CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

1 Corinthians Chapter 1 — Christ the Power and Wisdom of God

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 1 opens one of the most practical letters in the New Testament.

Paul is writing to a church he planted with his own hands.

And that church is in trouble.

Corinth was a wealthy, busy, proud city in southern Greece.

It sat on a narrow strip of land between two seas, and ships, money, and ideas flowed through it from every direction.

It was a Roman colony and the capital of the province of Achaia.

It was famous for trade, for the Isthmian Games, for its temples, and for its immorality.

Paul came to Corinth on his second missionary journey and stayed a year and a half, teaching the word of God.

A church was born.

Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free people, the rich and the poor all came to faith in Jesus Christ.

But a few years later, while Paul was in Ephesus, troubling news reached him.

The believers in Corinth were quarreling.

They were dividing into groups around their favorite leaders.

They were impressed by clever speech and human wisdom.

They were proud of their gifts.

And they were slowly bringing the values of their city into the church of God.

Paul does not begin by scolding them.

He begins by reminding them who they are in Christ and what God has already given them.

Then he goes straight to the heart of the problem:

Is Christ divided?

From there, Paul lifts their eyes to the cross.

The message of a crucified Savior looks like foolishness to the world.

But it is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

And God has deliberately chosen the weak, the lowly, and the overlooked, so that no one can boast in His presence.

The chapter moves through four movements:

- Greeting and Thanksgiving (verses 1–9).
- A Call to Unity (verses 10–17).
- Christ Crucified: God's Power and Wisdom (verses 18–25).
- God Chooses the Lowly (verses 26–31).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 1 is:

The church is united, not around human leaders or human wisdom, but around Christ crucified, who is the power and wisdom of God, so that all boasting belongs to the Lord alone.

I. CALLED BY THE WILL OF GOD

1 Corinthians 1:1 — "Called to Be an Apostle"

"Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,"

Paul begins the way ancient letters began, with the name of the writer.

But he immediately tells us where his authority comes from.

He did not appoint himself.

He was **"called."**

And he was called **"by the will of God."**

The word **apostle** means **"one who is sent."**

An apostle was a messenger sent with the authority of the one who sent him.

This matters because some in Corinth were questioning Paul.

Before he corrects them, he reminds them that he speaks as a man sent by Jesus Christ.

Paul also mentions **Sosthenes our brother.**

A man named Sosthenes was the ruler of the synagogue in Corinth when Paul was there, and he was beaten in front of the Roman governor.

This may be the same man, now a believer and a brother in Christ.

If so, a former leader of the opposition had become a partner in the gospel.

Cross References

Romans 1:1

> Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called by God to be an apostle and set apart to share God's good news.

1 Corinthians 9:1

> Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Aren't you yourselves the result of my work for the Lord?

Galatians 1:1

> Paul, an apostle—not sent by people or appointed by any man, but sent by Jesus Christ and by God the Father, who raised Him from the dead.

Spiritual Principle

God's call, not human approval, is the foundation of ministry.

Paul did not need the applause of Corinth to know who he was.

He knew who had sent him.

Key Truth

Every believer is called by the will of God.

Not every believer is an apostle, but every believer is sent.

II. THE CHURCH OF GOD IN CORINTH

1 Corinthians 1:2 — “Sanctified in Christ Jesus”

“To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:”

Notice whose church this is.

It is not Paul's church.

It is not Apollos' church.

It is not the church of Corinth.

It is **“the church of God in Corinth.”**

The church belongs to God, even when it lives in a very ungodly city.

Paul calls them **“sanctified in Christ Jesus.”**

To be sanctified means to be **set apart** for God.

This is not first a description of how they were behaving.

It is a description of what God had done for them in Christ.

They were also **“called to be his holy people.”**

God's people are holy by position, and they are called to become holy in practice.

Then Paul widens the circle.

The Corinthians are joined with **“all everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

They are not the whole church.

They are one part of a worldwide family.

And Jesus is **“their Lord and ours.”**

No group owns Him.

Cross References

Romans 1:7

> I am writing to all of you in Rome whom God loves and has called to be His holy people. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Joel 2:32

> Whoever calls out to the LORD by name will be rescued.

Romans 10:13

> Everyone who calls out to the Lord will be saved.

Spiritual Principle

God calls His people holy before they act holy, so that they can grow into what He has made them.

The Corinthians had many problems.

But Paul starts with their identity, not their failures.

Application

If you belong to Christ, you are set apart for God.

Live out what God has already declared about you.

III. GRACE AND PEACE

1 Corinthians 1:3 — The Gift and the Result

"Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

This was Paul's usual greeting.

But it is far more than a polite hello.

Grace is God's undeserved favor.

Peace is the wholeness and rest that comes when we are made right with God.

The order is important.

Grace always comes first.

Peace is the fruit of grace.

Notice also the source:

"From God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul places the Father and the Son side by side as the one source of grace and peace.

This is a quiet but powerful testimony to the full deity of Jesus Christ.

Cross References

Romans 1:7

> May you have grace and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:3

> May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Ephesians 1:2

> I pray that God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ will give you grace and peace.

Spiritual Principle

There is no true peace without grace.

A divided church needs peace.

But peace with one another starts with receiving grace from God.

IV. PAUL GIVES THANKS

1 Corinthians 1:4 — "I Always Thank My God for You"

"I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus."

This is remarkable.

Paul is about to write some of the strongest correction found anywhere in his letters.

Yet he begins by thanking God for these people.

Notice what he thanks God for.

Not their maturity.

Not their behavior.

He thanks God for **"his grace given you in Christ Jesus."**

Paul could see God's work in them even when it was mixed with a great deal of sin and immaturity.

Cross References

Philippians 1:3

> Every time I think of you, I thank my God.

Romans 1:8

> First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because people all over the world are talking about your faith.

