

## **Why So Much Rejection?**

1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5

(preached Pine Grove 1/7/18; Sunday AM)

### **Introduction**

As another year begins, the world slides deeper into sin.

For all the glitz and glamor and hope of a new year, there is the ugly reality that people love their sin and desire to continue to live in it for another year...

Now for many of us, there is always a nagging question about some people and it is this...

How in the world can some people refuse the offer of salvation?

Said another way..

How could someone in their right mind hear the offer of the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ and yet turn and walk the other way?

Well, there are a couple ways to answer that question...

For us in the south, one clear answer to that is this..

Many people walk away from God's offer to save them because they think they are already saved....

Plenty of people wander into churches each Sunday morning and hear the gospel preached and immediately think that the pastor is inviting everyone but them to be saved...

Now mind you, they are saved but they have convinced themselves that they are...

Though they continue in their sin..

Though they haven't picked up a Bible to read it in months..

Though they haven't prayed in weeks..

Though their lifestyle looks more their unsaved friends than those in the church, they are convinced that the prayer they said years ago was good enough to get them in heaven..

Or they are convinced that the walk they took down the aisle to speak to the preacher was good enough..

Or they are convinced that their baptism was enough to get them into heaven..

So they come to church every so often and listen to much of the message but figure that the preacher is talking to someone else besides them...

And they remain unchanged, and worst of all, they remain unconcerned about what will happen when they die...

So one reason people refuse to be saved is that they mistakingly think that they already are...

And let me be the first to say that preachers in pulpits bear a great responsibility in this first reason as well...

Because many pulpits for many years stressed the need to say a prayer or walk an aisle or get baptized without rightly explaining that salvation is much more than that...

You see for many years in the south and around the world, the gospel of “easy believism” was the gospel that was preached in many pulpits...

Easy believism is the gospel that makes salvation a simple matter of saying a prayer, walking an aisle or getting baptized...

Once those things are done, the person is safe and secure and ready for heaven....

And many preachers offer that gospel to add to their stats..

It looked good on the resume to say that 50 people prayed a prayer of salvation...or 100 walked an the aisle at invitation or 75 got baptized last year at the church...

But stats are meaningless in God's eyes...

The Lord is interested in those who are truly saved...

Now, don't get me wrong as so many often do...

There have been many prayers that led to true salvation...

There have been many people that walked aisles at the invitation that got truly saved..

There have been many people baptized because they were truly saved..

But I want you to understand that my goal is not to get you to say a prayer or walk an aisle or get baptized but to commit your whole life to following Christ...

The gospel message is not as easy as raising a hand and then going back to a life of sin...

The gospel message says count the cost to follow Christ, and then give up you life to follow him...

The gospel message says the way is narrow and it is hard to get saved...

The gospel message says it may cost you your job, your friends and your family to be truly saved...

But preachers soon learned that the true gospel didn't lead to raises by the church and praises by the association, so they made the gospel easier to believe....

Just say this prayer, just shake my hand after the service down front, just get wet and all will be well...

And so now in churches all over the world, you have people that are convinced they are saved by a prayer of 30 years ago or a baptism of 25 years ago or a talking to the preacher 35 years ago at the invitation...

Yet, there is not a single piece of salvation fruit in their life...

So these folks walk into churches every so often and they hear the preacher but they see no need to respond because they are good and saved due to what the preacher told them to do one time long ago..

And shame on those preachers and shame on those people for living in their self-deception...

So one reason people won't respond to the gospel is that they don't think they need to....

However, there are other reasons that people refuse to believe the gospel, and what I want to do this morning is take a brief look at some of those reasons as we prepare our hearts for the Lord's Table..

You see, the Lord's Table is a celebration of the death of Christ on a cross that secured the salvation of all who believe in Christ...

And we as the people of God need to celebrate that death and rescue as often as possible...

But as we celebrate the cross, it is important and helpful to think about why others reject it...

So, take your Bibles and turn to the book of 1 Corinthians, chapter 1...

Paul wrote this first letter to the church at Corinth in 55 AD.

At that point in history, the church was still very much young and immature..

Christians were learning how to follow Christ and act like Christ, and in very immoral cultures like the culture

at Corinth, it was hard for believers to break from the culture around them..

So Paul, inspired by God who gave him every word, wrote a letter to the church at Corinth...

And the purpose of the letter was to teach the Corinthians how to behave like Christians in all aspects of life...

So as Paul begins the letter in chapter 1 by encouraging the people in the church to see how blessed they were that God had saved them and made them into a church...

And then in verse 10 of chapter 1, he begins his instruction to them..

And the first matter they needed to correct was their unity...

You see, Paul founded the church but other believers came in and helped the church grow...

And some people had grown attached to him...

Other people in the church had attached themselves to another teacher these named Apollos..

Others likes Peter...

