Him.

We thank You for this opportunity to nourish our souls from the manna found in Your Word and we pray that Your Holy Spirit will superintend the delivery and the reception of the truth that we find in this portion of Your Word and that it will produce its supernatural fruit that we can be 100-fold fields and accomplish Your plan and purpose both now and in the ages to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, as I said, we pick up this morning in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 26. You remember the run-up to this portion in the preceding few verses where after talking about the problem that he has heard that there are those who are dividing up over different philosophies or different approaches. You might almost think that this is incipient denominationalism, I am of.

I've always thought it was a bit of a sorrow that you ask somebody in the Christian world, well, where do you go to church? And they'll say, well, I'm a something-ist. I'm a Baptist. I'm a Methodist.

I'm a Presbyterian. I'm an Episcopalian. I'm a Church of God, Church of Christ, name your

denomination.

And we seem to somewhat inadvertently fall into the very thing that Paul decries here, which is that we are segmented by emphasis on particular understandings of biblical truths, particular doctrines. It is necessary, of course, for us to try to make these distinctions and learn and rightly divide the word of truth, but the idea here is rightly divide the word of truth, not rightly divide the church. And we seem to think that, well, we're going to group together on this basis, and it encourages separation.

It encourages a loss of fellowship when we should be looking for those things that unite us. To the extent that things are good and noble and lovely and of good report, if there's any virtue or any praise, we focus on that, and it unites us. We've seen that in the preceding section here.

And in verse 20, Paul goes on to say, where is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this age? I was in another context looking at our passage. I wanted to try to make its message as clear as possible for somebody that didn't have the benefit of our exegetical survey, and I was looking at various translations, trying to find somebody that I thought really caught the flow of thought here, and I actually looked at a translation I've never seen before. You know, there's so many three-letter abbreviations that you get lost in the funhouse, and you think, what, another translation? But I would commend to your attention, and as I've looked at other passages in it, I'm beginning to appreciate it more and more.

And as I say, I know nothing about it except I read it this past week, and I've started to read other passages in it. It is included, miraculously, in my Logos library, so where I started out reading it on the web, it's included on some of the Bible study websites. The Bible Gateway has it.

But it is the New Living Translation, NLT. And I'm not so much recommending it at this point. I would need to do a little more research, look at key passages, see if it is theologically predilected in some particular direction.

But I've been inventing words all morning, so I'm going to really try to rein that in. Anyway, New Living Translation. And what I'd like to do is just read.

If you just listen, you can look this up later and reread it, but listen to the way this particular translation communicates Paul's thought from the Greek. And after, has Christ been divided into factions? Was I, Paul, crucified for you? Were any of you baptized in the name of Paul? Of course not. And then the little discourses on baptism that we examined.

But beginning in verse 18, just look up from your New King James, perhaps, and listen to this. This is the way the people in the church at Corinth probably heard, listening in their native Greek tongue, the thoughts of Paul flow across their cerebral cortex, their frontal lobe, their consciousness. I told you, I don't know, I got an extra vitamin or something last night.

Verse 18 from the New Living Translation. "...the message of the cross is foolishness to those

who are headed for destruction. But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.

As the scriptures say, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and discard the intelligence of the intelligent." So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. Since God in His wisdom saw to it that the world would never know Him through human wisdom, He has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe. It is foolish to the Jews who ask for signs from heaven, and it is foolish to the Greeks who seek human wisdom.

So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended, and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense. But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength.

Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And He chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful.

God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God. God has united you with Christ Jesus.

For our benefit, God made Him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God. He made us pure and holy, and He freed us from sin.

Therefore, as the scripture says, if you want to boast, boast only about the Lord. I think that is about as clear as you can make it in English. I think it catches the thought.

I commend especially this portion of 1 Corinthians to your attention in the New Living Translation. I really think that is better than anything I could do on my own. But I want to pick up now in our New King James Version at verse 26, and remember that up in verse 19, when Paul says, For it is written, there is a curious, this has happened.

Every time we have two studies going at the same time, I forever see this happen. And it is just one of the supernatural features of the Word of God, it seems to me. But that is a quote.