Colossians 1:3

> Whenever we pray for you, we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Thankfulness prepares the heart to give correction in love.

It is hard to correct people we have stopped thanking God for.

Application

Think of a believer who frustrates you.

Before you speak to them, thank God for the grace He has given them.

V. ENRICHED IN EVERY WAY

1 Corinthians 1:5 — Speech and Knowledge

“For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge—”

The Corinthians were not poor in spiritual gifts.

They were rich.

Paul names two gifts in particular:

Speech and knowledge.

These were the very things the Corinthians loved most.

And these were the very things they would later misuse.

Their speaking gifts would become a source of pride and confusion.

Their knowledge would make them puffed up instead of loving.

But Paul first reminds them where these riches came from:

“In him.”

Every gift they had was received from Christ.

None of it was their own achievement.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 8:7

> You are rich in everything—in faith, in speaking, in knowledge, in eager devotion, and in your love for us. Now make sure you are also rich in this gift of giving.

Colossians 1:9

> Since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We keep asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will, with all the wisdom and understanding the Spirit gives.

1 Corinthians 12:8

> To one person the Spirit gives a message of wisdom. To another person the same Spirit gives a message of knowledge.

Spiritual Principle

Spiritual gifts are gifts, not trophies.

What God gives is meant to be used for His glory and for the good of others.

VI. THE TESTIMONY CONFIRMED

1 Corinthians 1:6 — God Backed Up the Message

“God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you.”

The gifts in Corinth were proof of something.

They showed that the message Paul preached about Christ was true.

When Paul came to Corinth, he told them about Jesus.

They believed.

And God confirmed that message by changing their lives and giving them spiritual gifts.

The church itself was evidence that the gospel works.

Cross References

2 Timothy 1:8

> So don't be ashamed to tell others about our Lord, and don't be ashamed of me, His prisoner. Instead, join me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God.

Mark 16:20

> The disciples went out and preached everywhere. The Lord worked with them and backed up the message with the signs that came with it.

Hebrews 2:4

> God also confirmed it with signs, wonders, many kinds of miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit that He handed out as He chose.

Spiritual Principle

A changed life is one of the strongest proofs that the gospel is true.

Key Truth

God does not leave His message without a witness.

He confirms His word by what He does in the people who believe it.

VII. WAITING FOR CHRIST TO BE REVEALED

1 Corinthians 1:7 — No Gift Lacking

“Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.”

The Corinthians had everything they needed for the life of the church.

They lacked no spiritual gift.

But Paul attaches a reminder to that statement.

They were still **waiting.**

The gifts were not the finish line.

The Corinthians seemed to think they had already arrived spiritually.

Paul reminds them that the best is still ahead:

The revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The gifts are tools for the waiting season.

They are not a replacement for the return of Christ.

Cross References

Romans 8:19

> All of creation is waiting with eager longing for God to reveal His children.

Titus 2:13

> We wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:7

> These trials prove that your faith is real. Your faith is worth far more than gold, which perishes even though fire tests it. Real faith will bring praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Spiritual Principle

Believers live between the gifts of today and the glory of tomorrow.

Application

Use what God has given you.

But keep your eyes on the day Jesus returns.

VIII. KEPT FIRM TO THE END

1 Corinthians 1:8 — Blameless on That Day

“He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Here is wonderful assurance for a struggling church.

Their future did not depend on their own strength.

It depended on God.

“He will also keep you firm.”

God does not save His people and then leave them to hold on by themselves.

He holds them.

And the goal is that they will be **“blameless”** on **“the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Blameless does not mean they never sinned.

It means no charge will stand against them, because Christ has paid for their sin.

Cross References

Philippians 1:6

> I am sure of this: God, who began a good work in you, will keep working on it until the day Christ Jesus returns.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

> May the God of peace Himself make you completely holy. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes.

Jude 1:24

> Now to the One who is able to keep you from falling and to bring you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy—

Spiritual Principle

The God who began your salvation is the God who will finish it.

Your security rests on His faithfulness, not on your performance.

IX. GOD IS FAITHFUL

1 Corinthians 1:9 — Called into Fellowship

“God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

This verse is the anchor for everything Paul has said so far.

“God is faithful.”

Why can the Corinthians be sure they will be kept firm to the end?

Because God is faithful.

He has called them, and He will not abandon what He started.

Notice what they were called into:

“Fellowship with his Son.”

The word **fellowship** means sharing life together.

Christians are not just forgiven.

They are brought into a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

And if every believer shares fellowship with the same Christ, then believers share fellowship with one another.

That truth prepares the way for Paul's call to unity in the very next verse.

Cross References

1 Thessalonians 5:24

> The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.

1 John 1:3

> We tell you what we have seen and heard so that you can share life together with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

Deuteronomy 7:9

> So know that the LORD your God is God. He is the faithful God who keeps His covenant and shows His loyal love for a thousand generations to those who love Him and obey His commands.

Spiritual Principle

God's faithfulness is the believer's security.

People will fail us.

Churches will disappoint us.

We will disappoint ourselves.

But God is faithful.

Key Truth

Fellowship with Christ is the root.

Fellowship with His people is the fruit.

X. A CALL TO UNITY

1 Corinthians 1:10 — “That There Be No Divisions Among You”

“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.”

Now Paul turns to the first problem in Corinth.

He makes his appeal **“in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

This is the tenth time in ten verses that Paul has mentioned the name of Christ.

He is filling their minds with Jesus before he addresses their divisions.

He calls them **“brothers and sisters.”**

He is speaking to family, not to enemies.

The word translated **“divisions”** was used for a tear in a piece of cloth.

The church in Corinth was being ripped apart.

The phrase **“perfectly united”** was used for mending nets or setting a broken bone.

Paul wants the torn places repaired.

He is not asking them to agree on every small opinion.

He is calling them to share one mind and one purpose centered on Christ.

