

1Corinthians 17-12-31a

This is December 31st, 2017. We continue our study in 1 Corinthians. If you have not already done so, you can be turning to chapter one.

And once you reach chapter one, you can look at the end of it where chapter two starts because that's where we're going to be. 1 Corinthians chapter two. We'll take our customary moment at the beginning to go to the Lord in prayer and ask his blessing on our fellowship and on our study that he will bless this portion of his word to the nourishment of our souls.

Shall we pray? Father, we do thank you for all of your many blessings over the preceding year, the provision that you've made both visible and invisible, the protection that you have sustained us with, the challenges that you have brought our way to give us opportunities to grow our faith. We thank you for what we've learned from your word and we pray that as we embark on a new year that you'll continue to lead us and guide us with the voice of your Holy Spirit, speaking to us the truth of your word in a way that's meaningful to us and that makes a difference in our daily lives. We pray that this portion of 1 Corinthians that we look at this morning will be blessed to each heart in a way that will be an encouragement and a motivation that we all will be strengthened and united and brought together just as the apostle originally intended this message of your truth to do in its original recipient church.

We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen. We had a Christmas special last week, so just to refresh the context, I'm just going to back up and begin reading in 1 Corinthians chapter one, verse 18. I don't probably have to remind you that when Paul originally wrote this letter as with the rest of the books of the Bible, there were no chapter divisions.

It was just, in fact, it's fun to look at the Greek manuscripts because there are also no word divisions. It's just a string of Greek letters all the way across and this has been entertaining for us later on to try to go back and figure out in some cases if words were divided correctly or incorrectly. But yes, not only no chapter divisions and certainly no verse divisions, but no paragraph divisions, no word divisions, no sentence divisions.

So these people were smart. They could just look at a string of letters and figure it out. You may have seen puzzles like this where it's a grid of letters and you're trying to find words diagonally or backwards or whatever.

Well, it was trivial. Greeks didn't even publish those kinds of puzzles because that was their reading all the time. So I'm going to pick up now in 1 Corinthians chapter one, verse 18.

And the last part of verse 17 says, Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel not with wisdom of words, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. So this is what's setting up the content that is to come. That's the door opening and we're crossing the threshold.

He's had a lot of greeting and I heard from Chloe's people, this, that, and the other. But right here, he says, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. Now, let me just ask you, especially if you haven't had a chance to look at this verse recently, if there was a danger of the cross of Christ being made of no effect, what would that be? Jesus came, he suffered, he died.

God accepted his atoning sacrifice on our behalf. Because of this, all we have to do is trust him as our savior, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead and you're saved, right? So if somebody is gonna take that great central truth of history and make it of no effect, it's just egg on Teflon, it just slides.

It's like a Teflon wall. You throw it at the wall, nothing sticks. It just goes to the ground.

Does that happen in the modern day? Are there people, let's say on college campuses, in college classrooms, online, in chat rooms and debate forums and godisnotthere.com or whatever it might be, that are doing everything they can to make the cross of Christ of no effect? If there is no God, there certainly is no Christ, there is no historical evidence and so on. There's a lot of nay saying, not knee saying, nay saying. They are the knights who say nay.

There is no God, there is no Christ, there is no cross, right? So that would pretty much make the cross of no effect, right, it's a Santa Claus story, it's an Easter bunny story. So you and I hearing this and saying, wait a minute, I know God is there, Christ is real, the cross is true. I'm saved by grace through faith, that not of myself.

It was a wonderful gift of God. It has made a powerful and tremendous difference in my life and nothing else can do that. And it has done that same thing for hundreds of millions of people down through history.

So I know this is real. So group A, making the cross of Christ of no effect. Group B says, that's not right.

What would our antidote be? What would you do if somebody starts saying, no God, no Christ, no cross? Most of us would, and I think, I won't ask for a show of hands, but would you feel like arguing with somebody who said, your faith is a complete waste of time? Wouldn't you wanna argue and say, no, listen, this is a good deal, and here's why. This is real, and here's why. This is truth, and here's why.

