

Gospel Power 1 Corinthians 1v18-2v5

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Preacher: Michael Grant

[0 : 00] Chapter 1, starting at verse 18. 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.

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, the intelligence of the intelligent, I will frustrate. Where is the wise person?

Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For 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. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.

But to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

[1 : 21] Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards. Not many of you were influential. Not many were of noble birth.

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

It 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.

Therefore, as it is written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. And so it is with me.

So it is with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

[2 : 37] I came to you in weakness, with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

Let me just pray first, and then Michael is going to come and speak. Father, we need your wisdom today, and you have provided that in your word, your truth.

And we pray that by your Holy Spirit would speak into our hearts and lives, and that you, by your power, would change us and transform us, making us into the kind of people you call us to be.

Help Michael now, and may he know your Spirit working in him and through him. And may we all be blessed together. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

[4 : 03] Amen. Well, it's nice to be with you again here in Carragalline. Last day of the year, so as I won't be this part tomorrow, wish you all a very happy and blessed new year.

The very fact that we're here today on the last day of the year is an indication, isn't it, of God's faithfulness to us. The psalmist reminds us that our times are in his hands.

And as you get older, the year passes by so very, very quickly, doesn't it? But as we go through the years, we have our ups, we have our downs.

Different things happen to us. But through it all, we can acknowledge the faithfulness of our God and say, great is your faithfulness.

And I want us this morning to look at the Apostle Paul and particularly his coming to Corinth and all the things that happened to him there and the success of the gospel as he arrives in this particular city.

[5 : 24] How did he keep going? He was a man who knew what it was to suffer. But he tells us in Philippians chapter 4 and verse 13 that he can only continue and do what he does through Christ who gives him the strength.

So let's look at Paul in Corinth. By way of introduction, that's how we're going to start. Paul in Corinth. Now what do we know about first century Corinth?

Well, it was known as the Vanity Fair of the ancient world. It was an extremely evil city.

There were two ports. Sailors who had spent months at sea were well catered for when they came ashore. Everything was there for them to suit the desires of their hearts.

It was provided by people who were ready to give them what they wanted to have. It was an evil city.

[6 : 39] In this city was the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. And so the city became known as a city of immorality because there were the temple prostitutes, both male and female.

You wouldn't want to let your daughter out alone in first century Corinth. But Paul comes to this city and we ask ourselves, what brought him there?

Well, first of all, we can say this. It was the command of the Lord. Although Paul hadn't been present in the upper room when the Lord sends his disciples out into the world.

He would have known that the Lord commanded his church to go into all the world and to make disciples of all nations.

So Paul arrives at Corinth to make known this gospel. He can't do anything else. He wants to make known the Lord Jesus Christ, his death and his resurrection.

[8 : 01] The Lord had commanded him. I am, he says in 1 Corinthians 9 and verse 16, compelled to preach. So he's there because of the command of God, the command of the Lord to preach the gospel in the world.

But he's there also because of the call of the Lord. Remember, here was a man who was totally opposed to the gospel.

He hated anyone who followed the Lord Jesus Christ. But he was confronted by the risen Christ on the road to Damascus.

And as he lies on the ground, the risen Lord speaks to him and says, go into the city and you will be told what you must do.

And eventually, a man by the name of Ananias is sent to him. And what does Ananias say? What does Ananias say when he goes to the Apostle Paul?

[9 : 08] Well, he tells him that he is a chosen instrument to carry the name, his name, the name of the Lord Jesus before the Gentiles and before kings and before the people of Israel.

So there's not only the command of God, there's a specific call of the Apostle to go into the world. And when he stands and when he stands later on before King Agrippa, he is able to say, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven.

He's going to suffer, but there's this call he must make known. So the command of God was there. The specific call was there.

And he knew that he must get on with the work. That's why he's in Corinth. Because God had caught him. But he's also there for a third reason.

Paul was well versed in the Old Testament Scriptures. And he would have known the promises of God. He knew the command of God.

[10 : 25] He knew the call of God. But because he was steeped in the Old Testament Scriptures, he would have been very aware of the Old Testament promises concerning the spread of the Gospel in the world.

It wasn't to be confined to Jerusalem or to Samaria. It was to go to the uttermost bounds of the earth. He would have known verses like Isaiah 60 and verse 3 Nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Not just this promise but many other promises. How then could he be silent? God had caught him. The word of God had gripped him.

