

“A Wise Fool?” (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)

When I was growing up, my parents took my brother and me on two trips across the United States. On one of our six-week trips we visited the Sears Tower in Chicago. I will never forget our awe when we first saw the city’s magnificent skyline. The closer we came, the more the skyscrapers seemed to rise in height. As we headed toward the heart of this impressive city, the imposing buildings ahead of us appeared to grow out of the ground before our very eyes. The famous Sears Tower dwarfed even the tallest of the other superstructures. As we entered downtown Chicago, this massive construction loomed even larger. Standing at its base, we gazed straight up at the 110-story building that soars 1450 feet in the air. Built with 76,400 tons of steel, containing more than 4.5 million square feet, and covered by 16,000 bronze-tinted windows, the Sears Tower is an amazing sight to behold. We were astonished at its greatness and grandeur. The closer we drew, the larger it grew. And the larger it grew, the more we seemed to shrink.

That is what drawing close to something awesome will do. It will make you feel smaller and smaller by comparison. This is precisely the dynamic that occurs in our own hearts when we draw near to the starkest, most awesome display of God’s glory—the cross of Jesus Christ.¹ In 1 Cor 1:18-25, Paul is going to discuss the wisdom and power of the cross. The book of 1 Corinthians is about how to have unity in a divided church. Paul expressed this theme in 1:10-17.² Now in 1:18-25, he will take us to the cross, which is the basis of our unity. In these eight verses Paul will answer the question: Why does God use the foolish message of the cross? The answer may be surprising. God uses the foolish message of the cross to show forth His wisdom and power. In other words, *God “fools” us to show Himself wise and powerful.*

1. God pronounced the foolishness of the cross (1:18-20).³ This paragraph begins in 1:18 with a thematic statement. Paul writes, **“For the word of the cross⁴ is foolishness⁵ to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved⁶ it is the power⁷ of God.”**⁸ Paul makes it clear that there are only two categories of people: the “perishing” and the “saved.” Ultimately, all must fall into one of these two classes; there is no other.⁹ Paul writes that those who are perishing consider the word of the cross “foolishness.”¹⁰ Five times in eight verses, Paul will use a form of the word “foolishness.” Now it will help you to know the basic Greek word is *moros*. In 1:25 it appears as an adjective—*moros*.¹¹ I probably don’t have to tell you that we get the English word “moron” from this Greek word. It has the idea of something that is ridiculous, ignorant, stupid, and contemptible. If someone were to say, “You moron!” you would be insulted, and properly so. But that is the very word that Paul uses here—and not just once, but five times. What Paul is saying is this: Most people consider the cross to be moronic! Now there are countless reasons for this, but at the top of the list has to be that the cross offends our pride. The word of the cross is that salvation is freely granted by God’s grace, not human merit or intellect. Furthermore, salvation is extended to all people. This levels the ground at the foot of the cross. Everyone comes to God through faith, based upon the work of Jesus Christ. This offends man’s pride.

While the unbeliever considers the cross utter nonsense, the Christian sees it as “the power of God.” Please read 1:18b carefully. The word of the cross is not simply good advice or helpful information...it is the power of God! In other words, our victory in salvation and life can only be attained through the cross. The cross is everything to the Christian.

John Stott shares this brilliant thought: “I could never myself believe in God if it were not for the cross. In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it? I turn to that lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in God-forsaken darkness. That is the God for me. He set aside his immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death.”¹² These words provide one of the best arguments for both the existence of God and the power of the cross.

In 1:19 Paul quotes the Old Testament Scriptures,¹³ **“For it is written, ‘I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM¹⁴ OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE.’”** This quotation comes from Isa 29:14.¹⁵ The “wisdom of the wise” in Isaiah refers to political shrewdness, and Paul applies it generically to every form of human wisdom that exalts its own cleverness. The point is this: All human schemes that fail to take God into account will run aground (Isa 30:1-2). Isaiah mocks the failed scheming of the worldly-wise Jerusalem politicians who sought to ensure Israel’s safety. Their clever statecraft came to naught, because their alliance with Egypt so alarmed Assyria that it sparked the invasion they sought to avoid. The prophet reminds them that God is the Creator and humans are mere creations, and that God will turn things upside down (Isa 29:16). God’s rescue strategy opts for what appears to be weakness in this situation by allowing Jerusalem to become besieged and crushed before rescuing it.¹⁶ God doesn’t need human help. He set aside the cleverness of the wise. Paul illustrates the word of the cross with this story from the history of the Hebrew people of how God works, especially in terms of human redemption. God does not need anyone but Himself to accomplish His plan of salvation. The reason: He is an all-wise God (Rom 11:33).

