

# God's Power and Wisdom

1 Corinthians 1:18—2:5

*“But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30).*

The Bible says, “Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24). This verse defines Jesus as Lord. God has put in Jesus everything that we need. We are complete in Him (Colossians 2:10). Christianity is Christ. The Christian’s power is in God’s Christ, not in man’s method. The abundant life can only be built upon Jesus. Christianity is radical and demanding. Man does face-lifts and makeovers; God only does heart transplants. Christianity is a Person, not a program.

Sin drains the gospel’s power out of our lives (1 Corinthians 1:17; NIV). Christianity makes a person a new creation and gives him a new life and mind (2 Corinthians 5:17; see John 3:1–7; Galatians 2:20). Jesus calls us to die to sin that we might live to God.

The cross turns our normal way of thinking upside down. It says that we die to live and we give to get. It says that the way up is down and the last shall be first.

A crucified God is an oxymoron. He is almighty, but He has allowed Himself to be human. A Christian also

is an oxymoron. He is a living dead man. He has died, yet he is fully alive! People want life—but the cross offers death as the way to life. People crave victory—but the cross is a defeat that leads to victory. People want comfort—but the cross pricks our consciences and guides us to obey the gospel so that we may take comfort in God's forgiveness. People want peace—but the cross brings us to a war that results in peace. People honor beauty—but the cross, crude and ugly, expresses a beauty that excels all other beauties. If we wish for the power and wisdom of God, we begin with Christ upon a cross.

### **CHRIST, THE POWER OF GOD**

Paul said that "the power of God for salvation" is in the gospel message (Romans 1:16). What kind of God would save sinners through a cross? A God of grace and forgiveness! Our world worships brute power. God's power is greater than all other powers combined. It is awesome, everlasting, and full of mercy.

God created and upholds the world by His Word (Genesis 1; 2; Hebrews 1:3). He has providential power, for He works out all things for good for those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

However, God's greatest strength is revealed in the cross. It is a power that is described as His weakness! Paul said that He "has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong" (1 Corinthians 1:27).

He is a God of infinite humility. He provides salvation for us, but He lets us choose whether or not we will take it. He does not force His way into our lives—He stands at the door and knocks (Revelation 3:20). In the free choice that He gives us, we see the humility of God. He teaches

in His approach to us that we cannot make anything grow by pounding it with a sledgehammer.

Nothing is more helpless than a naked man dying on a cross, but God's greatest work was done through a Man, His Son, on a cross. Consider the power of the cross: There is no sinner for whom Jesus did not die, and there is no sin the cross cannot take away.

Jesus' death at Calvary was not a freak experience. It was the fulfillment of an eternal truth that was announced before the world began. Jesus was not on the cross for merely six hours. In a sense, He was there for thirty-three years. He faced it every day of His earthly life.

Jesus is the source of our salvation; the cross was the means of our salvation. God's power is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:6–10). Although crucified through weakness, Jesus exhibits the power of God (2 Corinthians 13:4). All we can do with it is to receive it humbly. If we reject it, we will do so to our eternal destruction.

The German philosopher and atheist Friedrich Nietzsche idolized power. He despised Jesus because he thought He was weak. Nietzsche is dead; the gospel is still being preached.

### **CHRIST, THE WISDOM OF GOD**

Paul said that Jesus "became to us wisdom from God" (1 Corinthians 1:30). God's great power is guided by His wisdom. His great plan for our salvation is an expression of His great wisdom.

God, in His wisdom, put a cross at the center of Christianity. Man thinks the cross is grotesque, but God says that it is the fullness of His glory.

The sin that underlies all sin is presumption (Psalm

19:13; 2 Peter 2:10). Man presumes that the way he thinks is the way God thinks, or should think. Psychology promises to make life *better*. Christ gives sinners life, *period!* Dead men need life, not rehabilitation (Ephesians 2). The power of God has always been to raise the dead. At the cross God raises sinners from the dead.

Man wants salvation from war, poverty, and disease. Christ on the cross saves us from sin. Man cannot solve war, mistreatment of others, or social unrest until he is saved from sin. Sin can be cured only at the cross.

To the intellectually proud, the cross is still folly. Man wants power, not wisdom—enlightenment, not faith. One cannot hold to the cross and at the same time hold to pride, hatred, and sin. No one can stand at the cross and boast.

At the cross Jesus died to save a world that did not want to be saved. What a Savior! Paul determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:1–5). Believe it and teach it! Never lose faith in the power of the gospel message! Let us quit trying to be godly without God, to be Christians without Christ, to be spiritual without the Spirit.

Only God could take an instrument of execution (the cross) and make it into the greatest motivation upon earth. Apart from the cross, there is no power to die to self, and there is no wisdom with which to live life to the fullest. Jesus said, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself” (John 12:32). He was able to draw all men to Himself because the cross is invested with God’s wisdom and power.

*The cross . . .  
there is no other way!*