I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. And if you look at a study Bible there, you will see that is from Isaiah 29.14. So before we continue, let's see what brought this to Paul's mind. You remember our adage, our rule of thumb, that any time you see Paul with any Jews in the audience at all, when he quotes Old Testament scripture, he is being suggestive.

It is a little footnote. And it is calling to mind for those Jews who know their scriptures, and have heard them read since childhood in the synagogue or wherever, the larger context of that

quote. And it is no different here.

Now this might be lost on the Gentiles who haven't had a lot of exposure to Old Testament scripture, but remember there is a mixture in Corinth, and he is speaking to both Jews and Gentiles. And it's got multiple applications, and it's a mixture. He says, you know, if you are listening to the Jews and they say, where is the sign? If you are listening to the Gentiles and they say, this isn't smart, he is talking to both of those.

So turn back, keep your finger here, but turn back to Isaiah chapter 29, and let's look at the context. I think you are going to find this to be familiar ground. Of course we did Isaiah not terribly long ago, but this will be familiar to you for other reasons.

It's a quote from Isaiah 29.14, but let's look at this whole chapter, because this dovetails, it interweaves itself with our Thursday night study in Kings and Prophets. It's talking about the very same thing we just saw Thursday night. You remember the nations surrounding Jerusalem, and how it's a rock that when they try to lift it, it's going to slice their hands, and it's a cup, and when they try to drink it, it's going to make them drunk, and blind, and confused.

Just when things seem darkest, after everybody has been decimated and carried away, a half, and then a third, and there is only one-sixth remaining, and then after women are ravished, and the city is destroyed, and they are dividing the plunder in the streets, you remember all of that, then God appears. Then there is deliverance for the remaining one-sixth, and you say, why does God let it get so bad before He delivers? Just keep that in mind now, because 29 of Isaiah is talking about the very same prophetic context. Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt.

Ariel here, you know, we think of the names of the cherubim, and in Jewish extra-biblical literature, not only do you have Michael and Gabriel, who are named in Scripture, but you have Uriel, and Ariel, and some others. And Ariel, such as Ariel Sharon, Ari means lion, and so Ariel is lion of God. But this is a different derivation, a different allusion in the root of the word, and this means an altar, a place, something that is sacrificed.

And you can see the concept of death of an animal by a lion, or at an altar, co-mingled here. But this Ariel has the destruction idea behind it. So, woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt.

Add year to year, let feasts come around, yet I will distress Ariel, there will be heaviness and sorrow, and it shall be to me as Ariel, as an altar, he is saying, as an altar of God, I will encamp against you all around, I will lay siege against you with a mound, I will raise siege works against you, you shall be brought down, you shall speak out of the ground, your speech shall be low out of the dust, your voice shall be like a mediums out of the ground, and your speech shall whisper out of the dust. You get the idea that after all of the population has been fractioned and removed, the ones who remain are those who are humble. God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble, and those who have their face in the dust and are speaking, you

know, somebody face down in the dirt, if you've ever been to the beach and tried this as a little kid in California, you know, if you get your face down in the sand and you try to talk, it's as good a muffler as any pillow.

But a voice coming up out of the earth is the picture here. These are those who have prostrated themselves after all of this destruction. Moreover, the multitude of your foes shall be like fine dust, and the multitude of terrible ones like chaff that passes away.

Yes, it shall be in an instant, suddenly. Think ground zero, think mushroom cloud. You will be punished by the Lord of hosts with thunder and earthquake and great noise, storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.

Remember the eyes melting in their sockets and the flesh dissolving while they stand on their feet? The multitude of all the nations who fight against Ariel, even all who fight against her and her fortress and distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision. You know, when you wake up and suddenly what seems so substantial and real, you realize, oh, that was just a dream. And you almost immediately begin to forget.

And in my case, I often entirely forget. Something important was going on. I was on a mission.

I was doing something. I was somewhere with someone. But it all, it's like a vision of the night.

You wake up, and when reality floods in, all of that that seemed so central and concerning just vanishes. That's what he says here. Be as a dream of a night vision.

It shall even be as a hungry man dreams. And look, he eats, but he awakes, and his soul is still empty. Or as when a thirsty man dreams, and look, he drinks, but he awakes, and indeed he is faint, and his soul still craves.

