

PULPIT COMPANION

GOD CHOSE THE CROSS

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-31

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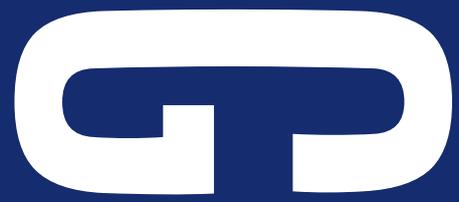


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This powerful message takes us deep into 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, where we discover why God chose the cross as the centerpiece of redemption. We're challenged to see the cross not as a religious symbol we've grown familiar with, but as a revolutionary statement about how God operates.

The sermon unpacks the four points of the cross, each direction teaching us something profound about God's wisdom versus worldly wisdom. We learn that God's wisdom looks foolish to the world, His power shows up where explanations fail, He chooses what society rejects, and Christ becomes our complete foundation. What's striking is the parallel drawn between a rocket shedding stages to reach orbit and our need to release pride, deaf ears, and shame to hear God's voice.

The message confronts our modern condition, we're over-informed but under-surrendered, intellectually armed but hesitant to obey, digitally disciplined but lacking genuine transformation. Just as a fig tree cannot mature without the fig wasp inside it, humanity cannot be redeemed without what God chose: the cross. This isn't partial salvation; it's total coverage. When we feel unqualified, overlooked, or like underdogs, we're reminded that God specializes in using the available, not the impressive.

The cross declares that on God's worst day, Friday, victory still belonged to Him because Sunday was coming. We're invited to stop disqualifying ourselves and recognize that we're covered, redeemed, and restored through the blood that still speaks.





SCRIPTURES FROM PULPIT AI

Explicitly Referenced Scripture

1. **1 Corinthians 1:18-31** - The primary text for the entire sermon, read in full from the New International Translation

Direct Quotations and Clear Allusions

1. **Isaiah 29:14** - Referenced in verse 19: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will thwart the cleverness of the intelligent"
2. **Jeremiah 9:23-24** - Referenced in verse 31: "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord"
3. **John 19:30** - Alluded to when discussing "It is finished" and Christ's victory on the cross
4. **Matthew 27:45-54** - Alluded to when mentioning the sun refusing to shine and the earth shaking at the crucifixion
5. **Luke 23:33-43** - Referenced when discussing the crucifixion events and those who praised him earlier wanting him to die

Strong Thematic Allusions

1. **Amazing Grace hymn/John Newton** - Direct reference: "I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind but now I see" (based on Luke 15:24, 32)
2. **Romans 5:8** - Thematic connection to God's love while we were still sinners
3. **2 Corinthians 12:9-10** - Theme of God's power being made perfect in weakness
4. **Ephesians 2:8-9** - Theme of salvation by grace, not by works or wisdom
5. **Colossians 2:13-15** - Theme of Christ's victory over powers and authorities through the cross
6. **1 Peter 2:24** - Theme of Christ bearing our sins on the cross
7. **Philippians 2:5-11** - Theme of Christ's humiliation and exaltation





DEVOTIONAL

Day 1: God's Foolish Wisdom

Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Devotional: The world measures value by credentials, intelligence, and power. Yet God chose a cross, an instrument of shame and execution, to display His ultimate wisdom. What the world dismisses as foolishness is actually God's masterpiece of redemption. Today, consider where you've relied more on human wisdom than divine intervention. Are you trying to think your way out of what requires surrender? Information can make you aware, but only Jesus makes you whole. The cross reminds us that God's "worst day" still defeats humanity's best efforts. When Friday looks final, remember Sunday is coming. God's wisdom doesn't always look like winning, but it always ends in victory.

Day 2: Power in Unexpected Places

Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

Devotional: God specializes in nobodies becoming somebodies through His power. Look at your own calling—you weren't chosen because you were impressive, but because you were available. Stop disqualifying yourself based on your past, your weakness, or your limitations. God deliberately chooses what the world rejects to showcase His glory. Your weakness isn't your embarrassment; it's your evidence that God can use you. If you've been overlooked by people, you're on heaven's shortlist. The cross declares that God doesn't need first-round picks with polished resumes. He transforms underdogs into overcomers, turning mess into miracles and floor testimonies into mountain-top victories. You're qualified because He chose you.





DEVOTIONAL

Day 3: Total Coverage Through Christ

Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:30-31

Devotional: You didn't climb into Jesus, God placed you in Him. This isn't partial salvation requiring you to complete the work; it's total coverage. Christ became your wisdom when confusion clouds your path. He became your righteousness when shame whispers you're unworthy. He became your sanctification while you're still changing, and your redemption while you're waiting for complete transformation. The cross provides what no insurance plan can, full restoration with no exclusions for pre-existing conditions. Your boast isn't in your strength, discipline, or willpower. Boast in the blood that covered what you couldn't correct, broke what bound you, and redeemed what seemed ruined. He's your all in all, your foundation that cannot be shaken.

Day 4: Releasing to Rise

Reading: Philippians 3:7-14

Devotional: Like a rocket shedding stages to reach orbit, you must release what's too heavy for where God is taking you. The pressure you feel isn't destruction, it's elevation. What needs to be released? Deaf ears that decide in advance God won't speak? Pride that assumes you already know? Shame that believes your past disqualifies your future? The cross teaches us that going forward requires letting go. Jesus released His divine privileges, embraced the cross, and gained ultimate victory. What worked at one altitude may weigh you down at the next level. Surrender isn't loss; it's strategic positioning for breakthrough. God has something special in store, but you must release yesterday's weight to receive tomorrow's promise.





