

INTRODUCTION 引言

I do not watch much TV, but I love to watch commercials. An image or a slogan helps customers remember a product. A Holstein cow reminds people of a fast-food restaurant chain. “Like a good neighbor” is tied to an insurance company. When you look inside your wallet, you may think of a credit card company. The signature for Christianity is the cross. The symbol is so simple that a three-year-old kid can draw it. The gospel is actually quite simple too. I can say it in 20 seconds: “Jesus Christ, the one and only God, became a man and came into our world. He died on the cross for our sins, but He rose on the third day. Those who put their trust in Jesus and receive Him by faith as their Savior and Lord are saved.” But why do many people reject this plain truth? Paul explains it in this passage. He was writing to the church of Corinth. If you know anything about this church, it was quite messy. Many members were prideful. Some of them indulged in immoral sins. The church was mostly consisted of non-Jews. They came from a background that worshipped many gods. To make things worse, Corinth was like a first-century Las Vegas. Tourists went there to look for pleasure. Believers there must get rid of their former lifestyle and resist temptations in order to follow Jesus faithfully. Paul began his letter by going back to the foundation of the faith. His focus was the cross. Jesus died on it to save us. He is the only door to salvation. Christians should always think of the cross. The world will challenge our faith. We may have confusion about our life purpose. We may wonder if God truly loves us when we are in hardship. The message of the cross reminds us who we are in Christ.

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Fall of the Smart 絆倒聰明人

Let us begin by looking at the fall of the smart. Who are those people, and why do they fall? Paul tells us their identities in **verse 20**: wise man, scholar and philosopher. “Wise men” were those who are educated. Most people were illiterate in the ancient world. Therefore, knowledge means power and wealth. “Scholars” were the Jewish scribes. They were the Bible teachers at that time. A direct translation of the term “philosopher” is “debater.” They used human reasoning to understand the world. Acts 17 says when Paul arrived in Athens, he saw a lot of people sitting around all day. They did nothing except exchanging the latest ideas. It is like a group of retired men sipping coffee at a fast-food restaurant or gathering at Shelby Farm. They talk for hours about politics and sports. Wise men, scholars and philosophers were respected people because they had knowledge. But verse 20 says that God made such wisdom of the world foolish. The point is not that God wants us to be uneducated. Those three groups of people will fall because they thought they were too smart to need God. Paul expands the scope in verses 22 and 23: **22 Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.** The Jews fell because they did not see the miracles they hoped for. But have they not seen enough? God rescued the Israelites from Egypt by His power, but they disobeyed Him. They ended up wandering in the wilderness for forty years. God gave prophets power to perform miracles and to tell prophecies. The Israelites rejected the prophets because they did not believe in God. Jesus healed the sick and cast out

demons. But the Jewish religious leaders denied Jesus to the point of killing Him on the cross. Thus, Jesus became a stumbling block instead of a stepping stone to their salvation. We get the word “scandal” from the Greek word for “stumbling block.” God became a man was like a shocking scandal to the Jews. Today, many people may say: “I will believe in God if He shows up in front of me.” People in Jesus time saw Him face-to-face, but they still did not believe. Miracles can lead to faith only if a person accepts that the power comes from God. As for the Greeks, they searched for wisdom. In their worldview, materials are inferior and mortal, and only spiritual things are superior and divine. It was unthinkable to them that God descended into our world. He even died on a cross. That was utterly offensive to the Greeks. The cross was a tool for death sentence for the most notorious criminals. How can a dying God who could not save Himself saves us? Today many people get stuck in the gospel too. They conclude that whatever that does not make sense must be false. They stumble in their wisdom. They cannot find God because they use a wrong tool. An astronomer uses a telescope to survey the universe. He declares: “God does not exist because I cannot see Him.” A biologist uses a microscope to investigate a cell. He reasons: “God does not exist because I cannot see Him.” But a humble person will say: “I don’t know whether God exists or not. But I will stay objective when I search for proofs.” How can we lead people to the truth? Paul tells us in verse 23 to preach Christ crucified. We share the Biblical truth without reservation. We must remember that God’s Word is full of power. We may engage in a debate with non-believers. But even if we win the argument, we still cannot win their souls. We need God’s help to overcome the dark force that captures people’s heart. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:4-5 – **4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.** Besides explaining the gospel, we must pray. We pray for wisdom and clarity to help us share the message. But we also pray that God will remove the spiritual blindness in people’s mind. Only God can help them realize that they are lost. Jesus is their only hope.