You've been led astray. Somebody has told you a fairy story. If you think there's no God, no Christ, and no cross.

Making the cross of Christ of no effect. This is Paul's theme. It's a myth, and you're a benighted, backward, uneducated person if you have fallen for this old, antiquated bedtime story.

So our response would be, let me give you the evidence. Let me show you how this is true. And not just anybody would take that on, right? I mean, what if you don't really know, oh, by the

way, Josephus mentions Christ and Christians in these three passages, and oh, here's Tacitus, and here's the earliest manuscripts, and the date of them, and this papyrus fragment from thus and so, the Gospel of John within the lifetime of the apostles.

All of these different little, and what if you don't know all of that? Well, then you probably wouldn't want to argue. Somebody says, well, there's no historical evidence for Jesus, no historian says anything about Jesus. Of course, this makes me smile because Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, you know, you got not just one biography, but four written within the living memory of people who saw and heard Christ.

So what happens? Oh, well, that's not real. And this is, just as an aside here, almost any time the secular materialist world bumps into a reality they don't like, then they just define it away. There's no historical evidence, no contemporaneous accounts of Christ.

What about these four in my Bible? Not to mention, you know, the rest of the New Testament. Well, those don't count, those aren't real. I define those away.

Those don't count as contemporaneous eyewitness evidence and firsthand accounts written within the living memory of people who could verify and debunk anything that was said in there that's not so. Well, no, those don't count. That's religious material and, you know, we don't know where that came from and that could be anything.

We don't know, so that doesn't count. So, okay, you say there's no God and no creator. So where'd the universe come from? Well, you know, the Big Bang.

Well, where'd the Big Bang come from? Well, I don't know, but your God can't be real because we don't know where he came from. The Big Bang is real, but your God is not. Well, we have evidence for the Big Bang.

Well, have you ever noticed that all of the information and all of the design and all of the complexity and layered complexity and multi-step complexity in the universe, the only place we've ever seen that come from is intelligence that's got the power to bring it into being, and we've never seen accidental information. You don't have a bomb go off in the Scrabble Factory and you walk out on the lawn and there's the first volume of Encyclopedia Britannica. You don't even get to be or not to be.

You can't get six words out of an explosion in the Scrabble Factory, and you can keep exploding the Scrabble Factory till Jesus comes back, and you're never gonna get anything meaningful out of chaos. You do not get information from any place except intelligence. But, well, I can't explain the Big Bang.

You can't explain God in terms of origins, but I'm right and you're wrong. Well, and so what do we do? Here's my point now. What's our subject? The cross being made of no effect.

What is our response? Somebody like me is ready to pull out the sword and do battle. I will

meet you on your own ground and show you that there is evidence and this is a reasonable faith, and it is a valid and un-mythological and unique answer to the problems of human life. But what does Paul say here? He says, well, there was this potential of the cross of Christ being made of no effect, so I came and I gave you all of the benefit of my Pharisaical background in the Old Testament and logical arguments, and I met these pagan philosophers on their own ground and whooped them.

He says just the opposite, doesn't he? He says, I came and preached the gospel not with words of wisdom, because if I had tried to justify it on the basis of reason, logic, evidence, that would make the cross of no effect. In other words, you're never going to argue, you're never going to reason or logic or evidence somebody into faith, into a saving knowledge of Christ. You're wasting your time if that is your goal.

So why would anybody engage in what they call apologetics or a defense of the faith and so on? I would suggest, and Paul does this many times, but it is not to convert. It is not to address this is the best way to get saved. In fact, this is the only way to get saved.

What we do when we present evidence and reason and logic, and when we compare what somebody else believes to what we believe, our goal can be to demonstrate that it is a reasonable faith. It is not unreasonable. It is not childish.