In 1:20, Paul launches into four rhetorical questions. He asks, **“Where is the wise man?¹⁷ Where is the scribe?¹⁸ Where is the debater of this age?¹⁹ Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”²⁰** Paul is speaking of the philosopher, the religious scholar, and the debater. What do these three categories of persons have in common? They are all perceived as professional experts. God has not simply disregarded the wisdom of the world or shown it to be foolish. He has “made foolish the wisdom of the world.”²¹

Just think about this: None of us would have ever come up with the plan of salvation that God did. In our “wisdom” we would have made it much more confusing, complex, and inequitable. Earn your way to heaven. We would have devised a “lay-away” salvation plan. But God designed a salvation free for all, available to all, by sending His Son to die for our sins.²² In the death of Christ, God displayed His own sheer genius in masterminding a plan of salvation whereby He remained both just and the justifier (Rom 3:26). If we had a million lifetimes to think and create a means by which a holy God would accept sinful man, we could never come up with the cross. Only the inscrutable wisdom of God could have thought of it. God designed His plan of salvation in such a way that sinful man could not come to know Him by human wisdom, which could only exalt man. So God purposed to save lost sinners through a means that seemed utter nonsense to a “wise” world—the cross. In the cross, we see the wisdom of God most fully revealed. In His infinite wisdom, God designed a plan that in no way compromised His holiness or left His righteousness unfulfilled. God’s wrath has been poured out on man’s sin; all the while, His righteous demands have been met, and He is now free to receive sinners into His holy presence.²³ This ought to blow our minds. *God “fools” us to show Himself wise and powerful.*

Now, please understand, Paul is not against knowledge. God created us to be inquisitive, to investigate, to gather knowledge. The problem with fallen humanity apart from Jesus is that we still don’t have a clue with the knowledge we obtain. The problem isn’t with knowledge but with the wisdom that interprets and applies the knowledge to concerns and struggles. We need to recognize that our knowledge is limited. But God knows everything that can be known or could be known. We need to entrust ourselves to Him and recognize that He loves to cut the wise and powerful down to size.

Lori’s grandpa turns 80 in April. For decades he has been doing crossword puzzles. I am always amazed at what he knows. His mind is sharp as a tack. The answers that I would never be able to come up with, he comes up with rather easily. He is a crossword puzzle master! In a more profound sense, God has devised the ultimate crossword puzzle. The word of the cross is something that would never enter the thoughts of man. That’s why those who are brilliant often struggle with the notion of the cross.²⁴ It is God’s ultimate crossword puzzle.

George Washington Carver (1864-1943) had a laboratory he named “God’s little workshop.” One day, Carver prayed, “Dear Mr. Creator, please tell me what the universe was made for.” God responded, “Ask for something more in keeping with that little mind of yours.” So Carver tried again. “Dear Mr. Creator, what was man made for?” Again the Lord replied, “Little man, you ask too much. Cut down the extent of your request and improve the intent.” So the scientist tried once more. “Then Mr. Creator, will you tell me why the peanut was made?” “That’s better,” the Lord said, and beginning that day Carver discovered over 300 uses for the lowly peanut.²⁵

The reality is that all believers and unbelievers have peanut-sized minds. We are small and foolish; God is immense and wise. The sooner that we really understand this, the better off we will be! The word of the cross is a foolish message, designed to help us glorify God for His wisdom and power. *God “fools” us to show Himself wise and powerful.*

[The Bible is clear, God pronounced the foolishness of the cross. But now in 1:21-25, we will see that...]

2. God planned the foolishness of the cross (1:21-25). In 1:21, Paul writes, “**For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.**” Paul explains (“for”) that God humbled the world by keeping those who were wise in their own eyes from knowing God. Paul says that God was “well pleased.” By this, Paul means that God was sovereign over His purposes. God doesn’t want to share His glory (Isa 42:8), so He chooses a message that gives Him the most glory possible.

