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WEEK 1

1 Corinthians 1:17–2:2 (NLT)

***F**or Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speech, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power. The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God. As the Scriptures say,*

'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and discard the intelligence of the intelligent.'

So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. Since God in His wisdom saw to it that the world would never know Him through human wisdom, He has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe. It is foolish to the Jews, who ask for signs from heaven and it is foolish to the Greeks, who seek human wisdom. So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say 'it's all nonsense'.

But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of

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God. This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength.

Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And He chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.

God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made Him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; He made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin. Therefore, as the Scriptures say, 'If you want to boast, boast only about the LORD.'

When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn't use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God's secret plan. For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified.

Meditation

At the Keswick Convention in the year 2000, Rev. John Stott outlined this passage by saying it is about:

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1. The weakness of the evangel (i.e. the gospel message)
2. The weakness of the evangelised
3. The weakness of the evangelist

That is exactly what the Apostle Paul is teaching, and though the gospel is hardly macho, it is 'Christ and Him crucified' which is the good news that we have to share with our world. As witnesses to the truth of Jesus, we are not Old Testament prophets called to denounce the sins of the nations, but Christians who are wanting the world to know of Jesus 'the Friend of sinners'. Non-believers are not our enemies; they are as we once were, and we want them to be as we are now.



We've a gospel to proclaim,
Good news for men in all the earth,
The gospel of a Saviour's name:
We sing His glory, tell His worth.

Tell of His birth at Bethlehem,
Not in a royal house or hall
But in a stable dark and dim:
The Word made flesh, a light for all.

Tell of His death at Calvary,
Hated by those He came to save;

THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL — WEEK 1

In lonely suffering on the cross
For all He loved, His life He gave.

Tell of that glorious Easter morn:
Empty the tomb, for He was free;
He broke the power of death and hell
That we might share His victory.

Tell of His reign at God's right hand,
By all creation glorified;
He sends His Spirit on His Church
To live for Him, the Lamb who died.

Now we rejoice to name Him King —
Jesus is Lord of all the earth;
This gospel message we proclaim,
We sing His glory, tell His worth.

— EDWARD J. BURNS

Prayer

Gracious Heavenly Father, as I begin working through this little book, first help me to be diligent in following it right through. Then, please help me to grow in having a Christ-like attitude to the people on every continent, in every country, of every culture and whatever colour of skin. May I see them as people whom You have made and love, and for whom Christ died. May I love them for Jesus' sake. Amen.



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My personal prayer:

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