It is not backward. It's not uneducated. It doesn't take fools to believe in Christ.

You don't have to be dumb, because anybody that's smart would never fall for it. This is the myth. That you can counter.

You can say, look, I'm not trying to convince you of anything except that this is a reasonable faith. God is not a misogynistic, genocidal maniac. He's not all of these things that people make him out to be.

There are plausible and valid answers to these criticisms, but we do not do that because if I can knock all of the sticks out of your anti-cross argument, then you'll get saved. In other words, it's not a path for evangelism. If somebody is lost, you cannot reason them into salvation.

When Paul came to Corinth, and these people were godless Greeks, subject to whatever gods were on whatever hill with whatever priests and whatever cultural activities, he didn't come and say, let me tell you why Jesus is more reasonable. Because on the face of it, he's not. So he goes on to 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. It's not even the logic of God, it's the power of God to us who are being saved. It is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, I will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

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? 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. So what is the appeal? Why do people get saved? Why did you accept Christ as your savior? Do you remember? Some of us can remember a distinct point in time where everything came to a head and the decision was presented to us and we said, yes. Why did we do that? Was it because, well, the preponderance of Josephus says, and here's the historical evidence and well, it kind of makes sense that if somebody would have to, I mean, even our justice system doesn't say, well, if you can't execute this guy for the murder, let's find a different guy and execute him and justice will be served.

Let's have a substitute in the electric chair or in the gas chamber or on the end of a rope or at the firing squad. If you can't shoot one, let's shoot somebody else so that justice is satisfied. We don't even, that doesn't even make sense to us in our own legal system and yet, allegedly, this is what the gospel says.

We were supposed to be on the cross as it were, but Jesus went instead. It's the message preached is foolishness to those who are perishing and you're not going to un-foolish it to open up a door for them to walk through and say, oh, well, if it's not foolish, I guess I'll be saved. What you can do is do what Paul does here and explain that it is going to look foolish to the eyes of man.

It can and does look foolish, but there are a lot of things that we don't understand because we're not smart enough and our obstacle is pride. We think if it doesn't make sense to us, it can't be right. We think if it doesn't make sense to us, even though we know we don't have all the facts, how many times have you been presented a story, you've been given a set of facts and you draw a conclusion from it, then a little bit later you get one or two other facts and suddenly the whole picture changes? This can happen around the house.

You are in the middle of something in the house, there's other people in the house, all of a sudden what you were doing has been changed or disturbed or it's been picked up or it's been thrown away or it's been given to goodwill or who knows what. And you're initially angry and you say, well, I can't believe that so-and-so would do thus and such. Then you find out another couple of facts.

There were reasons that the person had that suddenly, oh, okay, well, now that makes sense. It did not make sense because I had limited information, but with new facts, it suddenly makes abundant sense. Oh, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have gotten angry, I would have done the same thing in your shoes, right? Have anybody ever had that situation? You thought you were right, there is a way that seemeth right to a man, but the ends thereof are Sam is wrong, right? Well, Paul is essentially arguing that.

There are things that the world is not gonna understand, God's got facts we don't have, he's got understanding we don't have. So what seems to be the foolishness of God is actually wiser than men. What seems to be the foolishness of the person that messed with your situation, moved your stuff, is actually wiser.

Well, the reason I moved it is there was a hole in the roof and rain was coming in on it and I knew you wouldn't want it ruined, so I moved it. Oh, I didn't know about the hole, I didn't know about the leak, I didn't know about the threat. And what you did was wonderful, thank you, instead of I can't believe you did that, it's thank you for doing that, just by the addition of a few facts.

God knows more than we do. And that's really the substance of Paul's argument in the whole last part of this chapter. Look at verse 21, the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom doesn't know God.