So the multitudes of all the nations shall be who fight against Mount Zion. They were about to consume all of the plunder. They were about to grab this capital and fulfill all of their dreams of world conquest and unification under the satanic system.

And yet, in an instant, they're going to wake up, and it's going to be as ethereal and unreal as the food that the dreaming man thought he was eating and the water that the thirsty man thought he was drinking. It wasn't really there. Pause and wonder.

Blind yourselves and be blind. They are drunk, but not with wine. They stagger, but not with intoxicating drink.

Remember the cup and the rock in Zechariah. For the Lord has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep. He has closed your eyes, namely the prophets, and has covered your heads, namely the seers.

The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, Read this, please. And he says, Well, I can't. It's sealed.

My human abilities do me no good. The book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, Read this, please. And he says, I don't have the ability to read this.

Therefore the Lord said, Inasmuch as this people draw near to me with their mouths and honor me with their lips. Remember the half of the city that's taken captive and dies, and then two-thirds of what remains is taken out, and only the third of the half is left, or the half of the third is left. Remember that in Zechariah, Thursday night? All of these that honor God with their lips, but their heart is far from Him.

This time of tribulation exposes them. It outs them. It reveals their true nature.

Same thing is going to happen, by the way, at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, 99.99 years in, Satan will be released. Why didn't God put him eternally in the pit? Why does God let him out of the bottomless pit? Because He is going to come out and expose and reveal all of those who for ten centuries have been going along to get along, and brute force has kept them in line. They will say what they need to say and act the way they need to act, but their heart isn't in it.

And God will expose the secrets of men's hearts, according to my gospel, Paul says. They have removed their hearts far from me. Notice, their hearts didn't get diselected or un-predestinated to be far from God.

They have removed their hearts far from me. It's a choice. It's a decision.

It is a policy. It is a course that we pursue. They have removed their hearts far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the commandment of men.

Remember this being quoted, teaching for doctrines the traditions of men? That's a quote from this. That is what precedes Paul's quote. That context.

These who are seemingly for God, seemingly interested in God, but their heart is not actually in it. And they have substituted for genuine fear of God in the healthy sense, respect for God, awe of God, appreciation and wonder at the presence and power and grace of God. They have substituted for that the commandments of men.

I like the system. I like the litany. I like the ritual.

I like the procedure of it all. I like the atmosphere that is created by the music, or by the robes and the smoke, or whatever it may be. In our day, it's the informality.

It feels real, because it isn't hiding behind a necktie and a suit coat. It isn't behind an organ performance of some classic hymn. It's down to earth, man.

It's real. There's an open collar, and there's a jute necklace, and there's tattoos. It's real.

I like that feeling of reality. This is still generated by the actions of men. It isn't actually looking at God and being enraptured and impressed and amazed by God.

Placed down on our knees and on our face in worship, because of looking at God, it's looking at the inside of a performance hall. There's a performance that is producing a simulation, a similar but vastly more corporeal experience. It depends on the lighting.

It depends on the music. It depends on the repetition. It depends on hooking into the desires that people have for something to feel real.

They used to say relevant. If there's ever a word to purge out of your vocabulary, it's relevant. Their fear toward me is taught by the commandment of men.

You could say by the actions of men, the perorations of men, the performances of men. Reading the law was a performance art by the scribes in Jesus' day and in the days of the apostles. It had become a lot of holy smoke.

Therefore, behold, verse 14, I will do a marvelous work among this people. I will smack them down with a genuine display of divine power. For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden.

The genuine exercise of divine power. In the context here, think about the destruction of the city, and God is going to do this to the nations and to the Gentiles as He delivers that small remnant, that one-sixth that remains. Everybody's wisdom said go a different way.

The one-half that were trying to go along to get along, and they were led out and taken captive and slain. Then the ones inside, the two-thirds, and you end up with only one-sixth left. I forget exactly how that math works.

I think I'm doing it backwards, but you get the point. Most of the people, five, six of the people follow a bad path, believe that what they are doing is the way to survive, and the way to get along, and the way to prosper, and the way to peace. When they say peace and safety, destruction will come on them suddenly, because you don't get there by saying it, or by wooing it, or by negotiating for it, or by diplomacy.

You get it by turning to the God of deliverance. Only those who are on their face, talking into the dirt, is God going to hear, and is God going to deliver. The wisdom of the wise is going to come out to be foolishness, and the power of the powerful is going to come out to be utterly weak and ineffectual.