2. Call for the Simple 選召清心者

God denies the wisdom of this world. Those who claim to be smart will fall. In contrast, God calls for the simple. We can ask the same two questions again: who are they and why are they saved? Look at 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 believe.** The simple are those who believe in the message preached to them. Just like the definition in the Proverbs, the simple are not dumb people. They are simple-minded. They will wrestle in their heart similar to any person does when they hear the gospel. We can do a quick survey: who among us accepted Jesus the very first time you heard the message? Very few people did. For the majority of us, we read the Bible, attended church meetings, asked a ton of questions and were finally convinced that Jesus is God. The Holy Spirit worked in our hearts in the process until we surrender to God. Jesus loves the simple people. He says in Mark 10:15 that: **“I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”** “Receive the kingdom of God” means to be saved. God wants us to be child-like but not childish. An immature toddler can easily be led astray by a bad company. But children who have a healthy relationship with their parents believe in their words. The parents’ track-record confirms that they are trustworthy. Likewise, people with a child-like faith will readily embrace

God's truth. God gives us faith to receive His salvation grace. Then our faith continues to grow. God proves that He is trustworthy in small things. We gradually learn to rely on Him in bigger things. Our salvation is a dynamic relationship with God. Children go to their parents to fulfill their needs. Perhaps it is candies or other snacks. Later on, it will be a car or college tuition. But the most important thing children want is love. Our relationship with God works the same way. It will grieve God's heart if we want Him only for a ticket to heaven. God wants us to experience His love after we are saved. We follow Jesus by faith. We love Him and obey Him. God begins our faith journey. He will see us through. Paul says in verse 24: **But to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.** God extends His salvation grace to people of any background. Jesus was born as a Jew. But He is the Savior of the whole world. People become believers because God calls them. We may have different views on the doctrine of predestination. The notion is about whether or not God had predetermined who He will save. Regardless of our understanding, there is no question that God makes the call. I always say that a person will not come into the church by themselves. People might try to invite you to the church several times and you kept refusing. Then one day, you said yes for whatever reason. You heard a verse or a word from the Bible that inspired you. Sometime later you are saved. God has been drawing you to him all along. The fact that God calls people to salvation does not minimize our effort in evangelism. We invite people and explain the gospel to them. We should not be shy to mention the cross. Some people will find it unpleasant to be called sinners. But we do not need a Savior if we do not admit that we are sinners. Likewise, why see a doctor, agree with the diagnosis and receive treatment if I do not believe that I am sick? God does not call us to share a moral gospel to make people feel better of themselves. He does not call us to share a social gospel to transform the society. God calls us to share His gospel that only Jesus can give us a new life. Very often, some Christians dilute the gospel because they do not want to offend people. I listen to the same Christian music station when I drive. Its mission is to play "positive and encouraging music." The disc-jockeys talk about family, food, pets and other matters. But they seldom mention the Bible and God. I understand that they do not share the gospel outright and make altar calls. But to me, they have a big platform to minister to believers and non-believers with God's truth. We should not change our message to fit people's appetite. Some non-believers dislike what we say because they hate God and the gospel in the first place. Only God can change a God-hater to a God-lover.

CONCLUSION 結論

Jesus Christ is the only door to salvation. The message of the cross is so straightforward that a three-year-old kid and an eighty-year-old senior person can understand. God sees us the same way. We are lost in our sins and Jesus Christ is the only road to go back to the Father. The cross humbles the smart. God does not owe them a place in heaven because of their intelligence. The cross also takes away the self-pity of the simple. No one can be disqualified because he/she is not as educated, good-looking or wealthy as others. None of those factors matters. Jesus is calling those who do not know Him: "Come to me, receive me and follow me." Jesus is sending believers: "Go and bring in those who need to hear the good news."

