

Christians Gone Wild!
1st Corinthians, week 4
Boasting about Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:18–31)
Pastor Mark Driscoll

“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

Christians are peculiar and struggle with their peculiarity. What I mean is this: we believe that people are inherently evil and separated from God because of their sin; we believe God was born in a barn to a teenage virgin in a dump, rural, hick town, grew up sinless, and died homeless, broke, and humiliated via execution, but three days later rose from death and will forgive our sins if we ask Him. To non-Christians this all sounds rather nuts.

Consequently, some Christians struggle with being considered nuts and try to pitch Jesus without mentioning the poverty, shame, suffering, death, and seeming defeat of the cross. Instead, they favor pitching Christianity as a means by which people can be super smart, powerful, rich, and altogether admirable, successful, and victorious. This drift toward what Martin Luther called the “theology of glory” is nothing new.

The church at Corinth was filled with proud Christians whose theology of glory caused them to boast in their intellect, power, and wealth—everything except the cross. Consequently, their church became an unloving place of division which Paul sought to purify by teaching them the theology of the cross.

¹⁸For 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. ¹⁹For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

Paul first says that the message of the cross is foolish nonsense to everyone but Christians because it is too simple, too unexpected, and too humble for most people. Therefore, Christians should not be surprised when they explain their faith to non-Christians only to have the hearer respond with the same confusing look as a basset hound who has heard a high pitched whistle.

²⁰Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For 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. ²²Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

Paul further says that the theology of the cross is foolish because people want to follow a brilliant scholar with more degrees than Fahrenheit, a philosopher

with a new comprehensive system of answers to life's greatest questions, or a powerful guru who will do anything you ask from healing you to making you rich and famous. The simple, humble, unpublished, uneducated, meek Jesus is not sexy enough for most people. But it is that same Jesus who is the cloaked wisdom and power of God; He can only be seen through the eyes of faith.

²⁶Brothers, 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. ²⁷But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are...

Paul then reminds the Corinthians that they have no reason to be attracted to a theology of glory because most of them are not glorious people. Most were not smart, powerful, wealthy, or important. Subsequently, if salvation was only for the beautiful, smart, and successful people they would have no chance at being reconciled to God. But God in His grace chose the losers and outcasts to show His glorious grace by loving nobodies and oddballs.

...²⁹so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰It 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. ³¹Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

The result of a theology of glory is a prideful boasting in who we are, what we have done, and how fortunate God is that we would choose Him as our God. The result of a theology of the cross is a humble boasting in Jesus who has saved us by grace alone and given us the example of a humble life given for the sole purpose of glorifying God instead of self.