The understanding of their prudence shall be hidden. Paul thinks of this passage as he's writing to the Corinthians. We don't know exactly where he was.

There's the thought that maybe he wrote this from Philippi, or from some other place on his travels. We don't know exactly where he was, but he's writing it back to Corinth. We don't know if he had his parchments.

We don't know if he had spent his morning reading through Isaiah. He's a Pharisee. He's got

vast portions of Scripture available to him in his mental library.

Back then, when people had a mental library, it was awesome. But he's not dazzling them with his erudition, or with his memory, or with his logic. He is using this Scripture to point out that these things are going to seem so real, and so persuasive, and so powerful in the moment that you hear them.

But people are going to wake up like a hungry man who thought he was eating food, and suddenly awakes to find that he's still hungry, and there's no food in the house. Or a thirsty man doing the same thing with a refreshing glass of water. So he says, it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise.

And for those Jews who know that context, and thinking about the destruction of Jerusalem, well, what's happening in Jerusalem at this point? It is all heading downhill. It's only a few decades to the destruction under the Romans, and there's already been dispersion, and there has been great spiritual division, because when the message of the cross came, people divided. Jesus said, I'm going to divide households, and parents and children, and brothers and sisters are going to be going their separate ways.

And so the division in Jewish communities, in places where the message of Christ came, was a spiritual form of violence. And the old established ways, perpetrated and promoted by the scribes, the teachers of the law. So Paul goes on in verse 20 to say, where is the wise? Where is the expert of the Mosaic law, the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

So there is this contrast drawn. Spiritual reality transcends, and often is counterintuitive to the wisdom of the world. And I think if there was one word that sums up the whole point that Paul is making here is don't expect your faith to be validated and assured by a wonderful logical debate.

Don't think that you're going to be able to win the lost to Christ by debating them into it with the superior sense that it makes to believe in Christ. Don't think that you're going to be able to defend your belief with a lot of factual, well this makes the most sense of all of the available options, this is what makes the most sense. Paul says, God has given you a counterintuitive faith.

Actually it is intuitive. We intuit that it's the right thing even though a lot of the reason and a lot of the logical argument is difficult to support. It makes sense later, but most of us when we think back to our salvation, somebody didn't courtroom case us into belief in Christ.

Well, based on the preponderance of the evidence and a reasonable doubt, it seems more likely that it should probably go this way. It operates on a completely different plane. And don't get me wrong, and don't get Paul wrong, Christian faith is not unreasonable and illogical.

It is possible for the most intelligent, erudite, well-educated people on earth to absolutely 100% commit and believe and understand, and it doesn't create cognitive dissonance. We don't believe at the expense of our intellect. We don't sacrifice our minds on the altar of faith, as I've said before.

But you don't get there by reason. You don't get there by a preponderance of the evidence. You get there by what at the time seems unsupportable.

And Paul says, we preach and we believe and we preach a crucified Messiah. We preach a failed deliverer. We preach the army that was marching to come in and save the day.

We preach the cavalry that was going to blow trumpets and rescue you from the surrounding Indians, and they were all slaughtered. That's what we're preaching. Your salvation comes from a guy that couldn't even save himself.

Well, to the Jews, there's no power in that. I want to see the power of God manifest, and this is the weakness of God. This is the Son of God slain according to you.

The Jews want to see the opposite. They don't want to see the Son of God made weak and victimized and executed. The Jews want to see power.

Where's the sign? He should have come with clouds and horses, and Romans should have been fleeing and melting in eye sockets and the rest. That's what the Jews want to see. The Greeks want to see something that makes sense out of the world.

Oh, so this is better than our pantheon, and it's not just one more God, the unknown God. This is the one we didn't know about, Paul talks about in a different context. And they say, so you're telling me that all of us can be saved because this little segment of Abrahamic descendants had a Christ that got killed, and because of that, we can be saved.

This is the argument you're making? Look, I hear platonic argument and Socratic reasoning all the time, and this makes no sense. But I don't even understand your system of animal sacrifice. I don't understand it in our system, and I sure don't understand it in yours, because we sacrifice the weaklings and the lame and the blind, and we take that down to the temple of Athena or something and get rid of it.