INTRODUCTION 引言

我不怎麼看電視，但我喜歡看廣告。一個畫面或一句標語可以幫助人記住產品。一頭乳牛讓人們想起一家連鎖快餐店。「像個好鄰居」使人聯想起一家保險公司。當你查看錢包時，你可能會想到一家信用卡公司。基督信仰的標誌就是十字架。這個符號很簡單，連一個三歲的孩子都能畫出來。福音其實也很簡單。我可以在 20 秒內把它說出來：「耶穌基督是獨一的真神，祂成為一個人，並來到我們的世界。祂為我們的罪死在十字架上，但是祂三天後復活了。那些信靠耶穌並憑信心接受祂為救主和生命的主的人便能得救。」但是為什麼很多人拒絕這個清晰的真理呢？保羅在這段經文中解釋了這一點。他寫信給哥林多教會。如果你認識這個教堂的話，你就知道它是問題多多的。許多成員都自誇。他們中間有些人沉迷於不道德的行為。這所教會主要是由非猶太人組成的。他們來自敬拜多神的背景。更糟糕的是，哥林多就像是第一世紀的拉斯維加斯。遊客去那裡尋歡作樂。那裡的信徒必須脫離過去的生活型態並抵擋試探，才能忠心地跟隨耶穌。保羅在這封信的開始回到信仰的基礎。他的焦點是十字架。耶穌為拯救我們而被釘死在上面。祂是唯一的救贖之門。基督徒應該常常想到十字架。世界會挑戰我們的信仰。我們有時候可能對自己的人生目標感到困惑。當我們處於困境時，我們或許會懷疑神是否真的愛我們。十字架的信息提醒我們在基督裡的身份。

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Fall of the Smart 絆倒聰明人

讓我們先看看聰明人如何被絆倒。這些人是誰，他們為什麼會跌倒？保羅在第 20 節告訴我們他們的身份：智慧人、文士和辯士。「智慧人」是受過教育的人。大多數人在古代世界都是文盲。因此，知識意味著權力和財富。「文士」是猶太人的老師。他們是當時的聖經教師。「辯士」的直接翻譯是「辯論家」。他們藉著邏輯推理來理解世界。使徒行傳 17 章說，當保羅到達雅典時，他看到很多人整天聚在那裡。除了交換最新的學說，他們什麼也不幹。這就像一群退休的男士在快餐店喝咖啡或在謝爾比農場聚集。他們談論政治和體育講個不停。智慧人、文士和辯士之所以受到尊重，是因為他們擁有學問。但第 20 節說，神使世上的智慧變成愚拙。重點不是神希望我們缺乏知識。這三類人會跌倒，因為他們自認為太聰明，不需要神。保羅在 22 和 23 節擴大了範圍：**22 猶太人是要神蹟，希臘人是求智慧，23 我們卻是傳釘十字架的基督，在猶太人為絆腳石，在外邦人為愚拙。**猶太人跌倒是因為他們沒有看到他們想看的神蹟。但他們還沒有看夠嗎？神用祂的能力從埃及拯救

