

The Foolishness of God, Part 3

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:29–2:5

Code: 1815

INTRODUCTION

In 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5, Paul contrasts the wisdom of God to the wisdom of men. In this lesson, we will be looking at 1:29 to 2:5. Now, remember that Paul wrote the book of 1 Corinthians to deal with the problems in the Corinthian assembly. They had many problems, and the first one that Paul dealt with was the problem of division. The congregation was being fractioned into little groups. One reason they were divided into groups, according to 1:12, was that they were dividing up according to the men with whom they identified--Paul, Apollos, Peter, or Christ. Another reason they were divided was because they were polarizing according to philosophical viewpoints. Because Corinth was dominated by varying philosophies (and it wasn't very far from Athens, the center of philosophy) the Corinthians had become a populace divided over philosophical viewpoints. When they became Christians, they dragged their perspectives and opinions into the church and created little groups that rallied around viewpoints on man's destiny or man's life. As a result, the church had been fractioned into many groups, everybody claiming to be a believer, but also adhering to his former philosophy. So, Paul writes from 1:18 to 2:5 to show the Corinthians that this shouldn't be happening. He tells them that human philosophy is unnecessary--it is superfluous and dangerous.

When you have the Word of God, you have the solution to the problems that God wants you to solve. God didn't give us incomplete revelation. I'm not saying you should be ignorant about everything; I'm simply saying that God's Word is what a man needs, and that human opinion tends to divide rather than unify.

In showing the Corinthians that divine wisdom is superior to human wisdom, Paul demonstrates five ways in which God's wisdom is superior:

I. GOD'S WISDOM: ITS PERMANENCE (1:19-20)

A. Paul's Quote (1:19)

B. Paul's Questions (1:20)

II. GOD'S WISDOM: ITS POWER (1:21-25)

A. The Foolishness of God Reaches to Men (1:21)

B. The Foolishness of God Is a Barrier to Men (1:22-23)

C. The Foolishness of God Is Power and Wisdom to the Called (1:24)

Paul shows that the world, by all of its own wisdom, couldn't know God, couldn't do anything about sin, and couldn't transform men. That's why you can work in politics, economics, or education, and yet never really be able to change people. The world, at the best levels of its understanding, cannot bring men to know God and be redeemed out of their sin. But God's cross did do that, and even though it was rejected by the Jews and the Greeks, there were some who believed and to them it became power and wisdom. That proves that. . .

D. The Foolishness of God Is Wiser Than Men (1:25)

III. GOD'S WISDOM: ITS PARADOX (1:26-28)

A. God's Calling (1:26)

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called"

The world looks at three things to determine greatness: wisdom, power, and high rank. God,

however, didn't choose very many people for His church that were brilliant, powerful, or high ranking.

B. God's Choosing (1:27-28)

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound [put to shame] the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are"

In other words, God has chosen the things that in the eyes of the world are nothing for the purpose of bringing to nothing the things that the world thinks are important.

That's the paradox; that's the apparent contradiction. God wants to demonstrate that He does not need human wisdom. In order to do that,

He grants salvation to humble, simple people; they stand as a living testimonial to the world that God doesn't need human wisdom. Philosophy, literature, oratory, influence, power, and intelligence are all irrelevant to God. To show that, God chose the simple and the humble to be His people.

James 2:5 says, "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith. . . ?" Poor, uneducated, simple people have generally been the ones who have constituted the makeup of the church throughout its history. They stand collectively as a testimonial and a rebuke against the world. As the Gentiles stand to make Israel jealous (Rom. 10:19), so do the foolish and simple stand as redeemed people to make the wise of this world jealous. The simplest person without any formal education who knows God knows more than the greatest philosopher in the world that doesn't know God. That is a rebuke to human wisdom. Ephesians 3:10 says that God wants to take the church and put it on display before principalities and powers so that they may see in the church His wisdom.

That brings us to our next point:

IV. GOD'S WISDOM: ITS PURPOSE (1:29-31)

A. To Remove Pride (1:29-30)

1. Denying God Credit (1:29)

"That no flesh should glory in His presence. "

The most reliable manuscripts say "before God" instead of "in His presence. " In this verse, God removes all human boasting. Nobody can say, "I'm a Christian; I was smart enough to believe God. " Have you ever thought that? Have you ever looked at someone and thought, "How could he be stupid enough not to accept this"? If you've thought that, then you're really saying, "I was smart enough to become saved. " Your being saved had nothing to do with you being smart and someone else being stupid.