All of this raises the question, “Why did Jesus have to die on the cross?” Why not a heart attack or some other form of death? In Gal 3:13 Paul writes, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.’” This verse reflects the theology of Deuteronomy. The Law of Moses had a curse attached to it. If you failed in one point of the Law, you blew the whole thing and came under the Law’s curse (Deut 27:26; Gal 3:10; Jas 2:10). All of us qualify for the curse. That’s very bad, but here’s something that’s very good. Jesus took our curse for us by hanging on a tree (another term used for the cross). In the Old Testament days, a person who committed a capital crime would be executed, usually by stoning. If the crime was particularly hideous, the dead criminal would then be hung from a tree as the ultimate form of disgrace and shame. This also served as a warning to others. But the central idea was to bring shame to the criminal, because for the Jews to be hung up like that was disgraceful. It was obvious to all that a person hung on a tree was cursed.

Now hold that thought and fast-forward to New Testament times. The Romans had a favorite method of execution for criminals they really wanted to punish. It was crucifixion—nailing the criminal to a cross made of wood from a tree. A good example of the kind of criminal the Romans crucified was Barabbas, the thief and revolutionary who was released by Pilate at Jesus’ crucifixion. Barabbas had led a rebellion against Rome, and that was considered the worse kind of offense. So the Romans didn’t just want to execute Barabbas, they wanted to shame him and make him suffer untold agony. Both were accomplished on a cross. First, it was a symbol of shame. You had to be very bad to be crucified. Second, it sometimes took crucifixion victims several days to die. The Romans wanted to make these people suffer so much that they would wish for death, but it wouldn’t come for many hours. So the cross was a curse too, and Jesus came under the curse of the cross. In so doing, He satisfied the curse of the Law and made it possible that you and I would never have to suffer that curse.²⁶

Again, in 1:22-24, Paul explains himself further: “**For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” These three verses provide three different responses to the cross of Christ: A person can stumble, laugh, or believe.**

- 1) ***Many people stumble over the cross (1:22a, 23a).*** The Jews “stumbled” over the cross because most of them were looking for signs of power. (They must be from Missouri—the “show me” state.) They wanted God to prove Himself to them. In a sense, they required God to submit to them before they would consider submitting to Him. Such people don’t want to obey God; they want to order God around. Jewish history is filled with miraculous events, from the Exodus out of Egypt to the days of Elijah and Elisha. When Jesus was ministering on earth, the Jewish leaders repeatedly asked Him to perform a sign from heaven, but He refused.²⁷ They were looking for a political leader who would deliver them from the heel of the Roman Empire.²⁸ They simply could not imagine a crucified Messiah.²⁹

It is difficult for us to understand what crucifixion meant to the Jews. We’ve sanitized the cross and domesticated it. We gold-plate it and wear it around our necks. We put it on earrings and on our stationery. We hang ornate crosses in our sanctuaries and on our steeples. We build churches in the shape of the cross. All of this would have been unthinkable in the first century. So terrible was crucifixion that the word was not even spoken in polite company. If we want a modern counterpart, we should hang a picture of a gas chamber at Auschwitz in front of our sanctuary. Or put a noose there. Or an electric chair with a man dying in agony—his face covered, smoke coming from his head. The very thought sickens us.³⁰ But that’s what the cross meant for Jesus. And that is why the Jews were scandalized by the cross.

Because the Jews were looking for power and great glory, they stumbled at the weakness of the cross. How could anybody put faith in an unemployed carpenter from Nazareth who died the shameful death of a common criminal? They looked for a Messiah who would come like a mighty conqueror and defeat all their enemies. He would then set up His kingdom and return the glory to Israel. This was the attitude of the Jews, because their emphasis is on miraculous signs and the cross appears to be weakness.