The wicked city of Corinth in Greece was no barrier to the purposes of God. God. If nations were to come to the light, they had to hear of Jesus Christ.

So as he arrives in the city, he's recognizing that he's had the command. He recognizes the call of the Lord.

[11 : 43] He sees the promise of God and he has great confidence. How be it? as we shall discover, he's nervous. But perhaps the words of the Lord came to him even as he began his ministry there.

I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. The church going into the world and nothing could stop the purposes of God being worked out.

Because God is faithful. And of course there's an application for you and for me this morning. The command still stands.

We are to go into all the world to preach the gospel. Some will be called specifically to give up their time, to give up their normal jobs, to go out into the world.

We too have the promises of God, the Old Testament and New Testament promises. And God has placed you and I, or at least you, not me, but you in Karagaline.

[13 : 08] Is it easy to bring the message of the gospel to our friends, to our families, to our neighbors, to our colleagues, to our fellow students? No?

But God has saved us. And while He hasn't called us to be an apostle, He has called each one of us to be His witnesses.

And He's called us to pray to Him, the Lord of the harvest, that He will thrust out laborers into the harvest field.

And He's given us many promises to hold on to. And the one who commands, the one who calls, and the one who promises will be faithful.

One great missionary said this, God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply.

[14 : 08] That's Paul in Corinth. You're in carigaline. Let us go forward into the coming year to make known the glorious gospel to the people around and about us.

But the second thing I want us to notice is Paul's listeners in Corinth. What do we know about them? Who were they?

What were they like? Well, certainly we know that some of them were Jews. When Paul arrives in Corinth, we read about it in Acts chapter 18, we are told that Paul went into the synagogue, and every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue.

He took the Old Testament scriptures and showed them the Lord Jesus Christ in his death and in his resurrection. Did many of the Jews like what he had to say?

No. We are told that they opposed Paul, and they became very abusive. They didn't make his life easy. There was court action.

[15 : 29] The majority turned their backs on what he was saying. Didn't they have the law? Weren't they religious? Didn't they have those Old Testament scriptures?

They were all right. Weren't they ancestors of Abraham? But they turned their back upon the message of salvation, of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and what he had done upon the cross of Calvary.

They were the people that listened to the apostle Paul, but rejected what he had to say. But also some were Gentiles, for were told that when the Jews rejected, Paul shook out his clothes in protest, and said to them, your blood be upon your own heads.

I am clear of my responsibility. From now on, I will go to the Gentiles. Gentiles. And who were these Gentiles that he began to bring the message of the gospel to?

Well, we're told in 1 Corinthians 1 and verse 26, that not many of them were wise by human standards. They didn't have an education.

[16 : 52] There was no third level for them. Not many of them were influential. They didn't have the top jobs. They had no clout in society.

Nobody would listen to them. They weren't of noble birth. They were not rulers over others. But they became Paul's listeners.

They were foolish. They were weak. They were lowly. And by many they were despised.

But they were Gentiles who listened. So there were Jews that listened. There were Gentiles who listened.

But all of these people could be summed up under one heading. Jew, Gentile, they were sinners. Whether they were rich, whether they were poor, whether they were educated or uneducated, whether they were foolish, whether they were weak, whether they were lowly or despised, they were all united in this fact, that they were sinners in the sight of God.

[18 : 15] God. Later on in his letter, in chapter 1, in the first letter in chapter 6 and verse 9, he says this, Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?

Do not be deceived, neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

And that is what some of you were. They were the listeners. They heard what the apostle Paul had to say.

But the message came to them in the power of the Holy Spirit, and they had a change of life, a change of direction. They became part of the church, a church of saved sinners.

And again, there's application for you and I. We're surrounded by different kinds of people, different cultures, different religious backgrounds.

[19 : 43] We're surrounded by an increasingly secular society. A society that doesn't even recognize sin as sin.

A post-modern society where it's almost impossible to sin. What's to be done? Do we stay in a holy huddle?

in 2018? Or do we remember that God is faithful? Do we remember that we have a message to proclaim?

And God can take that message and change people, whether they're religious or non-religious. Whether they're well-educated or no education.

Whether they're rich or whether they're poor. those are our listeners. But we go out knowing that God is faithful.

[20 : 51] As Paul puts it when he writes to the Romans in chapter 5 and verse 20, that where sin increases, grace increases all the more.