Cross References

Philippians 2:2

> Make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, and being one in spirit and purpose.

Romans 12:16

> Live in harmony with one another. Don't be proud, but be willing to spend time with ordinary people. Don't think you are wiser than you really are.

John 17:21

> I pray that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us, so that the world will believe that You sent Me.

Spiritual Principle

The unity of the church is a witness to the world.

Jesus prayed for His people to be one so that the world would believe.

A divided church weakens that witness.

Application

Unity is not something we create from nothing.

It is something we protect, repair, and guard.

XI. A REPORT FROM CHLOE'S HOUSEHOLD

1 Corinthians 1:11 — “There Are Quarrels Among You”

“For it has been reported to me by Chloe's household that there are quarrels among you.”

Paul names his source.

He does not deal in rumors or anonymous complaints.

Chloe's household probably refers to members of her family or servants who had traveled to Ephesus.

They brought word that the church was full of **quarrels.**

The word means arguments, strife, and contention.

Paul handles this honestly and openly.

He does not pretend the problem is not there.

And he does not let it grow in silence.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 11:18

> First of all, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and I partly believe it.

Galatians 5:20

> The works of the flesh include worshiping idols, witchcraft, hatred, fighting, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, arguments, and splitting into groups.

2 Corinthians 12:20

> I am afraid that when I come, I may not find you the way I want you to be. I fear there may be fighting, jealousy, angry tempers, selfish ambition, gossip, slander, pride, and disorder.

Spiritual Principle

Problems in the church must be faced honestly, not hidden or whispered about.

Application

If you bring a concern, bring it openly and in love.

If you receive a concern, deal with it honestly and humbly.

XII. FOLLOWING MEN INSTEAD OF CHRIST

1 Corinthians 1:12 — Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ

“What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.””

Now Paul describes the divisions.

The church had broken into fan clubs.

“I follow Paul.” Some were loyal to the man who founded the church.

“I follow Apollos.” Apollos was a gifted speaker from Alexandria who taught in Corinth after Paul left. Some were drawn to his eloquence.

“I follow Cephas.” Cephas is the Aramaic name for Peter. Some may have preferred a leader connected to the original twelve and to the Jewish believers.

“I follow Christ.” This sounds the most spiritual of all.

But it may have been the proudest group, using the name of Christ to look down on everyone else.

Notice that Paul does not take the side of his own group.

He rebukes those who were using his name as much as anyone.

The leaders were not competing with one another.

The people were.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 3:4

> When one of you says, “I follow Paul,” and another says, “I follow Apollos,” aren't you acting like people of the world?

1 Corinthians 3:22

> Whether it is Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or the present or the future—all of it belongs to you.

Acts 18:24

> Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, who was born in Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a gifted speaker and knew the Scriptures very well.

Spiritual Principle

God's servants are gifts to the church, not banners to divide it.

We can appreciate a teacher without turning him into a party leader.

Spiritual Warning

Even the name of Christ can be used as a weapon of pride.

Claiming Jesus while despising His people is not true loyalty to Him.

XIII. IS CHRIST DIVIDED?

1 Corinthians 1:13 — Three Piercing Questions

“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?”

Paul answers the divisions with three questions.

Each one expects the answer **“No!”**

“Is Christ divided?”

Can the body of Christ be cut into pieces and handed out to different groups?

Of course not.

“Was Paul crucified for you?”

Paul uses his own name, not Apollos' or Peter's.

He refuses to let anyone build a following around him.

Only one person died for their sins.

“Were you baptized in the name of Paul?”

Baptism marked them as belonging to Christ.

Their identity was in Him, not in the man who preached to them.

Cross References

Ephesians 4:5

> There is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.

1 Corinthians 12:13

> We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether we are Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Galatians 3:27

> All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Spiritual Principle

The church belongs to the One who was crucified for it.

Key Truth

No preacher, pastor, or teacher died for you.

Jesus did.

That is why He alone deserves your loyalty.

XIV. CRISPUS AND GAIUS

1 Corinthians 1:14 — “I Thank God That I Did Not Baptize Any of You”

“I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius,”

Paul is not saying baptism is unimportant.

Jesus commanded it.

Paul is thankful that he personally baptized only a few people in Corinth, so that no one could use that as a reason to form a group around him.

Crispus was the leader of the Jewish synagogue in Corinth.

He believed in the Lord with his whole household.

Gaius was a believer who opened his home to Paul and to the whole church.

These were well-known converts.

Yet even they belonged to Christ, not to Paul.

Cross References

Acts 18:8

> Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, along with his whole household. Many of the Corinthians who heard Paul also believed and were baptized.

Romans 16:23

> Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church here, sends you his greetings.

3 John 1:1

> From the elder, to my dear friend Gaius, whom I truly love.

Spiritual Principle

A faithful servant points people past himself to Christ.

XV. NOT BAPTIZED IN PAUL'S NAME

1 Corinthians 1:15 — Guarding the Glory of Christ

“so no one can say that you were baptized in my name.”

Here Paul explains his reason.

He did not want anyone to say, **“Paul baptized me, so I belong to Paul.”**

Baptism is always into the name of the Lord.

Jesus commanded baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The one who performs the baptism is only a servant.

The One whose name is spoken over the believer is the Lord.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 1:12

> One of you says, “I follow Paul.” Another says, “I follow Apollos.” Another says, “I follow Cephas.” And another says, “I follow Christ.”

Matthew 28:19

> So go and make disciples of people from every nation. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Acts 19:5

> When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Spiritual Principle

Ministry must never become about the minister.

Application

Ask yourself: Do I point people to myself, or to Jesus?

XVI. THE HOUSEHOLD OF STEPHANAS

1 Corinthians 1:16 — An Honest Memory

“(Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not remember if I baptized anyone else.)”

This is a very human moment in Scripture.

Paul remembers another family he baptized.

Then he admits he does not remember if there were others.