- 2) ***Many people laugh at the cross (1:22b, 23b).*** Paul identifies with the Greek quest for wisdom. People think that they might submit to God as soon as they can “figure Him out.” They want God to fit into their minds before they will let Him fit into their lives. This was the response of the Greeks. The Greeks didn’t practice crucifixion, so they didn’t have the problems that the Jews did. They looked to philosophy as the answer to the deepest problems of life. The notion of a man hanging on a cross to save the world was utter nonsense to them. To them, the cross was foolishness. The Greeks emphasized wisdom and we still study the profound writings of the Greek philosophers today. But they saw no wisdom in the cross, for they looked at the cross from a human point of view. Had they seen it from God’s viewpoint, they would have discerned the wisdom of God’s great plan of salvation.
- 3) ***Some people believe and experience the power and the wisdom of the cross (1:24).*** “Those who are called” is parallel to “those who believe” (1:21) and “us who are being saved” (1:18). Part of being called is being able to hear God’s call, and being open to it. Those who respond by God’s grace are granted His wisdom and power. It is worth noting that Paul did not alter his message when he turned from a Jewish audience to a Greek one; he preached Christ crucified. This is the simple message that everyone needs to hear and believe. This past Friday, my five-year-old daughter Jena came into my study and gave me a picture she created. The words on the paper read, “Kros. I love you Daddy.” Although she misspelled cross, she has believed in the work of Jesus on the cross for her sins. The word of the cross is foolishness to the most intelligent and self-sufficient people in the world. But it is the power of God for those like Jena who will receive it as a child. The phrase “the power of God” in 1:18 and 24 brackets 1:18-24 as a unique literary unity.³¹ Verse 25 summarizes this unit and then provides a transition into 1:26-31.³²

Our passage closes in 1:25 with these glorious words: **“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”**³³ Don’t you just love this verse? This is one of my favorite verses in the Bible. It is the ultimate “trash-talking, put me in my place” type of statement. Paul is suggesting that IF (and this is a big “if”) it was possible for God to be foolish and weak, His foolishness and weakness would still overwhelm us. This should humble us to dust!

How does the word of the cross relate to our lives? *First, we must seek to ponder the wonder of the cross.* Not that the cross is not a popular symbol today. We see it in stained glass windows and on top of churches of widely varying beliefs. It is found around the necks of the deeply religious, the thoroughly superstitious, and all shades in between. The sign of the cross is made by baseball players before they bat, by pilots before they take off, and by boxers before they fight. In fact, you may have heard of the gambler at the race track who happened to see a priest making the sign of a cross over a horse, and promptly bet his paycheck, rent money, and car payment on that horse. When the horse came in last he sought out the priest and demanded to know why the horse had done so poorly when he had just blessed it. With surprise the priest responded, “I wasn’t blessing that horse. I was giving it the last rites.”³⁴

The story aptly illustrates how the cross has largely been emptied of its content in our society today. We have lost the significance of the cross. Our prayer must be, “Lord, take me back to the cross. Help me to see it anew and afresh.”

Second, as we strive to crossover into our world, we must be sure to crossover with the cross. Popular Christianity has been big business in politics, entertainment, sports, etc., but many have crossed over without the cross.³⁵ Yet, Christianity without the cross is like music without a tune. When you and I talk about our beliefs, we must make a beeline to the cross of Christ. That is what makes our message both unique and powerful.

*Finally, it may take a crucified church to bring a crucified Christ before the eyes of the world.*³⁶ Christ’s cross makes foolish human wisdom. The cross insults our intelligence (too simple), ability (nothing to do), and ambition (not glory for self). Yet, the churches that God is going to do great things through are weak and foolish in the world’s eyes, so that God can fool the world and receive wisdom and power.

When Lori and I were engaged back in 1992, we went to see the film, *A River Runs through It*. The movie chronicles two brothers coming of age in early 20th century Missoula, Montana. The boys grow up under the stern tutelage of their minister father. This preacher teaches his sons about life, grace, and love, through the art of fly-fishing. But as the boys mature and follow very different paths (one straight-and-narrow, the other wild) they find that fishing is the one bond that still draws them together as adults. Thus, the title *A River Runs through It* was not a description of the land as much as it was a description of a recurring theme in their lives. When all else failed, they could always go back to the river and bond around their love of fly-fishing.

If I had to pick a title for the Christian community experience, it might be “A Cross Runs through It.” When all else fails, we can always go back to the cross and bond around our love for the One who died for us there.³⁷ Ultimately, all that we believe is wrapped up in the cross of Christ. It is the central truth of the Christian faith and the preeminent event of human history. The cross is our message, our hope, our confidence. It is our badge of honor and the emblem of suffering and shame. Though the world despises the cross, we rally to it. In this sign, and this alone, we will conquer. Therefore, let us love the cross, preach the cross, stand by the cross, and never be ashamed of the cross. Hold it high as the banner of our salvation. Lift it up as the hope of the world. There is no power greater than the power of the cross. It is the only power that can lift men and women out of their sins, release them from condemnation, give them new life, and set their feet in a new direction.³⁸

Copyright © 2007 Keith R. Krell. All rights reserved. All Scripture quotations, unless indicated, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, and 1995 by The Lockman Foundation, and are used by permission.