Some in the church were so attached to their preferred teacher that they bragged about the fact that they had been baptized by him..

But Paul reminds them very quickly that the church is not to be divided but united in Christ...

And he tells them that he was not sent to create division by baptizing some and not baptizing others....

Look at verse 17 of chapter 1....

***17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in [l]cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.***

You see, the purpose of Paul's life was not to baptize but to preach the gospel of Jesus dying on a cross in the place of guilty sinners...

The gospel is not "I got baptized by Paul" but rather "I believe what Paul says about Jesus dying as my substitute on a cross to pay the penalty for my sin."

And Paul wanted to sort of "re-center" the Corinthian church on what they were to be about...

Well, let's take the next few minutes to re-center our hearts and our minds on what we are to be about as a church..



And that is to be those who take the gospel to the world...

And as we take that gospel to the world, let us understand why people will reject its offer of salvation...

Because that is what Paul is going to talk about in the next few verses of his letter...

So, let's begin our time by looking at a second reason why people reject the gospel in verses 18-24...

## **I. God's Cross is Unintelligent (18-24)**

Let me read verses 18-24....

*18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who [m]are perishing, but to us who [n]are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside." 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 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 [o]message preached to save those who believe. 22 For indeed Jews ask for [p]signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach [q]Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

Many people reject the gospel because it seems like foolishness to them...

Have you heard anyone ask the question..

How can a man dying on a cross 2000 years ago take away my sin today and forever?

Or maybe it is asked this way...

How can one man at one point in time forgive sins that happened in the past and will happen in the future beyond that point in time?

For many people, the idea of Jesus dying on a cross to forgive the sins of those who believe in Him is foolishness...

Look back at verse 18..

***18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who [m]are perishing***

But guess what?

That is how God designed his plan of salvation..

He designed the act of Jesus dying on a cross as a stumbling block...

Look at what God said in verse 19...

***“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.”***

In other words, the simplicity of the cross makes it a huge hurdle for those who love the complexity of hidden wisdom...

But that was God's design because He did not want a plan of salvation that could only be understood by the super smart..

If you could only get to God through intelligence, then the gospel would only be available to those with great wisdom...

But God is not exclusive or biased nor does He favor the super smart...

Rather God comes to all, and the simplicity of the cross is what makes it beautiful...

You see, the cross is so simple that a child can understand it but a man with 15 doctorates can't make sense of it...

Look at verse 20...

***20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 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 [o]message preached to save those***

***who believe. 22 For indeed Jews ask for [p]signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach [q]Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,***

You see there are people who need to have a full understanding of all things before they commit to it..

I tend to be that person...

When I get assembly instructions, I read them to the end before I pick up the first bolt and nut..

I want to get the big picture and try to grasp it all before I commit to putting it together....

You see, Gentiles or Greeks or non-Jewish people could not get past the fact that an all intelligent and all wise God would save people through the death of His own Son...

To them, such an act was stupid, idiotic, foolish...

They saw no wisdom in the cross.

Therefore they rejected it..

There are plenty of people like that today...

Many hold various degrees from multiple universities, and because of their great knowledge, they reject the gospel because in their minds, an all wise God would have thought of a better way to save people that through the foolishness of the cross...

Jews rejected the cross for a similar reason...

In their view of God, he would never submit Himself to the humiliation of the cross..

You see, Jews rightly had a very high view of the holiness of God...

That is why they had rituals to cleanse themselves and keep themselves holy...

And certainly God is holy, but God is also equally compassionate and loving and merciful..

And his compassion and humility led Him to come to earth to be humiliated and die for the sins of His people...

However, the Jewish person could not accept that God would do such a thing...

Therefore the cross to them was also foolish and unintelligent...

Let me tell you why the cross is sensible...

The cross is not one man at one point in time hanging on a cross...

The cross is the God-man....

The eternal Son of God dying to take on the sins of all who believe in Him...

And because He is eternal, his forgiveness can go backwards, forwards and it will last for all eternity...

The cross is not foolishness by the unsurprising wisdom of God...

If you are looking for a better plan of salvation than the cross, you will not find one because it will never come close to God's plan...

A second reason people reject the gospel is found in verses 26-30....

Not only is God's cross foolishness in their minds....

## **II. God's People are Unremarkable (26-30)**

As Paul finishes pointing out the wisdom of the cross, he moves to the wisdom of God in pointing out the people that God saves...

Look at verse 26...

***26 For [r]consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to [s]the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no [t]man may boast before God. 30 But [u]by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, [v]and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 so that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."***

The celebrity status of Tim Tebow is fascinating to me...

He has become the poster boy for Christianity in some circles...

And look, Tebow seems to be a good guy with a biblical worldview and the right priorities...



But some folks are just obsessed with him in the church...