This shows how little importance Paul placed on keeping count.

He was not building a list of his own followers.

Stephanas and his household were among the very first believers in the region of Achaia.

They gave themselves to serving God's people.

Stephanas was even with Paul when this letter was written.

God's Spirit inspired Paul's words, yet the letter also carries the real voice and memory of the man who wrote it.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 16:15

> You know that the household of Stephanas were the first believers in Achaia, and they have given themselves to serving God's people.

Acts 16:15

> After she and her household were baptized, she urged us, “If you believe I am faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my house.” And she convinced us.

Acts 16:33

> At that very hour of the night, the jailer took them and washed their wounds. Then right away he and his whole family were baptized.

Spiritual Principle

God remembers every person, even when His servants do not.

Paul forgot who he had baptized.

God has never forgotten a single one of His children.

XVII. SENT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

1 Corinthians 1:17 — Not with Wisdom and Eloquence

“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.”

Paul states his main assignment.

Christ sent him **“to preach the gospel.”**

Others could baptize.

Paul's special calling was to proclaim the message.

Then Paul tells them how he preached:

“Not with wisdom and eloquence.”

The Greeks admired speakers who could dazzle a crowd with polished speech and clever arguments.

Paul refused to win people that way.

Why?

“Lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.”

If people were won by Paul's speaking skill, their faith would rest on Paul.

If the message itself was dressed up to look impressive, the cross would be hidden behind the performance.

The power is in the cross, not in the presentation.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 2:1

> When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come with fancy words or impressive wisdom as I told you God's message.

2 Corinthians 10:10

> Some people say, “His letters are strong and forceful, but in person he is weak, and his speaking is nothing special.”

Colossians 2:8

> Be careful that no one captures you with empty philosophy and clever lies that come from human tradition and the basic ideas of this world rather than from Christ.

Spiritual Principle

The gospel does not need human cleverness to make it powerful.

The cross carries its own power.

Our job is to present it clearly and faithfully.

Key Truth

When the messenger becomes the center, the message loses its force.

XVIII. THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS

1 Corinthians 1:18 — Foolishness or Power

“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.”

This verse is the turning point of the chapter.

Paul now explains why the cross cannot be dressed up in human wisdom.

The same message produces two completely different reactions.

To some it is **“foolishness.”**

To others it is **“the power of God.”**

The difference is not in the message.

The difference is in the hearers.

Notice the two groups:

“Those who are perishing.”

“Us who are being saved.”

Both are described as being in process.

One group is on the road to ruin.

The other is on the road to full and final salvation.

And the cross is the dividing line between them.

Paul does not say the cross is **wise.**

He says it is **power.**

The gospel is not just good advice.

It is God's power that rescues, changes, and saves.

Cross References

Romans 1:16

> I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power to save everyone who believes—first the Jew, and also the Gentile.

2 Corinthians 2:15

> To God, we are the sweet smell of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

1 Corinthians 2:14

> The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from God's Spirit. They seem foolish to him, and he cannot understand them, because they can only be understood with the Spirit's help.

Spiritual Principle

The cross divides humanity into two groups: the perishing and the saved.

There is no neutral response to the cross.

Key Truth

What the world laughs at is the very thing God uses to save.

XIX. GOD DESTROYS THE WISDOM OF THE WISE

1 Corinthians 1:19 — “For It Is Written”

“For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.””

Paul supports his point from the Old Testament.

He quotes Isaiah 29:14.

In Isaiah's day, the leaders of Judah thought they were very wise.

They made clever political plans and looked to Egypt for help instead of trusting the LORD.

God said He would bring their wisdom to nothing.

Paul says the same thing happens at the cross.

God has overturned human wisdom by saving the world in a way no human mind would have planned.

Notice that God is the One acting:

“I will destroy.”

“I will frustrate.”

Human wisdom does not simply fail on its own.

God sets it aside.

Cross References

Isaiah 29:14

> So once again I will do amazing things with these people, wonder after wonder. The wisdom of their wise men will disappear, and the understanding of their clever people will vanish.

Isaiah 33:18

> You will think back on the terror and ask, “Where is the official? Where is the one who collected the money? Where is the one who counted the towers?”

Jeremiah 8:9

> The wise will be put to shame. They will be shocked and trapped. They have rejected the word of the LORD, so what kind of wisdom do they really have?

Spiritual Principle

Any wisdom that rejects God's word will finally be put to shame.

XX. WHERE IS THE WISE PERSON?

1 Corinthians 1:20 — The Wisdom of the World Made Foolish

“Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”

Paul now calls out three kinds of experts.

The wise person may refer to the learned thinker of any culture.

The teacher of the law was the Jewish scribe, the expert in Scripture and tradition.

The philosopher of this age was the Greek debater, the one who loved to argue ideas.

Paul asks:

Where are they?

Not one of them came up with the plan of salvation.

Not one of them could save himself.

Not one of them could explain how God would save the world through a crucified Messiah.

The phrase **“of this age”** is important.

The wisdom of this age belongs to a world that is passing away.

Cross References

Isaiah 19:12

> Where are your wise men now? Let them tell you, if they know, what the LORD of Armies has planned against Egypt.

Isaiah 44:25

> I am the One who exposes false prophets and makes fools of fortune-tellers. I overturn the wisdom of the wise and turn their knowledge into nonsense.

Romans 1:22

> They claimed to be wise, but they became fools.

Spiritual Principle

The smartest people in the world cannot reason their way to salvation.

Application

Education is a good gift.

But it is a poor savior.

Do not let the wisdom of this age become the judge of God's word.

XXI. GOD WAS PLEASED TO SAVE

1 Corinthians 1:21 — Through the Foolishness of Preaching

“For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.”

This verse explains God's plan.

The world tried to find God through its own wisdom.

It failed.

And Paul says this failure was itself part of **"the wisdom of God."**

God arranged things so that no one could climb up to Him by their own intelligence.