Verse 24 tells us who it is that becomes saved: "But unto them who are called [elected]. . . . " Verse 24 says that God elected people. Then in verse 27, the phrase "God hath chosen" appears twice. The same phrase appears again in verse 28. Why were you saved? Not because you were smart, but because God chose you.

You say, "Wait a minute; I had to do something. " That's indicated in verse 21: God chose "to save them that believe. " That was your faith response--God's part was choosing. You say, "I listened to all the logical arguments and made my conclusion. " No, you were saved because you were chosen of God in His marvelous grace. Because of that, as it says in verse 29, no flesh can glory before God. You can't come before God and say, "Here I am, God, remember me? I'm the smart one. "

a. Isaiah 42:8--". . . My glory will I not give to another. . . . " We are not to usurp glory that belongs to God. b. Ephesians 2:8-9--"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God--not of works, lest any man should boast. "We cannot boast about the part we played in our salvation.

2. Giving God Credit (1:30)

"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus. . . . "

The only reason you're in Christ Jesus is because of God. Human wisdom didn't bring you to Christ. Paul is saying here to the Corinthians, "The purpose in salvation was that God may be glorified. In order for God to get the glory, He made sure that you had nothing to do with your salvation. " You got saved because of God's wisdom. Man's wisdom, even at its best, can do nothing to change his heart or to help him know God.

Once you became a Christian you didn't stay ignorant; instead. . .

a. You Received Wisdom We read in verse 30, "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom. . . ." As soon as you became a Christian, the first thing you received was wisdom. Only those of us who know God and salvation are truly wise. We stand as a testimony for all time that God took simple, humble people who didn't know enough to do anything to redeem themselves, and He made us the wisest of all creation. It is for this reason that glory belongs to Him. That's why it says in verse 31, ". . . He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. " God gave wisdom that He might receive glory. He chose simple, humble people so that there would not be any question about the fact that salvation is not an issue of man's wisdom, but of God's wisdom. The moment you became a Christian, you learned many new things. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. . . ." (Jn. 14:6). You received the truth. In John 8:32 it says, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. " Let me show you what you learned when you became a Christian:1) 2

Corinthians 4:6"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shone in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. "God commanded the light to shine out of darkness physically when He created the world, and He also makes light shine into our hearts spiritually when we become saved. When we were redeemed, God turned the light on and gave us "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. " The first thing that a believer learns when he becomes saved is the glory of God. What is meant by the phrase "the glory of God"? The glory of God encompasses all that He is, all of His attributes, and all of His nature.

When you become a Christian, you know God--you know His nature and His essence. Before you were a Christian you didn't know God. It's a handicap to not know God, the generator of the universe and the source of all life. When you become a Christian, God turns on the light of the knowledge of His glory, and it comes through Christ. Let me show you another thing you learned when you became a Christian:2) Ephesians 1:9"Having made known unto us [having given to us in all wisdom] the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself"God not only reveals Himself to us, He also reveals His will to us. Now this isn't referring to who you ought to marry, or where you should work. That's not what it's talking about. What it is talking about is the whole of God's plan. That's indicated in verse 10, which talks about God's eternal purpose. When you became a Christian, you began to know God and His will. That's exciting!3) Ephesians 1:17-18"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints"Both hope and inheritance have a future aspect. We are hoping for the fullness of redemption, and for the inheritance which is reserved for us. According to verse 18, the eyes of our understanding are opened when we become saved--thus we now understand the hope of His calling and our inheritance. When you were saved, you came to know God, His plan, and your destiny. A Christian knows where he came from, what he's doing, and where he's going. That is the fullness of knowledge that comes at salvation. The people in this world haven't got any idea where they came from--some say they came from apes. They haven't got the faintest idea what they're doing here, and that's why they become existentialists--they live for the moment. Least of all do they have any idea where they're going. If I wanted to know only three things in this world, those would be the three: where I came from, what I'm doing here, and where I am going. God says that in Christ you find out those things. That's what I call having wisdom!That is why the simplest, humblest Christian person who doesn't know much in terms of the world is wiser about what matters than the philosophers of all