And for me, it illustrates how much Christians desire to have a celebrity as one of them...

But guess what?

That has never been the plan of God...

God rarely works through well-known and famous people...

Just consider what Paul is telling the Corinthians here...

“Look around in the church people at who God has saved.”

Not many of you are the wealthy elite of Corinth..

Not many of you are the famous philosophers of Corinth...

Not many of you are the great and strong soldiers of Corinth...

Instead, God has saved the unremarkable in Corinth and made you into a church of His people...

God saves the fool, the unintelligent, the weak...

Yes, we may want God to save the famous so that we get a voice in the world, but God is content to save the lesser known....

And why is that?

So that people can't boast in the fact that they got saved because of something they did...

God doesn't share this glory, and people who are famous are likely to take away from God's glory in saving them..

So God saves the lesser known over the well known...

Think about Rahab the harlot...

Think about Matthew the tax collector...

Think about Paul, the Christian killer...

And look, many people reject Christianity because of the unremarkable people that are part of it...

Their thinking is this...

“If Christianity is the only way to God, why isn't God saving the powerful people of the world who deserve to be saved?”

And the answer from God is simple...

Because people who have made a name for themselves will do very little to make a name for God....

Yet, when God saves the unknown person, it makes His name very well-known to the people around that person...

One final reason in this passage why folks reject the gospel is found in chapter 2:1-5...

### **III. God's Preachers are Unsophisticated (2:1-5)**

Look at verse 1 of chapter 2...

***2 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the [a]testimony of God. 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, 4 and my [b]message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith would not [c]rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.***

In case you didn't know, Paul was not the glitzy TV preacher that we often see today..

Paul was not even that pleasant to look at...

No 3 piece suit...

No jet that flew him all around..

No entourage of people escorting him from town to town...

Rather Paul was a tent-making preacher who was often weak and sickly in his ministry and travel...

He wasn't even eloquent in the pulpit...

He wasn't even very persuasive in what he preached...

Now, think about all the false prophets in the world today....

Some have million dollar smiles and the 1000 dollar suits...

Some have fancy robes they wear and silly hats with all the pomp and circumstance around them..

Some are great speakers with fantastic voices that could sell ice to an eskimo...

And what is the result of all of that?

They attract millions of people who love the look, the ceremony, the order, the fancy architecture, the powerful voice...

Then you have Paul who isn't well-dressed, well-groomed or well-spoken....

And many people reject the gospel because of the unsophisticated messengers of it...

Look, I don't drive a BMW, and this suit was on sale at JC Pennies...

I can't speak 15 minutes without stumbling over words...

And for those who want sophistication in their "religion", it often comes at a high price...

Because the sophisticated preacher may lead you a very unsophisticated hell...

I would rather stick with Paul and simply be weak and fearful but stick to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified...

If you are here this morning looking for high-class religion, I cant offer that...

But I can offer you the opportunity to join us low-class people by lowering yourself before God in repentance and faith....

## **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that people reject the gospel for all sorts of reasons...

Some think they are already saved....

Some think the cross is foolishness...

Some think Christians aren't famous enough..

And some think preachers aren't fancy enough....

But let me end by taking you back to the beginning of where I started...

Look back to verse 18 of chapter 1...

***18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who [m]are perishing, but to us who [n]are being saved it is the power of God.***

It is interesting how two people can look at the same object and have two very different reactions...

Some people consider the cross and think how foolish it is for people to rest their eternal destiny on Jesus going to cross...

While other consider Christ on the cross and see there eternal destiny secured in that same picture...

It is also interesting to note how many people are waiting on a sign to get saved...

“IF God would just speak to me or send me a sign, then I would get saved.”

And the answer to that is, “no you wouldn’t.”

And the reason I know that is because you dont need but one sign to get saved...

And that sign is Jesus going to a cross in your place.

God has given you a sign.

It is your guilty conscience and the picture of the innocent one hanging on a cross in your place...

That is all the sign you need and all the sign you will get...

And that cross to us who are saved is not only a sign, it is our hope and our comfort and a demonstration of the power and compassion of God...

And this morning, that cross and the Christ upon it is the One we remember at the Lord’s Supper...



The communion of the saints of God happens around the cross of Christ that provides that unity..

And this morning as our deacons come forward to prepare to serve us, we are called to prepare our hearts for the Lord's Supper...

So how do you prepare your heart...

Well, first of all, you make sure your heart is saved...

Because those in unbelief and rejection of Christ are not permitted to take part in the Lord's Table..

Second of all, if you are Christian but living in unrepentant sin, you cannot take part in the table of the Lord..

Now for the unsaved and the unqualified, there is opportunity now to repent of your sin and make your heart ready to take part in this celebration of Christ's mercy..

I am going to pray and I beg you to make your heart ready before taking part in the Lord's Supper this morning..

Let us pray..