So there's hope for Karageline. There's hope for our families. There's hope for our friends. There's hope for our neighbors. There's hope for our work colleagues.

If we're Christians this morning, we are saved sinners. sinners. And we bring the message of salvation to those who are still at the present time in darkness.

But we do know that a God of grace and mercy and love saves sinners in Corinth. And he can save sinners today.

He can save sinners tomorrow. He can save sinners during 2018. Because he is faithful.

[22 : 01] He will gather a people to himself. The devil will not win the day. So we see Paul in Corinth.

We see his listeners in Corinth. But thirdly, we see Paul's message in Corinth. Now when Paul arrives in this city, he has a message.

And he gives himself wholeheartedly in delivering that message. Now what is his message? What would you have done if you arrived in first century Corinth?

What would you bring before the people? Well, Paul makes his number one priority, the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 3, I deliver to you that which was of first importance, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.

[23 : 20] What scriptures, Paul? Well, according to the Old Testament scriptures, that he was buried and that he was raised the third day according to the scriptures.

This was my message, a crucified and a risen Lord. So, in other words, when he came before Jews, he preached Christ crucified risen.

When he came before Gentiles, he preached Jesus Christ crucified risen. When he met with sinners, he preached Jesus Christ crucified and risen.

there was no compromise to Jewish thinking. If you look at verses 22 and 23, you read there these words, Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom.

But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. promise. But Paul didn't compromise his message.

[24 : 44] The Jews said, give us a sign. That was always their way of thinking. Jesus was asked to work signs and wonders again and again while he was here upon earth before his death and resurrection.

Even when he hung upon the cross, they said, come down if you are the Christ. And they mocked him as he hung there.

He saved others. He cannot save himself. Give us a sign. Come down. But he didn't come down. Though the Jews asked for a sign. You see, a crucified Savior proved proved to be a stumbling block to the Jews.

They adopted a teaching which said something like this. That the Messiah would come as a mighty ruler. That he would get rid of the yoke of the Romans.

[25 : 54] That if they kept the law, they would eventually get to heaven. all they had to do was live their lives in purity. But they failed and they failed miserably.

And the apostle Paul comes to them and says, I want to point you to the cross. Because that is the way of salvation. Salvation will never be found in keeping the law.

Because it's impossible to keep the law. I want you to look to Christ who hung there and took the wrath of God upon himself in your place and died in your place.

Look to Christ and be saved. That's what you must do. And although he could have tried other methods, he didn't.

He said there's only salvation through faith. in what Jesus Christ did upon the cross. For there he died for sinners.

[27 : 03] There he died that people might be clean. Some years ago, I was in Poland near the city of Wucz.

Wucz. The second largest city in Poland and quite near there. there was a memorial to the many Jews who were sent to the gas chambers at Auschwitz.

It was a very moving memorial. It was you went in at one end and you went down a long tunnel. And as you went down the tunnel, so the names of the people that had been transported from which appeared and when they were sent.

And when you got to the end of this memorial, this long tunnel, there was no way out. And you looked up and you were in a chimney.

family. It was showing the end of so many people that were sent from those parts that they ended up cremated at Auschwitz.

[28 : 20] But God in His mercy has saved a number of Polish people, even in Auschwitz itself.

What had happened? Well, somebody had betrayed a number of Christians and said that they were anti-Nazi. And so they were thrown into Auschwitz.

They were Christians and they witnessed to many, many Jews. And although the story hasn't been told, it is out there. There are papers available collected by a friend of mine.

And it says that many, many Jews turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. As they heard the message of salvation in such terrible circumstances, they turn to the Savior.

They had one message to give to these people as they faced death. And all of us face death. The one message is Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

[29 : 31] No compromise. faith in Him and in Him alone. But there's no compromise to Gentile thinking either.

You see, the Greeks, well, they had their philosophies. And here was Paul. And what was he doing? Was he elevating their philosophies and their philosophers?

No. He was preaching about a man who lived a perfect life, who was nailed to a cross. And the Greeks said, foolishness, ridiculous.

How can someone dying a gruesome death like that save people? It doesn't make sense. God's love.

So Paul changed track. Not for a single moment. He sought to prove from the Old Testament Scriptures that Christ had to die.

[30 : 38] That He had to shed His blood upon the cross. He took people back to those Old Testament Scriptures which said He was wounded for our transgressions.

He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement that brought us peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed.

He pointed them to a crucified, risen Christ. And as He says in this passage in verse 21 for 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 believed.