the ages. The wonderful thing about it all is that the glory is God's, because we didn't do anything to gain wisdom; God gave it to us. If we know where we came from, why we're here, and where we're going, is that cause to boast? Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:30, "But of Him [God] are ye in Christ. . . . " It is because God put us in Christ that we received true wisdom. We're in Christ, and Christ is made unto us wisdom. Paul mentions in verse 30 something else you received when you were saved. b. You Received Righteousness You say, "What is righteousness?" Righteousness means that before God, you stand right as opposed to wrong. You are good as opposed to bad--sinless as opposed to sinful. You say, "You mean when I responded to God's calling, and I believed, that made me right before God?" That's correct. Second Corinthians 5:21 says that Christ was made sin for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. " He took our sin and gave us His righteousness. When God looks down from heaven at a Christian, He sees him with a cloak over him that says "The righteousness of Christ" on it, and it covers the sin. God declares him righteous because of Christ's atoning act. In Philippians 3:9, Paul says that he wants to "be found in Him, not having [his] own righteousness. . . but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. "It's a wonderful thing to realize that when you're saved you not only get wisdom, but you also get absolute and total righteousness before God. Your sin is removed from you. You say, "How can God do that?" He can do it because Christ took your sin and bore it on the cross, and paid the penalty for it. God is satisfied. c. You Received Sanctification 1) Explained To be sanctified means "to be set apart, or holy. " We'll use the word holy. God not only declared you righteous, but He also began an inside work of making you holy. The moment you believed in Christ, the incorruptible seed was planted in you (1 Pet. 1:23). John said in 1 John 3:9 that you cannot continue to commit habitual sin. Why? Because God's holy seed is in you. When you became a Christian, the first thing you began to see in your life was holiness. Before you were a Christian, you sinned all the time. When you became a Christian, all of a sudden there was holiness with intermittent sin. As you mature in Christ--as you walk in the Spirit--the frequency of your sinning decreases. 2) Experienced God works in us to make us holy. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Now that you're saved, you are holy. " We not only are right before God in a judicial way, but we actually are made holy, and that's an experiential thing. We begin to walk in the Spirit. Romans 8 says, "But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. . . " (v. 9). Galatians 5:22-23 shows us some of the fruit produced in our lives as a result of being made holy. Second Corinthians 3:18 tells us that the Holy Spirit conforms us into the image of Christ. Ephesians 2:10 says we were "created in Christ Jesus unto good works. . . . "In 1 Corinthians 1:30, Paul also says. . . d. You Received Redemption To redeem means "to buy back. " God, through Christ, has purchased us from the power of sin. We have been redeemed. Ephesians 1:7 says we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin. Peter said, ". . . ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold. . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:18a-19). Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption are all given to us in Christ. What did you do to earn wisdom? You're not smart enough to have known wisdom on your own. What did you do to earn righteousness? Paul says in Romans 3:20, ". . . by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified [made right]. . . . " You didn't do anything to earn righteousness. What did you do to be made holy? You couldn't make yourself holy. What did you do to redeem yourself? You couldn't pay the price. We cannot glory in our own wisdom. Only God's wisdom is worthy. . .

B. To Receive Praise (1:31)

"That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. "

All that you are--wise, righteous, holy, and redeemed--can only be attributed to the wisdom of God. You did nothing. Verses 29 and 30 do not attribute these things to the philosophy of man. The philosophy of man cannot grant true wisdom, it can't pay the price for sin, it can't make you holy, and it can't deliver you from sin's grasp. The only thing it can do, if you let it infiltrate the church, is divide you. There are churches all over this country that are split over political issues. There's no need for

that. All human philosophy will do is polarize you at points that don't really matter. Referring to Jeremiah 9:23-24 in this verse, Paul says if you're going to glory, glory in the Lord. He's the One who has done it all.