Permissions: Feel free to reproduce and distribute any articles written by Keith Krell, in part or in whole, in any format, provided that you do not alter the wording in any way or charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. It is our desire to spread this information, not protect or restrict it. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: by Keith Krell, Timeless Word Ministries, 2508 State Ave NE Olympia, WA 98506, 360-352-9044, www.timelessword.com

Scripture Reference

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Isaiah 19:1-25

Acts 10:34-43

Romans 1:16-17

Philippians 2:1-11

Colossians 2:8-15

1 Peter 2:6-10, 24-25

Study Questions

1. Why is the message of the cross foolishness to unbelievers (1:18a)? What have my fellow students, friends, neighbors, and coworkers shared with me about God, Jesus, and Christianity? How have I responded to their remarks?
2. How is the message of the cross the power of God (1:18b)? How have I seen this power unleashed in my life? Is there supernatural activity in my life that I can testify to? How has God's power infiltrated my marriage, family, and work?
3. Why does God take such pleasure in shaming the wise (1:19-20)? When have I seen God make the wise people of this world appear foolish? Does this actually happen? What does this look like? Is God opposed to intellectual pursuits? Why or why not? How can God use brilliant people?
4. Should Christians try to make the gospel palatable to people today? Why or why not? Why are the perspectives of the world held so passionately today? What will help people change their erroneous world view? Why is salvation a matter of being called and believing in Christ (1:21-24)?
5. What is the most foolish thing about God, from the world's perspective (1:25)? What is the weakest thing about God, from the world's perspective? How do these two attributes or works actually showcase God's wisdom and strength? How does this relate to my own life and experience? When is it that my greatest weaknesses are my greatest strengths?

Notes

¹ This idea came from Steven J. Lawson, *Made in Our Image: What Shall We Do with a “User-Friendly” god?* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2000), 165-166.

² 1 Cor 1:17 concludes 1:10-17, but it is also transitional because it introduces the theme of the next paragraph, contending that the cross of Christ is more powerful than human wisdom and eloquence (1:18-25). See also Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians: New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 27.

³ The title and outline points of this message are built around God because He is the obvious focus. Richard Hays writes, “The preacher should note how often God is the subject of the verbs in this passage (especially in 1:18-31), both explicitly and implicitly. God destroys and saves, God made them foolish, God decided, God chose, God is the source of your life in Christ Jesus.” See Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians: Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 37.

⁴ Paul rarely uses crucifixion language (Rom 6:6; 1 Cor 1:17, 18, 23; 2:2, 8; 2 Cor 13:4; Gal 2:19; 3:1 [13]; 5:11; 6:12, 14; Phil 2:18; 3:8). Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians: Sacra Pagina* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 91.

⁵ Words of the wisdom/folly cluster occur 19 times in this paragraph, whereas words of the power/weakness cluster occur five times. Clearly, wisdom rather than signs represents the characteristic preoccupation of the Corinthian community. Nigel Watson, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: Epworth Commentaries New Edition* (London: Epworth [1992] 2005), 13.

⁶ Scholars like to note the use of the present passive participle *sozomenois* (“being saved”) and argue that salvation is not complete until one perseveres in the faith. Yet, elsewhere Paul indicates that the believer is secure in Christ (e.g., 1:8-9; 3:15; Rom 5:1; 8:1, 29-39).

⁷ The concept of “power” or “the power of God” occurs five times in 1 Cor 1:17, 18, 23, 24; 2:4, 5.

⁸ In 1:18-2:5, the argument proceeds in three steps: Paul makes his main point in 1:18-25, confirms it in 1:26-31 with an appeal to the Corinthians’ own situation, and then further confirms it in 2:1-5 with reference to what and how he had preached in Corinth. The apostle’s thesis is registered first in 1:18 and then twice restated (in 1:21 and 1:23-24).

⁹ See also Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1958] 1990), 43.

¹⁰ The following chart delineates the contrasts between the word of wisdom and the word of the cross.

