

# THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS

GOD'S GRACE FOR AN IMPERFECT CHURCH: A STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS · 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-2:5 · APRIL 14, 2024 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

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*"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)*

## The Cross Proclaimed (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)

The Corinthians' disunity and misunderstanding of the message of Christ  
The message of the gospel of Jesus Christ  
God's work in wisdom and foolishness, power and weakness  
The desire of Jews and Greeks  
Our cross-centered faith

## The Cross Proclaimed and the Community of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

How others see us  
How we perceive ourselves  
How God sees us when we are "in Christ Jesus"

## The Cross Proclaimed and Paul's Ministry (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

The Corinthians' desire for Christian leaders who appear strong and wise  
Paul's apparent weakness and foolishness  
The weakness and foolishness centered in Christ crucified  
The weakness and foolishness that demonstrates the Spirit's power

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When have you seen an unexpected turning of the tables where victory, strength, or wisdom comes from an unexpected source?
2. This week we continue our preaching series, "God's Grace for an Imperfect Church: 1 Corinthians" by looking at 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5. Whether you are on your own or with others, begin your study in prayer, asking God to speak to you through this study and then read that text aloud.
3. What strikes you with Paul's statement in verse 18?
4. In 1:18-25 what does Paul say that Jews and Greeks are looking for? How is the message of God revealed in Jesus countercultural to those desires?
5. How do you think the message of Jesus the crucified Messiah is still countercultural today?
6. As Paul explores the believers' identity in Corinth in 1:26-31, how does Paul describe them?
7. Why might this be surprising given the prominence of Corinth in the Roman world?
8. What do these words about the Corinthian believers speak to you as you reflect on your own identity by worldly standards and in God's eyes?
9. Paul concludes this section by talking about his own life and ministry in 2:1-5. What does Paul seem to be addressing in the concerns of the Corinthian believers?
10. How might Paul's statements about his apparent weakness be surprising in an upwardly-mobile culture that emphasized outward appearance and eloquence?
11. What is God speaking to you through this study? If you are with a small group, discuss that with one another and then pray about what you shared. If you are on your own, write it down, pray about it, and share this with someone during the next few days.

## DIG DEEPER

This week dig deeper in one or more of the following ways:

- Memorize 1 Corinthians 1:18 or 1:22-24
- Consider reading these books:
  - St. John Chrysostom's Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians: [ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf112/npnf112?queryID=33775666&resultID=1091](https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf112/npnf112?queryID=33775666&resultID=1091)
  - N. T. Wright, *Paul: A Biography*
  - Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*
  - Brennan Manning, *The Importance of Being Foolish: How to Think Like Jesus*