You take all the best of your flocks and herds, and you sacrifice them. I mean, it's not just dumb and dumber, it's dumbest. The dumbest religion I ever heard of, and you're saying this is the way for me to have eternal life? Well, it's just nonsense.

It's foolishness. But the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and God is looking for people whose spiritual intuition is not God's. You know, if there were such a God that was loving and merciful and put Himself on the line and demonstrated His love, God commendeth His love toward us, in that when we were sinners and had no use and no value and no virtue at all, Christ died for us.

And the heart of the message of the cross appeals to some. You don't have to have it proven. People want to believe things all the time.

I want to believe that by not using aerosol hairspray, I'm saving the environment. I want to believe that by recycling, the planet is becoming a better place. There are things that people want to believe are true and are willing to believe are true, sans any evidence at all.

So everybody has the capacity to, as it were, go with your gut. I want to believe this is true. I watched again, I mentioned in the past week or two, this NOVA deal on memory hackers and on the nature of human memory, and how memories are created, how they are brought up.

And when you remember something, it's not reading something that is permanently printed on a page. It is pulling up a file on your computer and it can be edited while it is up. It's not read-only.

It's read-write. We have to be very careful with our memory. And wishful thinking can alter memory.

And we are convinced that something was the way we really want it to be when we remember it, and not the way it actually was. And this has been demonstrated in thousands of experiments now. Once they hit on this, and a guy was using sea slugs and one thing and another to get the simplest form of nervous system and figure out how neuron communication works and how synapses are formed and new ones are created when memories are created.

And that the connections can be enabled by the creation of a memory. And when you pull a memory up, if you block the save, you know how you have a document, I think most of us will understand this. You've got a document saved on your computer and you bring it up for editing and then the power goes off.

Well, the saved version is still on your hard drive. And so even if you lost your live version that's on the screen, it's still on. Well, what they are beginning to figure out for the human mind is when you retrieve the memory, the memory is fully brought out of your mind and is up in the editing space.

The act of remembering it brings it up and it's essentially no longer in your mind. And when you think about it in the present, I remember when my earliest childhood memory is X, then you re-save it and it is re-written into the brain. And what they do is they get somebody to recall a memory and bring it up in the current space.

Then they give them a chemical that blocks the formation of new memories and that memory is gone or a component of it is gone. They're finding out that memories are complex. There is an emotional component like fear.

There is a detail component in terms of circumstance and it is stored several places in the brain and they've gotten to the point now where they can just block certain aspects of it. So let's say

they use the example of people that have a spider phobia. They're deathly afraid of spiders.

So they have you revisit that memory, bring it up. They have a guy walk over and touch a tarantula. Well, his mouth is dry, he's sweating.

You can see the guy is pale and his heart is racing. He can barely get his finger over to the edge of the terrarium, much less touching the spider. And she says, okay, now let's walk across the room.

And he drinks some medicine that is actually a blood pressure medicine, but it has the side effect of blocking the formation of fear memories. So he drinks this. He comes back a week later and she says, okay, now we're going to do the same thing we did last week.

We're going to go touch this spider. And so he goes over there and he knows what a spider is. He remembers last week when he touched the spider.

What he doesn't remember, because that memory was brought up and then when it was restored, the fear part didn't get rewritten. And he's not afraid. He says, I feel like I'm a different person.

I ought to be afraid. I remember being afraid, but I'm not afraid. And he's petting this tarantula.

The lady calls it tarantula. She's a fern. She says, now touch the tarantula.

He's touching the tarantula. It's really comical. I tell you, you'll enjoy that program if you can dig it up off of PBS or something.

But here's my point. The foolishness of God is wiser than men. And you can't even try to trust your own wisdom.

You can't even trust your own intellect a lot of times because we have presuppositions. How can Republicans and Democrats look at the very same facts and be so bitterly permanently opposed? They can never see the other side. They can never come to a meeting of the minds in the middle.

And people looking at the very same facts come to wildly different conclusions. And there's no talking them out of it. It's kind of scary to be a product of past arguments, past observations, and not be teachable.