If you had to be smart enough and have enough evidence, if you had to be a scientist with beakers and flasks and gram scales and rulers and micrometers and all that in order to parse the gospel, well, those of us that are less acute wouldn't get there. So it pleases God that you don't get relationship with Him by what you know. In the same way that we have friends, we have romantic attachments, we have close personal connections and it didn't come because we sat and analyzed all of the pros and cons of somebody's personality.

It comes in a different way. There is a different avenue to personal relationship. The cross makes possible personal relationship with God.

And we don't get there by analyzing God and God analyzing us and it's the best of several available options. It is because He loves us. And we respond to that love with love of our own.

That's what Paul says. So in verse 24, those who are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because power and wisdom are the two obstacles.

Jews request a sign. What is the sign? Expression of power, right? Part the sea, heal the blind, fill my tooth, something. Do something that is obviously miraculous so that we can believe.

I wanna see power. And the Greeks want all of the logical argument and all of the evidence. But Christ, i.e. the cross, the message of the cross, transcends those.

Christ is the sign of the power of God. Christ is the reasonable answer to the problem, to us who are being saved. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men, down in verse 25.

So then he goes on in 26. You see your calling, brethren, not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise.

God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty. How many of y'all, pop quiz, remember a little concept in days past labeled angelic conflict? Anybody ever heard that term? What does that represent? What's going on there? At some time before humanity came on the scene, sometime before Genesis 1, God had another civilization and there was a sin issue, there was a rebellion issue. Somebody said, I think we can function

independently of God.

There's a little section over there in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 that has the five I wills. I will raise my throne above my fellow angels. I can be like the most high.

We don't need God to be dictating everything. I'm smart enough to do it myself. Well, God could have just prepared the lake of fire, which he did at that time and said, all y'all that think that way, in you go, goodbye.

But for some reason, that sentence was passed but not executed. Satan is not in the lake of fire. He's not down there with a red suit and a pitchfork and turning people on a spit.

It didn't happen. Instead, human creation happened. This world happened.

So what conclusion do we draw? We are a demonstration of something to all of that previous civilization. Now, who's smarter, them or us? If there was some sort of an IQ test, do you think we could outsmart any of God? I think the lowest, meanest, mop-in-his-hand angel in all of God's creation is gonna be way smarter than me. I feel certain that that whole order of creation is at a level I can't even comprehend, much less match.

So what has God done in this angelic situation? He has taken foolish creatures that are dumber than the angels and has shown that they, with all of their limitations and all of their short-duration lifespans and the world, the flesh, and the devil all against them are still in the midst of that swamp smart enough, i.e., to choose God. And God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise up there and to demonstrate what grace is and what love is and what free will is. Well, now that same situation by analogy within the realm of humanity, there are people who think they are very smart and that they're too smart to fall for the old gospel story.

And God has chosen us who are, quote, not so smart. We have the humility to recognize that what we need is not a real smart, humanly engineered solution. What we need is the creator God to be our father, to come into our hearts and our lives and rehabilitate us in ways no piece of technology can do.

There's nothing that can get into the invisible realm of our ideas and our thoughts and our intents, our motivations, and the corruption of our nature. There's no, listen, science can go on for another 10,000 years. I don't care what they discover.

I don't care if they start making sandcastles out of dark matter. They are never gonna be able to get into my heart and fix my selfishness and my corruption and my inevitable path to perish. Every time you pass a birthday, you are that much closer to the end of this mortal existence.

You've never been as old as you are right now. And you've never had less of your physical life left than you have right now. Younger ones think, well, but I've got decades.

Maybe you do, maybe you don't. All you have to do is consult the statistics for people in your age bracket. And people wake up in the morning and tie their shoes, thinking I've got my whole life in front of me, and they're on a sliding tray at the morgue by the end of the day.

They didn't see it coming. You do not know what is allotted to you. And so what you've got counts, but it is a problem that science is never gonna fix.

They're not gonna download your mind into a chip. And heaven help you if they ever did. I lose those things all the time.