Instead, God was pleased to save people through a message:

"The foolishness of what was preached."

Paul is not saying preaching is foolish.

He is saying the content of the message, a crucified Savior, looks foolish to the world.

And notice who is saved:

"Those who believe."

Not those who figure it out.

Not those who earn it.

Those who believe.

Cross References

Matthew 11:25

> At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and educated and have shown them to little children."

Romans 1:21

> Even though they knew about God, they did not honor Him as God or thank Him. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their foolish hearts became dark.

Romans 10:14

> But how can people call on Someone they have not believed in? How can they believe in Someone they have never heard about? And how can they hear unless someone tells them?

Spiritual Principle

God saves through faith, not through intelligence.

The door of salvation is low enough for a child and too low for the proud.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God chose a way of salvation that humbles every human heart equally.

XXII. SIGNS AND WISDOM

1 Corinthians 1:22 — What the World Demands

"Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom,"

Paul describes the two great groups in his world.

Jews demand signs.

Many wanted a powerful display from heaven to prove the Messiah had come.

They wanted a Messiah who would defeat their enemies and restore the kingdom.

Greeks look for wisdom.

The Greek world loved philosophy and debate.

They wanted ideas that were clever, polished, and impressive.

Both groups wanted God to meet them on their terms.

One wanted proof by power.

The other wanted proof by reason.

Cross References

Matthew 12:38

> Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

John 4:48

> Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will never believe."

Acts 17:21

> All the people of Athens and the foreigners living there spent their time doing nothing but talking about or listening to the newest ideas.

Spiritual Principle

God does not bow to human demands; He calls people to bow to His way.

Application

What do you demand from God before you will trust Him?

A sign? An answer that satisfies every question?

God has already given the greatest sign and the deepest wisdom in Christ.

XXIII. CHRIST CRUCIFIED

1 Corinthians 1:23 — A Stumbling Block and Foolishness

“but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,”

Here is the heart of Paul's preaching.

“Christ crucified.”

Not Christ the great teacher only.

Not Christ the miracle worker only.

Christ crucified.

To the **Jews** this was a **stumbling block.**

The Greek word is the source of our word **“scandal.”**

The Law said that anyone hung on a tree was under God's curse.

How could the Messiah die the death of a cursed criminal?

To the **Gentiles** it was **foolishness.**

Crucifixion was the most shameful death in the Roman world.

It was used for slaves, rebels, and the lowest criminals.

To worship a crucified man as God seemed ridiculous.

Yet Paul would not change the message.

Cross References

Galatians 5:11

> Brothers and sisters, if I were still preaching that people must be circumcised, why am I still being persecuted? If that were true, the offense of the cross would be gone.

Isaiah 8:14

> He will be a holy place of safety. But for both kingdoms of Israel He will be a stone that makes people stumble and a rock that makes them fall. For the people of Jerusalem He will be a trap and a snare.

1 Peter 2:8

> And, “He is a stone that makes people stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they refuse to obey God's word, and this is what was set for them.

Spiritual Principle

The cross will always offend human pride, and faithful preaching will not remove that offense.

Key Truth

The church does not need a more acceptable message.

It needs the same message preached with greater faithfulness.

XXIV. THE POWER AND WISDOM OF GOD

1 Corinthians 1:24 — To Those Whom God Has Called

“but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

Now Paul shows the other side.

To **“those whom God has called,”** everything changes.

The same Jews who wanted signs find in Christ **the power of God.**

The same Greeks who wanted wisdom find in Christ **the wisdom of God.**

What they were searching for in the wrong places, they find in the crucified Savior.

Notice also that the called come from **both Jews and Greeks.**

The cross breaks down the walls between peoples.

What divided the world unites the church.

Cross References

Colossians 2:3

> In Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.

1 Corinthians 1:30

> It is because of God that you are in Christ Jesus. Christ has become wisdom from God for us—our righteousness, our holiness, and our redemption.

Romans 1:16

> I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power to save everyone who believes—first the Jew, and also the Gentile.

Spiritual Principle

Everything the human heart is looking for is found in Christ.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The world asks for signs.

The world asks for wisdom.

God answers both with a Person—Jesus Christ crucified.

XXV. THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD

1 Corinthians 1:25 — Wiser and Stronger

“For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.”

Paul uses holy irony.

God is never truly foolish or weak.

But even the things that look like foolishness and weakness in God's plan are far greater than the best of human wisdom and strength.

The cross looked like defeat.

Jesus hung naked, beaten, and dying.

His enemies mocked Him.

His friends ran away.

It looked like the weakest moment in history.

But at that moment, God was defeating sin, death, and the devil.

The **weakest** moment was the **strongest** victory.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 13:4

> It is true that He was crucified in weakness, but He lives by God's power. We also are weak in Him, but by God's power we will live with Him in order to serve you.

Isaiah 55:8

> “My thoughts are not like your thoughts, and your ways are not like My ways,” says the LORD.

2 Corinthians 12:9

> But He told me, “My grace is all you need, because My power works best in weakness.” So I will gladly brag even more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power can rest on me.

Spiritual Principle

God's greatest victories often look like defeat at first.

Application

Do not judge God's work by how it looks today.

The cross looked like the end.

The empty tomb proved it was the beginning.

XXVI. THINK OF WHAT YOU WERE

1 Corinthians 1:26 — Not Many Wise, Powerful, or Noble

“Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.”

Now Paul turns from the message to the people.

He tells the Corinthians to look around the room.

Who did God call?

Not many wise by human standards.

Not many influential in power and position.

Not many of noble birth from the important families.

Notice Paul says **"not many,"** not **"not any."**

There were some people of standing in the church, like Crispus and Gaius.

But most were ordinary people.

Many were laborers.

Some were slaves.

The Corinthians were tempted to be proud.