Let me give you an illustration of this from the book of Galatians:

1. Honoring Circumcision

Whenever the church becomes divided over politics, economics, or anything else, it runs into problems because then it's dividing over nonessentials. Remember that Paul said if you're going to glory, glory in the Lord. You didn't do anything to deserve His grace. In Galatians 6:13, we read, "For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law, but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. "

The Judaizers came into Galatia, and confused the Galatian Christians by telling them they had to get circumcised and become Jews. Paul tells the Galatians that the Judaizers don't care about their souls; all they care about is getting converts. "They want to make you Jews so that they can glory in your flesh," he says.

2. Honoring the Cross

Paul then says in Galatians 6:14, "But God forbid that I should glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . " He says, "There's nothing for me to boast about--there's nothing to glory in but the cross. " In Romans he said, ". . . I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me. . . " (15:18). In Galatians 6, Paul says there are two reasons why he boasts in the Lord: one, it changed his relation to the world "by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (v. 14). Two, Jesus Christ made him "a new creature" (v. 15b). Paul says it was that cross that changed his relation to the world, and it was the cross that made him a new creature. Because of that, he would not glory in mankind.

Let's look now at. . .

V. GOD'S WISDOM: ITS PRESENTATION (2:1-5)

This isn't so much a point as it is an illustration of all the former points. Paul uses himself as the example in these verses to support what he's said in the previous points.

A. Paul's Preaching (2:1-4)

1. His Declaration of God's Word (2:1-2)

a. The Essence of His Preaching (2:1)"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. "Paul is saying, "Do you remember my presentation to you? My presentation was an illustration of everything I've just said. When I came to you, I didn't come talking fancy words and human philosophy. Let my presentation to you be an illustration of the unimportance of human philosophy. " God had determined to save men not by human wisdom, but by the gospel. When Paul came to Corinth he didn't come as a philosopher; he came declaring the witness of God. The Greek word here for "testimony" is marturion, which means "the witness of God. " A witness is someone who has seen something that is objective, actual, and historical. Paul says, "I came to you and reported to you the testimony of God's objective revelation, not things of a speculative nature. "That is something that all of us should be doing. Somebody once said to me, "You ought to warn people about the economic situation. " I said, "No, I can't do that. " He said, "Why?" I said, "First, I don't understand it. Second, I'm not an expert on it. " I just want to teach people the Word of God; they can come to their own conclusions. What's going to happen will happen because this is God's world, and He determines all that goes on. Paul said, ". . . I . . . came not with excellency [or 'superiority'] of speech [Gk. logos] or of wisdom [Gk. sophia]. . . . " In other words, he said, "I didn't come giving you human philosophy. I came to you with God's Word--the testimony of God. " The testimony of God is Jesus Christ. In John 15:26, we read that the Father testifies to the Son. Paul declared the marturion--the witness--of God concerning Christ. He didn't speak to the Corinthians in speculation, but with the testimony of God. When we

gather together on Sunday, we concern ourselves with the Bible, not political, economical, or social opinions. This is illustrated in other places in the Scripture: 1) 2 Corinthians 4:1-2 Paul writes to the Corinthians, "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth. . . " (vv. 1-2a). The primary task of the ministry is to manifest the truth of God. Paul continues, ". . . commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (v. 2b). Paul said, "We have a clear conscience, as do the Corinthians, because we have manifested God's truth." 2) 1 Timothy 4:13, 15 In this passage, Paul told Timothy what the priorities of his ministry should be: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (v. 13). Paul told Timothy to teach God's Word. There are three things a minister should do: one, read the Bible; two, explain it; and three, apply it. I endeavor to do that with every text I teach. Paul didn't say, "Read the text, explain it, apply it, and then give a few opinions." He said, ". . . give thyself wholly to them [reading, explaining, and applying]. . . " (v. 15b). 3) 2 Timothy 4:2-4 Here Paul said to Timothy, "Preach the word; be diligent in season, out of season. . . . For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine but, after their own lusts [Gk. epithumia], shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." True biblical preaching is not popular. But there are all kinds of people who want to talk about God and go to church, so they'll find a church where they can hear what they want to hear. Vincent said this: "In periods of unsettled faith, skepticism, and mere curious speculation in matters of religion, teachers of all kinds swarm like the flies in Egypt. The demand creates the supply. The hearers invite and shape their own preachers. If the people desire a calf to worship, a ministerial calf-maker is readily found." Paul, however, gave the testimony of God--he didn't only say what people wanted to hear. There are some ministers today who tell people only what they want to hear, because they don't want to upset the people they're speaking to. Some people will go to different places until they find someone whose preaching appeals to them. Some men make a fortune these days just telling people what they want to hear. b. The Emphasis of His Preaching (2:2) "For I determined not to know any thing among you, except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." Paul focused on the cross in his preaching. He preached Christ crucified--Christ the Savior. He preached a fact, not a speculative opinion. Just because it says here that Paul preached Christ crucified does not mean that he denied the rest of the Scripture. In Acts 18:11 it says that he taught the whole Word of God to the Corinthians. The cross--the redemptive plan of God--was the emphasis of Paul's preaching, as opposed to human speculation. In fact, he made this point so clear to the early church that people thought the Christians worshiped a dead man. Celsus himself said, "Christians worship a dead man." On Palatine Hill, a caricature was once found of a Christian kneeling at the foot of a cross with a crucified donkey on it. At the bottom of the caricature it said, "Alexamenus worships his god." Even though the Gentiles saw the cross as foolishness, Paul never changed his message to accommodate the people. We've seen that Paul was faithful to preach God's Word. Now, let's look at. . .