The Word of Wisdom	The Word of the Cross
Foolishness/dying	Power of God/saved
World’s wisdom	God’s foolishness of preaching
Didn’t know God	People get saved
Jews/signs/stumble	Jews and Gentiles called
Gentile/sophia/folly	Christ/wisdom and power

¹¹ The noun *moria* (“foolishness”) appears in the NT only in 1 Cor 1:18, 21, 23; 2:14; 3:19. The adjective *moros* occurs in Paul’s letters only in 1:25, 27; 3:18; and 4:10, but it occurs 36 times in the LXX, where the fool is skewered for being oblivious to self-destructive behavior. Paul portrays God here as being a wise fool. What seems self-destructive is consciously intended to save others. David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 63 n.3.

¹² Preaching Today Citation: John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*; submitted by Bill White, Paramount, CA.

¹³ This is the first of several quotations from the OT in 1 Corinthians: (1:19, 21; 2:9; 3:19-20; 6:16; 9:9; 10:7; 14:21; 15:54-55; cf. 2:16; 5:13; 10:26).

¹⁴ The key word in this paragraph is “wisdom,” which is used eight times.

¹⁵ Paul quoted loosely from the Greek OT (LXX).

¹⁶ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 64.

¹⁷ Isaiah spoke similar words in Isa 19:12 to mock the Egyptian wise men who could not comprehend the ways of God.

¹⁸ Isaiah also ridiculed the Assyrians for their arrogance in assuming that they would be victorious over the God of Israel (Isa 33:18). The scribe is an “expert in the Mosaic law” or “professional copyist.” See NET Study Notes.

¹⁹ Here Paul focused more on the situation at hand in Corinth. He associated the wisdom of words with the boasting that God opposes. See also Richard L. Pratt, *I & II Corinthians*: Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 21.

²⁰ Paul's references to the age (*aion*) and the world (*kosmos*) clarify that he was speaking of purely natural wisdom in contrast to the wisdom that God has revealed. God's wisdom centers on the cross.

²¹ Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 44.

²² Tony Evans, *Our God is Awesome: Encountering the Greatness of Our God* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 183.

²³ Lawson, *Made in Our Image*, 175-176.

²⁴ Speaking of salvation and condemnation, in Matt 11:25, Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants."

²⁵ Preaching Today Citation: Paul Thigpen, "No Royal Road to Wisdom," *Discipleship Journal* (Sept/Oct 1985).

²⁶ Tony Evans, *Who is This King of Glory?* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 66-67.

²⁷ See Matt 16:1-4; Mark 8:11-12; John 2:18.

²⁸ In Acts 1:6 the apostles asked Jesus, "So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, 'Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?'" This question shows how strong this hope was among the Jews.

²⁹ The Mosaic Law taught that a person who is hanged is under the curse of God (Deut 21:23; cf. Gal 3:13).

³⁰ What would you think if a woman came to work wearing earrings stamped with an image of the mushroom cloud of the atomic bomb dropped over Hiroshima? What would you think of a church building adorned with a fresco of the massed graves at Auschwitz? The same sort of shocking horror was associated with *cross* and *crucifixion* in the first century. D.A. Carson, *The Cross & Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons from 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 12.

³¹ Scholars call this an *inclusio* and they find many of these literary structures in the Bible. It makes for many fascinating discoveries.

³² See also Collins, *First Corinthians*, 90.

³³ Paul's marvelously succinct rhetorical parallelism both recapitulates 1:18-24 (first paragraph or section of 1:18-2:5) and points forward to the next sections (1:26-31 and 2:1-5). Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 175.

³⁴ Michael P. Andrus, "The Power Behind the Powerless" (1 Cor 1:18-2:5): Unpublished sermon, 9/25/2000.

³⁵ I believe this clever play on words can be attributed to Martin Marty, *The Christian Century* (1/8/1986). Christianity Today, Vol. 30, no. 8.

³⁶ Preaching Today Citation: W.E. Orchard in The Temple. Christianity Today, Vol. 34, no. 6.

³⁷ Preaching Today Citation: Scott McDowell, Nashville, TN; from a movie review of Robert Lane and Leonard Maltin at www.Amazon.com.

³⁸ Ray Pritchard, *In the Shadow of the Cross: The Deeper Meaning of Calvary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 175.