Paul reminds them where they came from.

Cross References

James 2:5

> Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Hasn't God chosen people who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to receive the kingdom He promised to those who love Him?

John 7:48

> Have any of the leaders or the Pharisees believed in Him?

Matthew 11:25

> At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and educated and have shown them to little children."

Spiritual Principle

God's grace is not drawn to human status.

He does not choose people because they are impressive.

He makes people new because He is gracious.

Application

Remember what you were when God found you.

It is the best cure for spiritual pride.

XXVII. GOD CHOSE THE FOOLISH AND THE WEAK

1 Corinthians 1:27 — To Shame the Wise and the Strong

“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.”

Three times in verses 27 and 28 Paul repeats the words:

“God chose.”

This was not an accident.

God did not settle for weak people because He could not find strong ones.

He chose them on purpose.

Why?

To shame the wise.

To shame the strong.

When God uses the weak to do His work, no one can say human strength did it.

The Old Testament is full of this pattern.

God shrank Gideon's army so Israel could not brag.

God sent a shepherd boy with a sling against a giant.

God keeps doing it.

Cross References

James 2:5

> Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Hasn't God chosen people who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to receive the kingdom He promised to those who love Him?

Judges 7:2

> The LORD said to Gideon, “You have too many people with you for Me to hand Midian over to them. Otherwise Israel might brag against Me and say, 'We saved ourselves by our own strength.'”

1 Samuel 17:45

> David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin. But I come against you in the name of the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel's armies, whom you have insulted.”

Spiritual Principle

God delights to work through the weak so that the glory is clearly His.

Key Truth

Your weakness does not disqualify you from God's service.

It may be the very thing He uses to show His power.

XXVIII. THE THINGS THAT ARE NOT

1 Corinthians 1:28 — The Lowly and the Despised

“God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are,”

Paul goes even further.

God chose **the lowly things.**

Those the world considers low-born and unimportant.

God chose **the despised things.**

Those the world looks down on and rejects.

God chose **the things that are not.**

Those the world treats as if they do not even exist.

And through them, God sets aside **“the things that are”**—the people and powers the world counts as important.

This is how God has always worked.

He creates something out of nothing.

He gives life to the dead.

He lifts up the humble and brings down the proud.

Cross References

1 Samuel 2:8

> He lifts the poor from the dust and raises the needy from the garbage pile. He seats them with princes and gives them a place of honor.

Luke 1:52

> He has brought down rulers from their thrones and has lifted up the humble.

Romans 4:17

> He is the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that did not exist.

Spiritual Principle

God turns the world's ranking system upside down.

Application

Look around your church for the people the world overlooks.

God does not overlook them.

Neither should we.

XXIX. NO ONE MAY BOAST

1 Corinthians 1:29 — The Purpose of God's Choosing

“so that no one may boast before him.”

Here is the reason for everything Paul has said in verses 26 through 28.

God chose the weak, the lowly, and the despised for one purpose:

So that no one may boast before Him.

The Corinthians were boasting.

They boasted in their leaders.

They boasted in their gifts.

They boasted in their knowledge.

Paul says salvation leaves no room for any of it.

No one will stand before God and say, **“I earned this.”**

Cross References

Ephesians 2:9

> It is not the result of anything you have done, so no one can brag about it.

Romans 3:27

> So where is bragging? It is shut out. By what kind of law? A law of works? No, by the law of faith.

Jeremiah 9:23

> This is what the LORD says: “Don't let wise people brag about their wisdom, or strong people brag about their strength, or rich people brag about their riches.”

Spiritual Principle

Grace and pride cannot live comfortably in the same heart.

Key Truth

Boasting is the opposite of grace.

Where grace is truly understood, boasting disappears.

XXX. CHRIST OUR WISDOM

1 Corinthians 1:30 — Righteousness, Holiness, and Redemption

“It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.”

Paul now shows where every believer's life comes from.

“It is because of him.”

Not because of you.

It is God who placed you **“in Christ Jesus.”**

And Christ has become for us **“wisdom from God.”**

The Corinthians were chasing wisdom.

Paul tells them that true wisdom is not an idea.

It is a Person.

Then Paul explains what that wisdom includes:

Righteousness.

In Christ we are declared right with God. His righteousness is counted as ours.

Holiness.

In Christ we are set apart for God and are being made like Him.

Redemption.

In Christ we are bought back and set free from slavery to sin, with full freedom still to come on the last day.

Everything we need for salvation—past, present, and future—is found in Jesus.

Cross References

Jeremiah 23:6

> In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety. This is the name He will be called: The LORD Is Our Righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5:21

> God made Christ, who never sinned, to be sin for us, so that in Him we could become the righteousness of God.

Romans 3:24

> They are made right with God freely by His grace, through the redemption that comes by Christ Jesus.

Spiritual Principle

Christ is not only the giver of salvation; He is our salvation.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

We do not add Christ to our wisdom.

We do not add Christ to our goodness.

Christ Himself is our wisdom, our righteousness, our holiness, and our redemption.

XXXI. BOAST IN THE LORD

1 Corinthians 1:31 — "Let the One Who Boasts Boast in the Lord"

"Therefore, as it is written: "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.""

Paul ends the chapter with a summary from Jeremiah 9:24.

God does not take away boasting completely.

He redirects it.

There is one proper object of boasting:

The Lord.

Jeremiah said not to boast in wisdom, strength, or riches.

Instead, boast that you know and understand the LORD.

This is the answer to the divisions in Corinth.

If everyone boasts in the Lord, no one boasts in Paul, Apollos, or Cephas.

If everyone boasts in the Lord, no one boasts in his own gifts.

The cross removes our pride and gives us a better glory.

Cross References

Jeremiah 9:24

> But whoever brags should brag about this: that he understands and knows Me—that I am the LORD, who shows faithful love, justice, and righteousness on the earth. These are the things I delight in, says the LORD.