2. His Dependence on God's Power (2:3-4)

a. His Condition (2:3) "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." What did Paul mean by this? Some people think the fear and trembling here refers to a physical illness, but I don't think that's what he's talking about. This same idea of fear and trembling is used in other Bible passages to mean "mental anxiety over an important issue" (2 Cor. 7:15; Eph. 6:5). In Philippians 2:12 we read, ". . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." In that passage it refers to an anxiety that comes with something that's urgent. Paul expressed anxiety over the Corinthians because of the corrupt city they lived in. In fact, when a man's life became debauched with unceasing immorality, he was said to be Corinthianized. The word Corinthianize became the verb for "continual prostitution." After having been thrown out of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, Paul came to Corinth alone and discouraged. He saw the city dominated by sinfulness, and he had a

terrible mental anxiety over the lostness of the city. b. His Communication (2:4)"And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power..."Paul didn't come with his own words or in his own power. He came in the power of the Holy Spirit. He said, "I didn't want to come in my own power because if I had, then you would have identified with me and not Christ. "B. Paul's Purpose (2:5)"...that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."Paul is saying, "I didn't want you to put your faith in my opinions. I wanted you to put your faith in God, whose power can transform you. " He told them in verse 4, ". . . my speech [Gk. logos=personal contact] and my preaching [Gk. kerugma=public preaching] were not with enticing words. . . . " He didn't come to persuade them to his opinions; he just let the Spirit's power flow through him to change lives. He did the same thing at Thessalonica: "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit. . . " (1 Thess. 1:5a). That's the only way you can change lives.

Charles Spurgeon said, "The power that is in the gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher; otherwise men would be the converters of souls. Nor does it lie in the preacher's learning; otherwise it could consist in the wisdom of men. We might preach till our tongues rotted, till we should exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless. . . the Holy Spirit be with the Word to give it power to convert the soul. " That is precisely what Paul was saying: "I came to you not with a human message, but with the testimony of God--the cross. I gave this testimony with divine power, so that your faith would not be based on philosophy but on the power of God. " A pastor once pointed to a man after a service and said to me, "See that man? He's one of my converts. " I said, "Really?" He said, "Yes, not the Lord's--mine. " He attributed that person's faith to his own power, not God's.

John Stott said, "It seems that the only preaching God honors, through which His wisdom and power are expressed, is the preaching of a man who is willing in himself to be both a weakling and a fool. " God not only chooses the weak and foolish to be saved, He also chooses them to preach. It's through the weak and foolish that God's Word and God's power can be expressed.

Paul has proven that God's wisdom doesn't need human wisdom. He shows the Corinthians that they didn't need to bring human wisdom into their church--it would only bring division. We, too, don't need human wisdom. May it be that we always unite around God's Word and God's Spirit.