If somebody downloaded me onto a USB stick, I'd be in the back of a drawer somewhere and never get a chance to run. And I find those things in the carpet of the floor and the car. It's never gonna happen.

God is the only one who can fix these problems because he is infinitely smarter than we are. So you see your calling. Not many wise are called.

God has chosen the foolish things of the world, verse 27, to put to shame the wise. And the weak things of the world, angels evidently are eternal in a way that we're not. They don't seem to die.

There's no record in the Bible of any angel dying. And we do. And so we're weak, we're perishable.

We're grass that springs up in the morning and withers by evening. But we bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him, you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God.

The wisdom that we lack, this is the message of the cross. Christ is the wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. And so if we're going to brag on anything and be impressed by anything and boast over anything, it's the Lord.

He's done what we can't do. So that brings us to chapter two. I, brethren, when I came to you did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.

And if you have in your periphery someone who is seeking, they're dissatisfied, they have recognized that there is an emptiness, there's an ache, there is a meaninglessness to life. Is this all there is? I don't find myself fulfilled. I don't find myself satisfied.

I find myself falling short of my own standards and certainly of any objective standard. I recognize a need. I recognize a lack.

I recognize that there is something more and I'm not connected to it and I can't seem to find it. That is someone who is looking. That's us before we got saved.

There's something wrong. There's something needed. The answer to that isn't logic, reason,

evidence.

It's not even sign power. It isn't somebody with a gift coming in and working miracles. Well, that must be the answer.

Look at the miracle this person just wrought in my sight. Because what's the problem with wisdom? You can be fooled. Remember the medical knowledge that said, I was reading about this, in the mid 1930s, a guy invented a way to help people not have epileptic fits anymore and to stabilize their thinking when they were kind of crazy? It was the scientific breakthrough, the man got a Nobel Prize for this breakthrough.

You know what it was? You drill a hole right here. You drill a hole right here. You stick a poker in there and you wiggle it.

It's called a lobotomy. Latest, greatest scientific breakthrough in the 1930s through the 1950s was the lobotomy. That's the wisdom of man and it wasn't until years had gone by and thousands of people had been lobotomized that they began to realize that they were basically scrambling people's brain and it was unpredictable.

You could disconnect stuff that had tremendous personality changes. People went autistic, they went unconscious, they went away, they lost abilities. Parts of their body didn't work anymore.

Yeah, drill a hole, stick in a post. This is the way to fix the sin problem. This is a way to fix the corruption and the fallen nature.

We'll just go in there and start disconnecting things until it quits sparking. That's often the wisdom of the world. Not to say we don't have airplanes and cell phones, but the wisdom of this world is passing away and often it is incomplete.

Have you seen the, I've told you this before, you look at the commercials on TV. Did they repair your insides with mesh? Sue them, they goofed. Did they repair a joint with a titanium ball and socket? Sue them, they messed up.

Did you take this particular drug for this particular problem? Sue them, it's killing people. You know, I love the ones that weren't written by English majors and it says, you know, have you or a loved one suffered injury or death? If you have suffered death, you're not hearing this commercial. If you have suffered injury or if your loved one has suffered death, but you can't put a complex subject and a complex verb in that way and be wise.

So what's the issue here? God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, those who think they're wise. It makes so much sense at the time. It's a great breakthrough from everything we know.

This is the most likely explanation. Couple of new facts come in. We've got to stop that right now.

We can't do that anymore. No more thalidomide for these ladies. No more leeches to get this person better.

No more draining the blood out of George Washington to help him get over his fever. Over the course of time, human wisdom, it's fallible, it's changeable, it is incomplete. God's wisdom is perfect and it's higher than ours.

And again, you see this happening and repeated by Paul in verse 29, the base things of the world and the things which are despised, God has chosen and the things which are not to bring to nothing the things that are so that no flesh should glory in his presence. And he says that no one should boast in his presence. But of him, you are in Christ Jesus who has become all of these things for us.