2 Corinthians 10:17

> Whoever wants to brag should brag about what the Lord has done.

Galatians 6:14

> But I will never brag about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through the cross the world has been crucified to me, and I have been crucified to the world.

Spiritual Principle

The only safe place to put our boasting is in the Lord.

Key Truth

The chapter begins with grace from the Lord.

It ends with glory to the Lord.

XXXII. SEVEN GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 1

1. Christ Unites the Church

The believers in Corinth were saying, **"I follow Paul," "I follow Apollos,"** and **"I follow Cephas."**

Paul answered, **"Is Christ divided?"**

Principle:

Divisions and factions weaken the witness of believers; unity must be rooted in Christ, not in human leaders.

2. The Cross Is the Center

Paul refused to preach with clever words and impressive speech.

He preached **"Christ crucified."**

Principle:

The gospel is not about eloquence or human wisdom but about the saving power of Christ crucified.

3. God Overturns Worldly Values

God chose the foolish, the weak, the lowly, and the despised.

Principle:

God chooses the lowly, the weak, and the overlooked to display His glory and confound the proud.

4. Boasting Belongs to God Alone

All wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and redemption are found in Christ.

Principle:

Salvation leaves no room for human pride; the only right boast is in the Lord.

5. Identity Comes Before Correction

Before Paul corrected the Corinthians, he reminded them that they were sanctified, called, enriched, and kept by God.

Principle:

Believers change best when they remember who God has already made them.

6. God Is Faithful to Finish His Work

God will keep His people firm to the end.

Principle:

Our security rests on God's faithfulness, not on our own strength.

7. The Message Divides the Hearers

The cross is foolishness to those who are perishing and power to those who are being saved.

Principle:

There is no neutral ground at the cross.

XXXIII. THE CITY OF CORINTH

To understand 1 Corinthians, it helps to understand Corinth.

A City of Trade

Corinth controlled the land route between northern and southern Greece and the shortcut between two seas.

Merchants, sailors, and travelers filled its streets.

A City of Pride

Corinth had been rebuilt as a Roman colony about a century before Paul arrived.

Many people there had risen from humble beginnings and were eager for status, honor, and recognition.

A City of Speakers

Traveling teachers and public speakers were admired in Corinth.

People judged them by how well they spoke, not by whether what they said was true.

A City of Idols and Immorality

Temples to many gods stood in the city.

Corinth had such a reputation for sexual immorality that its name became a byword for loose living.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The problems in the Corinthian church were the values of the city leaking into the church.

These believers had come out of Corinth.

Now Corinth needed to come out of them.

The church must be shaped by the cross, not by the culture around it.

XXXIV. THE FOUR GROUPS IN CORINTH

Paul names four groups in verse 12.

The Paul Group

Loyal to the man who first brought them the gospel and planted the church.

The Apollos Group

Drawn to a gifted, eloquent teacher who knew the Scriptures well.

The Cephas Group

Attached to Peter, perhaps because of his connection to Jesus' original disciples and to the Jewish believers.

The Christ Group

Claiming to follow Christ alone, perhaps in a way that looked down on everyone else.

Key Truth

Paul, Apollos, and Peter were not rivals.

They were fellow workers serving the same Lord.

Later in the letter Paul says:

“I planted, Apollos watered, but God has been making it grow.” (1 Corinthians 3:6)

Spiritual Principle

We can honor God's servants without dividing God's people.

XXXV. THE WISDOM OF THE WORLD AND THE WISDOM OF GOD

1 Corinthians 1 sets two kinds of wisdom side by side.

The Wisdom of the World

- Begins with human reason.
- Judges God by human standards.
- Values eloquence, status, and power.

- Sees the cross as foolishness.
- Leads to pride and boasting.
- Is passing away with this age.

The Wisdom of God

- Begins with God's revelation.
- Is received by faith.
- Values humility, weakness, and grace.
- Sees the cross as the power of God.
- Leads to boasting in the Lord.
- Is found in a Person, Jesus Christ.

Key Truth

The world's wisdom asks, “How can I rise to God?” God's wisdom answers, “God came down to you in Christ crucified.”

XXXVI. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 1 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

1 Corinthians 1 presents Jesus as:

The Lord

He is **“our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours.”** He belongs to the whole church, and the whole church belongs to Him.

The Son of God

Believers are called into fellowship with **“his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

The Source of Grace and Peace

Grace and peace come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ together.

The Coming One

Believers eagerly wait for Him to be revealed.

The Crucified Savior

“We preach Christ crucified.”

The Power of God

In Him God's saving power is at work.

The Wisdom of God

In Him God's plan of salvation is fully revealed.

Our Righteousness, Holiness, and Redemption

Everything we need before God is found in Him.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The crucified Christ is not a weak point in the Christian faith; He is its power, its wisdom, and its glory.

XXXVII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why does Paul begin by saying he was “called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God”?

Some in Corinth were questioning Paul and his authority.

Paul reminds them that he did not appoint himself.

God called him and Christ sent him.

That is why his words carry authority.

Question 2

What does it mean to be “sanctified in Christ Jesus”?

To be sanctified means to be set apart for God.

Every believer is set apart the moment they are joined to Christ.

Then God works to make their daily lives match what He has declared them to be.

Question 3

Why does Paul thank God for a church with so many problems?

Paul could see God's grace at work in them.

He thanked God for what God had given them, not for what they had achieved.

Thankfulness also prepared the way for loving correction.

Question 4

What gives believers confidence that they will be blameless on the day of Christ?

God Himself will keep them firm to the end.

Paul says plainly, **“God is faithful.”**

Our confidence rests in His character, not in our strength.

Question 5

What was causing the divisions in Corinth?

The believers were lining up behind favorite leaders.

Some followed Paul, some Apollos, some Cephas, and some claimed Christ in a proud way.