Focusing on the Facts

1. According to James 2:5, whom did God choose to be rich in faith? Why?
2. How were you saved?
3. What is the purpose of salvation?
4. What four things did you receive when you became a Christian?
5. Second Corinthians 4:6 says that when you become a Christian, you receive "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. " What does the phrase "the glory of God" mean? Using that definition, explain what new knowledge we obtain of God when we become a Christian.
6. What does Ephesians 1:9 say we receive knowledge of when we become a Christian? Explain what this is referring to.
7. When you were saved, you came to know ____, God's ____, and your ____.
8. What is righteousness? Why was Christ made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21)? What does God see when He looks at a Christian?
9. What does the word sanctified mean? Describe what God is doing when He sanctifies you.
10. What happens to the frequency of your sinning as you walk in the Spirit? Read Galatians 5:22-23. What is produced in our lives as a result of being made holy? According to 2 Corinthians 3:18, what does the Holy Spirit do to us?
11. What does the word redeem mean? What did God redeem us from? How did He redeem us (1 Pet. 1:18-19)?

12. Read Galatians 6:14. In what did Paul glory? In verses 14 and 15, Paul mentions two reasons why he boasted in the Lord. What were these reasons?
13. To support what he said in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, what does Paul do in 2:1-5?
14. Explain what Paul meant when he told the Corinthians that he came to them declaring "the testimony of God" (1 Cor. 2:1b).
15. According to 2 Corinthians 4:1-2, how did Paul and his helpers handle their ministry? Why did they have clear consciences?
16. What did Paul say should be Timothy's priorities, in 1 Timothy 4:13? What should all ministers do with the Bible?
17. Paul warned Timothy that there would be those who "will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:3). Why do some ministers not preach sound doctrine? Why might some people leave a church with true biblical preaching?
18. What did Paul focus on in his preaching (1 Cor. 2:2)? Does this mean he neglected the rest of the Scripture? Support your answer.
19. In 1 Corinthians 2:3, Paul said, ". . . I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. " What is this idea of fear and trembling used in other Bible passages to mean? Why did Paul experience this anxiety?
20. Paul didn't come with his own _____ or in his own _____.
21. What did Paul want the Corinthians to put their faith in (1 Cor. 2:5)?
22. According to Stott, through what kind of preacher does God express His wisdom and power?

Pondering the Principles

1. Look up the following verses: Ephesians 1:4; 2:10; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9. Who determines which people become saved? According to Ephesians 1:4, when did this choosing take place? Now read Isaiah 55:1; John 1:12; 3:16; Romans 10:9, 13; and Revelation 22:17. What does a person do to receive salvation? In the above verses is a paradox: salvation is determined by God's choosing (election), and by the human response of faith. Some people try to resolve this paradox by combining these two truths. Doing that, however, only undermines the truth of God's sovereignty and the need for a human response. Rather than trying to explain away this tension, we must rest in it, realizing that we could never understand all that God knows (Deut. 29:29). Using the above verses as references, write down what you could say to someone who is struggling with this paradox. Take the time to memorize one verse for each part of the paradox, so that you can use God's Word to support what you say.

2. In 1 Corinthians 1:31, Paul wrote, ". . . He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. " Have you ever boasted about how good you are at something that requires skill? Do you find yourself occasionally praising yourself for your abilities? Write down all the things you are able to do well. Do you think God needs you specifically to do those things? Could He give those same talents to anyone else He wanted to? In regard to your salvation, did God have to save you? Romans 8:32 says that God "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. . . . " Whenever you find yourself thinking about how skilled you are at doing something or how much you deserve to be a Christian, remember that it is God who made us what we are. Commit yourself to developing a habit of thanking God for all that He has made you to be.

3. Paul came to the Corinthians "not with excellency of speech or of wisdom," but with the testimony of God (1 Cor. 2:1). When you share the gospel with an unsaved person, do you back up what you say with Scripture, or do you depend on persuasion and clever words? If you don't back up what you say with the Bible, is it possible for the unsaved person to misunderstand exactly what he is to put his faith in to become saved? Why? If you do not know how to present the gospel effectively to an unsaved person, read a good book on the subject, or join a class that teaches you how to reach non-Christians. Remember, God's Word has all the power we need to convince people of their need for Christ!

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