And part of the way around this mental roadblock is humility. If you've seen people that actually do change their mind, change parties, change from liberal to conservative or conservative to liberal or evangelical to atheist or atheist to evangelical, one of the things that happens is people have a kind of humility that says, I will set aside my strong belief that this is true and has to be true. There is a component of humility, whichever direction you go.

The ability to revisit these seemingly transient and immovable structures. I keep wanting to say

intangible, and that's a combination of two words that are not what I want to say. Intransigent is what I'm looking for.

I must have eaten some starches this past week. So here's my point. As you get to verse 26, when he concludes the first section there that we just looked at, because the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men, this is talking about what seems to be foolishness on God's part to crucify the Christ, to sacrifice His Son, is wiser than anything man could come up with because the context is so much greater.

We're narrow, we're short-sighted, we're limited, we only have a few pieces of the puzzle. If I suddenly screamed out in this room, get out of here right now, get up out of your chair and run out of the room, you would say, well that's just silly. Why should I do that? That makes no sense.

I've been sitting in this room as long as we've had the house. You're saying run out of here and run out of here now. If I then told you, I see wires and explosives under your chairs, and I see that there's a broken lock on the back door, there was obviously a break-in and somebody has booby-trapped this place, get out of here, get out of here now.

Or if I say, do you not see that in the next room some of the kitchen stuff has caught fire? Now you say, oh well, with this new information, now it does make sense to me. What did not make sense, now does make sense. Someone says, slam on the brake, stop the car, slam on the brake, stop the car.

You say, why should I do that? I've been driving this car for years. If you're like my granddad driving his Model A on the roads between Oklahoma and Arkansas, the reason he said stop the car is one of the wheels rolled past the car. Grandpa says, well looky there, somebody lost a wheel.

It was him. It was his. New facts, more information, greater context suddenly make the inexplicable and the foolish explicable and wise.

Well, we have to recognize that God being God knows things we don't know, and what seems foolishness on his part is actually wiser than the wisest thing we can come up with with our limited fact set and our limited logic and our grossly scaled down, you know, try explaining it to your dog. Try explaining anything you do to your dog. Unless you're going outside to take a walk in the woods, he's going to be confused by your actions.

Unless you are lined up with what he believes in and wants to do, he says, why are we not walking out the door and going in the woods? Why are you making me wait? Where's my food? Why are you reining me in? Why are you leaving without me? And the dog is in a panic and barks and goes nuts. Well, I can't infuse the dog with the knowledge I have that this is actually going to be, I'm going to get dog food. You can't eat until I leave and come back.

Oh, okay, if you could just get your dog to see what he can't understand. But you know, we all

have great dogs that just trust us and they'll just plop down and say, well, I don't know what he's doing, but you know, things will be okay sooner or later. And we love a dog that doesn't just yap and panic and go nuts and chew the scenery when they don't understand what's going on.

They just plop down and wait. They say, well, you know, my master does this all the time, but you know, I always get fed. I always end up getting let out and you know, I have a pretty happy life here, so I'll just trust.

You love a dog like that, that will do what you say so, and it makes no sense to his dog brain at all. But the wisdom of humans is that what seems foolish on the part of humans is wiser than the wisest dog, right? Except maybe Lassie Renton 10, who have the wisdom of men. So that's what Paul's point is here.

And as you pick up in verse 26, for you see your calling, brethren, not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble. And notice are called is in italics. Paul says, for you see, and this is a present active indicative.

This is a present tense, second person plural. You all are looking. He says, you all looking at your calling.

And the calling here is from kaleo. This is not the calling out. This is just from, this is klesos.

It's the noun from kaleo. And he says, you see, your participation in the gospel, your membership in the called might be the best way to look at this. Many are called, but fewer chosen.

You are in those who responded to the call. You're in the church, right? The ekklesia, the ekkaleod ones. So he says, basically, you all look around at each other.

Look at the group of called, brothers. And this adolfoi is to soften what could be taken as a non-compliment. He's about to say something that could be taken as a little insulting.

He says, look around, brothers, including myself. I am one of you. Not many wise according to the flesh.

Not many mighty, not many noble, period. Do you see a lot of geniuses in here? Do you see a lot of powerful governmental leaders? And the third one, noble, this is a really cool word. This is eugenes, which literally means well-born.

You know, noble families. Do you see very many of the von something? Remember in Germany, allegedly the noble families were Ludwig von Beethoven, von Trapp family. There's some nobility in the back.