Underneath it all was pride and a love for human wisdom and status.

Question 6

How do Paul's three questions in verse 13 answer the divisions?

Christ cannot be divided.

Only Christ was crucified for them.

They were baptized in Christ's name, not Paul's.

Since they all belong to the same Lord, they must not split into rival groups.

Question 7

Is Paul saying baptism does not matter?

No.

Jesus commanded baptism, and Paul did baptize some believers.

Paul is saying his main calling was to preach the gospel.

He was glad he had baptized only a few so that no one could claim to belong to him.

Question 8

Why did Paul refuse to preach with “wisdom and eloquence”?

He did not want people's faith to rest on his speaking ability.

He did not want to bury the cross under a performance.

The power of the gospel is in the message of the cross itself.

Question 9

Why was the cross a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles?

Many Jews expected a powerful, conquering Messiah, and the Law said anyone hung on a tree was cursed.

Many Gentiles saw crucifixion as the most shameful death possible.

To both, a crucified Savior made no sense.

Question 10

In what sense is the “foolishness of God” wiser than human wisdom?

God is never truly foolish.

But the cross, which looked foolish and weak, accomplished what no human wisdom or strength ever could.

Through it God defeated sin and death and saved those who believe.

Question 11

Why did God choose the weak and lowly?

So that no one could boast before Him.

When God works through the weak, it is clear that the power and the glory belong to Him.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 1 change about the way Christians live today?

1 Corinthians 1 should cause believers to live:

- Secure in their identity in Christ.
- Thankful for God's grace in other believers.
- Committed to unity in the church.
- Loyal to Christ above every human leader.
- Unashamed of the message of the cross.
- Humble about their gifts and background.
- Boasting only in the Lord.

XXXVIII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 1 asks several important questions.

Do I Know Who I Am in Christ?

God has called me, set me apart, and enriched me in Him.

Am I Thankful for Other Believers?

Paul thanked God even for a troubled church.

Do I thank God for the grace I see in others?

Am I Contributing to Unity or Division?

Do my words heal the torn places in the church, or tear them wider?

Have I Made a Human Leader My Banner?

I may appreciate a pastor, teacher, or writer.

But do I follow him more than I follow Christ?

Am I Ashamed of the Cross?

Do I try to make the gospel more acceptable by leaving out the cross?

Am I Impressed by the Wrong Things?

Do I judge people by their education, money, or speaking ability?

Do I Remember What I Was When God Called Me?

Grace found me when I had nothing to offer.

Where Is My Boasting?

Do I boast in my gifts, my knowledge, or my achievements?

Or do I boast in the Lord?

XXXIX. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“The Cross Ends Every Contest”

The Corinthians were in a contest.

Whose leader was best?

Whose gift was greatest?

Whose wisdom was highest?

Whose background was most impressive?

Paul brought them all to the foot of the cross.

There, every contest ends.

At the cross, the wise and the simple are equally helpless.

At the cross, the strong and the weak are equally in need.

At the cross, the noble and the slave are equally saved by grace.

No one climbs higher than anyone else at the foot of the cross.

And no one has anything to boast about except the One who hangs on it.

This creates a powerful principle.

The cross does not just save us from sin.

It also saves us from the endless need to prove ourselves.

Principle:

When Christ is everything, we no longer need to be something.

XL. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 1 was written to a gifted church.

They had knowledge.

They had speech.

They had every spiritual gift.

But they were divided.

They were proud.

And they were measuring the things of God by the standards of their city.

Paul did not answer them with a new program.

He did not answer them with a better speaker.

He did not answer them with a stronger leader.

He answered them with the cross.

The cross that looks foolish to the world.

The cross that offends human pride.

The cross where the Son of God died in weakness.

The cross that is the power of God for everyone who believes.

1 Corinthians 1 therefore reminds us:

Never be ashamed of the message that saved you.

Never forget what you were when God called you.

Never let a human name replace the name of Christ.

Never let your gifts become your glory.

The church does not stand on the wisdom of men.

It stands on:

A crucified Savior.

A faithful God.

A free grace.

And a shared Lord.

The same message still saves:

Tell people that Christ was crucified for them.

Tell people that God's power is greater than human strength.

Tell people that God's wisdom is greater than human wisdom.

Tell people that God chooses the lowly.

Tell people that God is faithful.

And until He is revealed:

Stand together in Christ.

Preach the cross.

Walk in humility.

Boast in the Lord.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for calling us by Your grace.

Thank You that You have set us apart in Christ Jesus and made us Your holy people.

Thank You for grace and peace that come from You and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank You for every gift You have given to Your church.

Thank You that You will keep us firm to the end.

Thank You that You are faithful, and that You have called us into fellowship with Your Son.

Forgive us for the times we have divided what You have made one.

Forgive us for following people more than we follow Christ.

Forgive us for being impressed by the wisdom of this world.

Forgive us for boasting in our gifts, our knowledge, and our achievements.

Heal the torn places in Your church.

Make us united in mind and thought.

Help us never to be ashamed of the cross.

Give us courage to preach Christ crucified, even when the world calls it foolishness.

When we feel weak, remind us that Your power works best in weakness.

When we feel overlooked, remind us that You chose the lowly.

When we are tempted to be proud, remind us of what we were when You called us.

Thank You that Christ has become for us wisdom from God—our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

Keep our eyes fixed on the day our Lord Jesus Christ will be revealed.

And until that day, may we boast in nothing but You.

“Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“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.” — 1 Corinthians 1:18

Central Truth

Christ crucified, who looks like foolishness and weakness to the world, is the power and wisdom of God, so the church must be united in Him and must boast in the Lord alone.

1 Corinthians 1 in One Sentence

Paul calls a gifted but divided church to stop following human leaders and human wisdom and to stand together on Christ crucified, the power and wisdom of God, who chose the lowly so that all boasting would belong to the Lord.