And again, in verse 31, he who glories, let him glory in the Lord. So there is a turning away from self. Now this was introduced earlier in the chapter.

What is it that the Jews are looking for? Pop quiz, everybody close your books and open your blue book. What are the alternatives that people are looking for? What alternative are the Jews looking for to the message of the cross? What do they wanna see? You can speak up, what are they looking for? A sign and what is that? What kind of sign? Sign on a post, Wile E. Coyote sign before he falls. What kind of sign? What is the sign? What's it made of? What does it express? Power, right? Take this mountain and throw it in the sea.

Take these five loaves and two fishes and feed a crowd of thousands. Take this man blind from birth and give him sight. And yet Jesus did all those signs and it really wasn't sufficient.

The Pharisees saw Lazarus who had been dead for over three days walking around. Pretty much the biggest sign. I've asked some people, you know, you say there's no evidence for God and I say, well, what would qualify as evidence in your mind? You say there's no evidence of God.

I see it all around me, you don't see any. So tell me, what would you need to see to say, well, yeah, I guess there's a God after all? And you know what they say? Well, how about raising someone from the dead? That would tell me that there's a God. It's been done.

People just like you saw it and you know what they did? We gotta find that Lazarus and kill him. We gotta put him back in the ground. The sign doesn't convince, but it's a manifestation of power.

Now, second quiz question, what are the Greeks looking for? Wisdom, right? They want somebody to reason and logic them into it and convince them by a preponderance of the evidence that this must be the truth. Well, I just don't see any other viable explanation. Why was there such dancing and jubilation in the streets once Darwin got his Origin of Species published? I can finally justify what I've always felt all along.

I didn't want there to be a God and now I can have some academic wisdom to back it up. There doesn't need to be a God. I didn't want him to be there.

Now I can satisfy my mind as well as my heart that there is no God. Power and wisdom. Now, here's the third quiz question.

This is the most important one. Got to pay close attention to this one. The Jews and the Greeks, these two categories of people that either want to see, and by the way, these same categories exist today.

People that do not want to believe or choose not to believe or feel they can't believe, these are basically the two objections. Where is this power and this wisdom that they are looking for? What kind of power and wisdom is it? And let me sort of give away the answer by putting the question this way. Who is it that they want to have as the target of the power and the wisdom? Who do they want to see benefit from it? Get this power to work for me.

Remember Simon the Sorcerer? Give me this Holy Spirit so that I can exercise power. Give me this wisdom so that I can have the same kind of confident assurance that my heart is on the right track that Darwin and Dawkins and all these other people give me. The power is so that I can be benefited.

The wisdom is so that I can be benefited and that I can feel good and say that I'm on solid ground. And so, yes, I came to the conclusion. I received the power.

I got the power. And so, who in the realm of subjectivity is the focus of this power and this wisdom that they are looking for? The Jews are seeking a sign for themselves. The Greeks are seeking wisdom for themselves.

What has Paul repeated twice here in verse 29 and verse 31? If you are going to be a believer, your focus is not on yourself. Even though we are the beneficiaries of salvation, but what is the foolishness of the message preached? What is the glory of the cross? Not that I got saved. It is God's grace, God's power, God's love, God's willingness to send his own son.

John 3.16 isn't in order that we could all get saved, God sent his son. What's the order of ideas in John 3.16? Who's the first noun in the sentence? God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten son. So that.

It's the fundamental problem. Belief versus unbelief isn't a lack of demonstrated power and it isn't a lack of viable wisdom. It is the self-centered view, the self-centered life.

Do something for me. I fold my hands, convince me. Wise me into belief, argue me into belief, demonstrate and evidence me into belief or dazzle me into belief.