He says, do you see very many vons around here? Do you see very many, you know, people connected to royalty? Do you see many that are well-born? Do you see many that are just of the

elite? And he doesn't say that not many mighty are called. He says, look at your group. Look at your calling.

And this is a slightly different thought here. He says, look around. Those that are a member of your Corinthian group there, how many of y'all are Socratic geniuses? How many of y'all are powerful? And this is dunamis in the sense of potential power.

This means you can exercise authority in some realm. You're a judge. You're a magistrate.

You're a governmental ruler. You're a mayor. You're the head of some precinct or whatever.

Do you see very many people that have got that kind of power going on in the mental realm, in the civil realm, in the realm of influence? God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise. I want to remind you again of something that I mentioned before, contrasting wisdom and foolishness. The word group of Sophia and Joseph, the word group in Gnosis versus Moria, those things occur 44 times in Paul's first 10 epistles, especially the references to Sophia and Gnosis.

It's almost four dozen times you find these things referred to. Well, 28 of those are in 1 Corinthians, and 26 of them are in the book of Genesis. In these first three chapters.

So this really is our topic, the contrast between what your faith is and the wisdom and knowledge that people want to try to bring against it. God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things. This is asthenia, weakness, the opposite of dunamis.

There are all kinds of contrasts. You're either dynamite or you're asthenia, you're weak. He's chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty, and this is iskuros, this is the strong.

So not many that have the ability to exercise power, that's dunamis. And God has chosen these foolish and weak things to put to shame things which are exercising. Iskuros is strength in evidence.

You not only have the ability, but you're using it. You're strong. You see this strength manifest.

And so the argument that, well, but look around. Your Christian faith isn't building airplanes and cell phones. Your Christian faith isn't air conditioning your house.

It's the wisdom of men that's doing these things. Your Christian faith isn't making these physical changes in the world and bettering human life and making you rich and making you famous and making you X, Y, and Z. God has chosen weak and foolish things in the eyes of the world to put to shame the accomplishments of the world. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? And this is the topic that the Bible revisits time and time and time again.

And we're going to pause here and take our break, but when we come back we're going to look at the consistency of this message. This isn't the only place. This is probably the most prominent place where the wisdom of God is compared and contrasted with the wisdom of man.

The strength of God is contrasted with the strength of man. Jesus talked about this. The Old Testament talks about it.

It is something that we need to have fresh in our minds because our daily decisions, what you're going to do when we close our Bibles and head out to the rest of the weekend and the upcoming week and into the holiday season, what we do is going to either be guided by our identity in Christ or by the practices and the traditions of man. This is what people usually do. I've been getting a little bit convicted about this because I think, well, everybody watches TV in the evenings.

We all like a good show and a good story. I keep thinking maybe that's one of these assumptions I need to revisit. Maybe that's one of these towers I need to go question that, well, everybody does it.

It's perfectly socially acceptable. I mean, who wouldn't? And yet I think about the time that that chews out of my mental life where I'm just on hold. Somebody is telling me a story and I sit there for hours and people tell me story after story after story.

And I think, well, and this connects to my identity in Christ. How exactly? How is this preparing me for the kingdom? Am I going to be calling up some episode of The X-Files when the Lord Jesus returns? Probably not. Entertainment is a good thing, but in our day, in our age, just as an example, it has taken up so much of our time and our mental attention.

And it displaces us. And I think sometimes it just displaces other things. And I'm beginning to question in my own life whether what I am allowing to displace so much time and so much thought is really legitimate.

Could I prepare a better Bible class if I took one of the hours each night that I watch television because I'm tired and, oh, let me just relax, let me just veg? To me, I'm beginning to think that's a little bit of a lame excuse. Anything worth having is worth putting in a little effort for. And we all work when we're tired.

And you gain something when you're not feeling your best. You push through. You gain the prize, not by an easy coast.

It's not like a soapbox derby. Well, just turn it loose and see which one rolls the fastest. It is running the race that is set before us.

And so I think as we look at the wisdom of the world, we have to question how much of it we've taken on board without question that we just accept unthoughtfully, uncritically. And Paul is

calling us here to that counterintuitive life that focuses on the message of the cross.