The message of the cross have you accepted it? Do you believe it that there is only salvation in Christ and in Him alone?

You see we live in a different age but nothing has changed salvation. And you and I must go out into this world and point people to the same Savior.

[32 : 12] And why do we point to the same Savior? Well sin had to be punished didn't it? God had to be just and God provided a substitute a perfect substitute a perfect sacrifice in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if the people of the community of Carigaline would know forgiveness of sin they must come to the foot of the cross.

There's an old hymn which says there lies beneath its shadow that is the shadow of the cross. There lies beneath its shadow but on the further side the darkness of an awful grave that gapes both deep and wide and there between us stands the cross to arms outstretched to save like a watchman set to guard the way from that eternal grave.

So the people of Carigaline need to come to the foot of the cross as they are as sinners and to quote another hymn just as I am without one plea but that your blood was shed for me and that you bid me come to me O Lamb of God I come as a sinner there is no other way but I can tell you this if people do come as they listen to the message of the cross and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus if they come will he save yes he will because he is faithful 1 Corinthians 1 and verse 18 says 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

Paul at Corinth Paul's listeners in Corinth Paul's message in Corinth and finally Paul's power in Corinth what was it that caused sinners to respond to what Paul was saying what power was at work that caused people to be changed to become new creations to have a complete change of direction what was it that turned people round well let's first of all put it negatively a power was at work but it wasn't a natural power Paul tells us he he arrives at the city and he's nervous and the [35 : 37] Lord speaks to him in Acts 18 and verse 9 it says do not be afraid keep on speaking do not be silent for I am with you and no one is going to attack or harm you because I have many people in this city here's the great apostle but he's afraid he naturally wants to stay quiet he suffered persecution as he made his way down through Europe of that day and his fear is perfectly understandable and he speaks about it in the passage that was read to us earlier on 1 Corinthians 2 and verse 1 when I came to you brothers I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom and he goes on to say I came to you in weakness and fear and with much trembling my message and my preaching were not with wise or persuasive words no it didn't lie in me said the apostle Paul it's not me that caused people to change their lifestyles it wasn't my eloquence it wasn't my well crafted sermon no it wasn't a power that I naturally possessed

I've been obedient to the command of God I've received the call of God I know the promises of God I sowed the seed I've watered the seed and some Jews and Gentiles listened and rejected and others heard and believed no it wasn't me and he tells us elsewhere it wasn't Apollos and it wasn't Peter it's not their power it's not my power it's not my wisdom so what was it Paul well he says something happened there was a power at work that was supernatural there was the very power of God the spirit of the living God this is how it's put in 1 Corinthians 2 and the latter part of verse 4 it was a demonstration of the spirit's power so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom but on God's power so Paul preached about the cross he pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only saviour he showed the people that there was no salvation apart from faith in him and God by the power of his spirit took his word and implanted it deep in the hearts of his listeners and they were changed dramatically it was the very power of God isn't that what he says in 1 Corinthians 1 and verse 18 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 and in 1 Corinthians 1 and verse 24 he says to those whom God has called both Jews and Greeks

Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God and it was the power of God that broke down people's natural resistance to the message of the cross and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ the power of God caused them to change completely they were born again from above they saw that there was no other way and it was as though the cross drew them so that they could do nothing else but bow before the Lord now that's a work of God that's the almighty power of the Holy Spirit and you and I should be praying as we go out and witness that we will be empowered and that

God will take our weak words that God will take our fears and transform them so that we are ready to proclaim and we may sow and we may water and God by his power will bring about the increase

so that when people are converted it won't be because of you but it will be because of the power of God and that's what is needed I've been reading recently a book about the days of Whitfield and Wesley and I was reading about a funeral service of someone who has died and 10,000 people attended that funeral service and because the spirit of God was so at work they had to erect three platforms for different preachers and preaching went on all day and hundreds were brought into the kingdom and don't you and I want to say oh God come and do it again he is able but you and I must seek him so let us share the gospel let us water the seed that we have sown with our prayers prayers and let us look to him to bring about the increase and may he have all the glory as people in caragaline hear about

[42 : 21] Jesus crucified and come and bow before him in repentance and faith and as they come and bow in repentance and faith they will know the life that he alone can give namely resurrection life power to live for his glory our God is faithful let us seek after him to move in caragaline to the glory of his name amen as he has A He Where Are He.

He