Strike me with a ball of lightning and I'll believe because I'm the one that needs convincing, I'm the one that needs this kind of proof, which is a concomitant and a manifestation of pride. If

you recognize that you are needy, you are the man in the ditch and providentially, here comes somebody that can get you out of the ditch and they do, you have the humility to accept it. In the story of the Good Samaritan, who is the laudable one? Who is the one to be praised and to be appreciated and respected? The man in the ditch or the guy who despite all kinds of racial and ethnic problems, picks him up, carries him, spends his own money and makes provision and says, if anything else is needed, let me know and I'll continue to help him.

Who gets the glory in the story of the Good Samaritan? It's not the story of the man in the ditch, is it? The story of the man in the ditch, the poor man and somebody came along and helped him, but look at him now, look at what he's done with his rehabilitation. It's all about the one providing the deliverance, right? This is an issue of attitude and you're not gonna change someone's inherently self-centered, self-sufficient, I am the judge on the stand and God is on trial person. I will judge, you bring me the evidence, I'll decide if this God is worthy of my respect and my faith, never gonna happen.

Well, are you the Messiah? Remember when Jesus was on trial? Did Jesus argue with Pilate or the Sanhedrin or the high priest or any of those people that he was dragged before all night long? He made simple declarations of fact and he did no miracle. Could Jesus have done a miracle? Could he have turned a nearby glass of water into wine and said, see, told you I was the Messiah. He gave them no power because the problem is not a lack of demonstration of power.

The problem in evidence in this universe is not a demonstration of power that needs to be made, it's all around us. It's a problem of attitude. So Paul says, God is smart because it is a filter for people who have the attitude that can dwell in his presence for all eternity.

He can save us and he can rehabilitate us because we are not like Satan saying, I will, I will, I will. We say, God has, Christ has, my father has, the Lord Jesus has. Those are the subjects of our sentences.

No flesh glories in his presence, we boast in the Lord. It's about the Lord and his quality. And when you recognize that, suddenly the power and the wisdom are abundant all around.

But the attitude comes first. To get into the building where God's power and God's wisdom are on display, you've got to open the door by turning the knob and that door and that knob are faith. Faith first, then you are going to see it.

So in chapter two, I didn't come to you with excellence of speech and wisdom, declaring you the testimony of God. I didn't know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear and trembling.

My speech, my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom. Do you ever feel like you're in a situation where maybe you could share the truth of Christ with somebody, but you feel inadequate and, well, I'm going to mess it up. Let me, who do I know that could really

explain this well? Let me give you a tract, let me hand you a book, let me refer you to someone.

There's a great website, you know, go to needhim.org or something and get it there. You should be comforted. The apostle Paul, author of most of the New Testament, felt that way.

And there was a huge explosion of interest in the Lord Jesus Christ and faith in him in Corinth, despite his beaked nose and his bald head and his squeaky voice and his unimpressive appearance. I was with you in weakness, in fear and trembling. My speech, my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Demonstrations of the Spirit. Now, there are overt demonstrations of the Spirit and there are Bible-based demonstrations of the Spirit. We focus on the latter.

And all you have to do is know your Bible truth, know what happened on the cross. We speak wisdom among those who are mature, not the wisdom of this age. The rulers of this age are coming to nothing.

And we're gonna talk after the break about this coming to nothing. Paul keeps coming back to those who are perishing, these things that are coming to nothing, what is not and what is. And this is an important subject and it recurs throughout the Bible.

You find it in John and in his epistles, you find it in Peter, you find it in the words of the Lord Jesus himself. What does it mean for something to come to nothing? This has ramifications, especially in terms of what's on the line if you don't believe. What happens at the great white throne? What happens to those whose names are not in the book and are judged according to their works and they are cast into the lake of fire? What happens? Well, that has already been introduced when Paul says those who are perishing.

It's foolishness of those who are perishing. What kind of perishing? Is it just a temporary setback? Is it some kind of permanent ongoing situation? What is it? Well, that is here in chapter one and in chapter two, the things that are passing away and the things that are going to last forever. So we'll see that when we come back from the break.