DEVOTIONAL

Day 5: The Blood Still Speaks

Reading: Hebrews 12:22-24

Devotional: The cross stands empty because Jesus isn't there—He rose victorious. The blood He shed still speaks today, declaring better things than your pain, louder truths than your accusers, and stronger promises than your past. While life still hurts, the blood still works. While you're healing, processing, and praying through tears, the blood speaks redemption over your situation. You don't have to fix yourself first, explain everything fully, or understand completely. Just come. The altar is the foot of the cross where total coverage awaits. You're covered, reclaimed, and restored. God isn't finished with you. The empty cross declares victory is yours. Let grace reclaim you today and make Christ your all in all.





SMALL GROUP GUIDE: God Chose the Cross

Opening Prayer:

Key Scripture:

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Icebreaker Question

Question: Share about a time when something that seemed foolish or backwards in the moment turned out to be exactly what you needed.

Main Takeaways from the Sermon

The Four Points of the Cross:

1. God's wisdom looks foolish to the world
2. God's power shows up where the world can't explain it
3. God chose what the world rejects
4. God makes Christ our foundation





SMALL GROUP GUIDE: God Chose the Cross

Discussion Questions:

Part 1: Understanding the Message (15 minutes)

- 1. The Rocket Analogy:** The sermon opened with the image of a rocket shedding stages to reach orbit. What are some things you might need to "shed" or release to rise to the next level in your faith journey?
- 2. Corinth and Today:** Paul lists several types of people in Corinth, intellectually armed, philosophically satisfied, culturally fluent, etc. Which of these descriptions resonates most with modern culture? Which one might describe you or your struggles?
- 3. Foolishness vs. Power:** Why do you think the message of the cross appears foolish to those who don't believe? What makes it powerful to those who do?

Part 2: God's Wisdom vs. World's Wisdom (15 minutes)

- 1. Information vs. Transformation:** The sermon states, "Information can make you aware, but only Jesus can make you whole." What's the difference between knowing about God and knowing God personally?
- 2. The World's Failed Solutions:** Discuss the sermon's point that the world has tried intellect, peace, philosophy, and love, yet still faces violence, war, emptiness, and division. Why can't human wisdom alone solve our deepest problems?
- 3. On God's Worst Day:** Reflect on the statement, "On God's worst day, God wins." How does understanding that Friday's cross led to Sunday's resurrection change how you view your current struggles?





SMALL GROUP GUIDE: God Chose the Cross

Discussion Questions:

Part 3: The Underdog Advantage (15 minutes)

1. **Not the First Round Pick:** The sermon emphasizes that God often chooses the "foolish, weak, and despised." Why do you think God operates this way? How does this challenge our culture's values?
2. **Stop Disqualifying Yourself:** Have you ever felt "not good enough" for God to use you? What lies have you believed about your worth or calling? How does this sermon challenge those beliefs?
3. **Available vs. Impressive:** The message states God specializes in those who are "available" rather than "impressive." What does it mean to make yourself available to God? What might be blocking your availability?

Part 4: Total Coverage (15 minutes)

1. **Christ as Foundation:** The sermon lists Christ as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Which of these four do you need to lean into most right now, and why?
2. **Boasting in the Blood:** What does it practically look like to "boast in the Lord" rather than in your own strength or accomplishments?
3. **He's Not There:** The sermon emphasizes that Jesus is no longer on the cross, He rose victorious. How does the empty cross (and empty tomb) give you hope for your current situation?





SMALL GROUP GUIDE: God Chose the Cross

Personal Reflection (10 minutes)

Take a few moments of silence for personal reflection. Consider these questions:

- What is one area where I've been relying on my own wisdom instead of God's?
- Am I disqualifying myself from something God may be calling me to?
- What would it look like for me to fully accept that I have "total coverage" through Christ?

Optional: Have group members journal their thoughts or share one insight from their reflection time.

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

1. **Release Something Heavy:** Identify one thing you need to "shed" to rise higher (pride, unforgiveness, fear, control, etc.). Write it down and pray specifically about releasing it to God.
2. **Embrace Your Underdog Status:** If you've been disqualifying yourself, write down three ways God has already used your weakness or "foolishness" for His glory. Thank Him for choosing you.
3. **Boast Differently:** Pay attention to your conversations this week. When you're tempted to boast about your accomplishments, redirect the glory to what God has done instead.
4. **Declare Total Coverage:** Each morning this week, speak aloud: "Christ is my wisdom, my righteousness, my sanctification, and my redemption. I am fully covered."





SMALL GROUP GUIDE: God Chose the Cross

Group Prayer Focus (10 minutes)

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for group members who feel disqualified or "not good enough"
- Pray for wisdom to see God's power in what the world calls foolish
- Pray for the courage to boast only in Christ and what He has done
- Pray for anyone struggling to believe they have "total coverage" through the cross

Closing Declaration:

Have the group say together: "I'm covered. I'm redeemed. I'm restored. God chose the cross, and God chose me."

For Next Week

- Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-16 (Paul continues his message about God's wisdom)
- Come prepared to share one way you experienced God's "foolish" wisdom working in your life this week
- Bring a friend who needs to hear that God specializes in underdogs
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Leader Notes

- **Be Sensitive:** Some group members may be wrestling with feelings of inadequacy or past rejection. Create a safe space for vulnerability.
- **Encourage Honesty:** The "first round pick" vs. "underdog" discussion may hit close to home for some. Affirm that God's economy is different from the world's.
- **Avoid Clichés:** When discussing struggles, resist the urge to offer quick fixes. Sometimes people need to sit with the tension of "Friday" while trusting "Sunday" is coming.
- **Celebrate Stories:** If someone shares a testimony of God using their weakness, take time to celebrate and thank God together.

Final Thought: The cross wasn't Plan B. It was always God's plan because only the cross could provide total coverage for total brokenness. You don't have to fix yourself first, just come to the foot of the cross and let Him do what only He can do.