以色列人，但他們仍然不順服神。他們最終在曠野漂流了四十年。神給了先知行神蹟和說預言的能力。以色列人拒絕先知，因為他們不相信神。耶穌醫治病人並趕鬼。但是猶太宗教領袖否認耶穌，甚至在十字架上把祂釘死。因此，耶穌成了他們得救的絆腳石，而不是墊腳石。我們從希臘文的「絆腳石」得到英文「醜聞」這個字。神成為人對猶太人來說就像是一個令人震驚的醜聞。今天，很多人可能會說：「神若出現在我面前，我就會相信。」耶穌時代的人們面對面地見過祂，但他們還是不相信。只有當一個人承認神是能力的源頭時，神蹟才會帶來信心。至於希臘人，他們尋求智慧。在他們的世界觀中，物質是低一等次和短暫的，唯有屬靈的東西才是高尚和神聖的。神降臨到我們的世界，對他們來說是難以想像的。祂甚至死在十字架上。這讓希臘人感到厭惡。十字架是處決罪大惡極的囚犯的死刑。一個不能自救、垂死的神怎麼能救我們呢？今天，許多人也被福音的信息卡住了。他們得出結論，任何無法明白的事情肯定是錯誤的。他們被智慧絆倒了。他們找不到神，因為他們使用錯誤的工具。天文學家使用望遠鏡觀測宇宙。他們宣稱：「神不存在，因為我看不見祂。」生物學家使用顯微鏡研究細胞。他們總結：「神不存在，因為我看不見祂。」但是一個謙虛的人會說：「我不知道神是否存在。但我在尋找證據時會保持客觀。」我們怎樣才能引導人認識真理？保羅在 23 節告訴我們要傳釘十字架的基督。我們毫無保留地分享聖經真理。我們必須記住，神的話語充滿能力。我們也許會與非信徒進行辯論。但就算我們贏得了爭論，我們仍然無法贏得他們的靈魂。我們需要神的幫助使他們從黑暗勢力的網綁中釋放出來。保羅在哥林多後書 4:4-5 中說：**4 此等不信之人被這世界的神弄瞎了心眼，不叫基督榮耀福音的光照著他們。基督本是神的像。5 我們原不是傳自己，乃是傳基督耶穌為主，並且自己因耶穌作你們的僕人。**除了解釋福音之外，我們還必須禱告。我們祈求神幫助我們在分享信息時有智慧和解釋清楚。我們也求神挪去人們心中的屬靈盲點。只有神能幫助他們意識到自己是迷失的。耶穌是他們唯一的盼望。

2. Call for the Simple 選召清心者

神否定這個世界的智慧。那些自以為聰明的人會跌倒。相比之下，神選召清心的人。我們可以再次問同樣的兩個問題：他們是誰，他們為什麼得救？請看第 21 節：**世人憑自己的智慧，既不認識神，神就樂意用人所當作愚拙的道理，拯救那些信的人；這就是神的智慧了。**清心的人是那些接受所傳給他們信息的人。就像箴言中的定義一樣，清心的人不是愚昧的人。他們是心靈單純的人。當他們聽到福音時，他們會像任何人一樣在心裡掙扎。我們可以做一個簡單的調查：我們當中有誰在你第一次聽到福音時就接受了耶穌？很少人是這樣的。對於我們大多數人來說，我們閱讀聖經，參加教會聚會，提出一大堆問題，但最終確信耶穌是神。在這個過程中，聖靈在我們心中工作，直到我們降服於神。耶穌愛清心的人。祂在馬可福音 10:15 說：**「我實在告訴你們，凡要承受神國的，若不像小孩子，斷不能進去。」**「承受神的國」就是得救。神希望我們像小孩子一樣，但不是要幼稚。一個不成熟

的小孩很容易被壞人騙走。但是與父母關係良好的孩子會相信他們的話。父母過去表現證實他們是可信的。同樣，擁有孩子般信心的人會欣然接受神的真理。神賜給我們信心來接受祂的救恩。然後我們的信心繼續成長。神證明祂在小事上是值得信賴的。我們逐漸學會在更大的事情上依靠祂。我們的救恩是與神的動態關係。孩子會去找父母以滿足他們的需要，也許是糖果或其他零食。長大後，他們需要的可能是汽車或大學學費。但孩子們最想要的東西是愛。我們與神的關係也是如此。如果我們只為了一張天堂的門票而要神，那麼祂一定很傷心。神要我們在得救後經歷祂的愛。我們憑信心跟隨耶穌。我們愛祂並順服祂。神開始我們的信心之旅。祂會繼續與我們同行。保羅在第 24 節說：**但在那蒙召的，無論是猶太人、希臘人，基督總為神的能力，神的智慧。**神將救贖恩典賜給任何背景的人。耶穌生下來是個猶太人。但祂是全世界的救主。人們成為信徒是因為神的選召。我們可能對預定論有不同的看法。這個概念是關於神是否已經預先定好祂要拯救的人。不管我們的理解如何，毫無疑問是神發出呼召。我常常說一個人不會自己走進教會的。別人可能多次嘗試邀請你來教會，但是你一直拒絕。然後有一天，不知為何，你便答應了。聖經中的某一節或某句話啟發了你。一段時間後你便得救了。是神一直在吸引你到祂的身邊。神選召人得救這個真理並不會減少我們在傳福音上的努力。我們邀請人並向他們解釋福音。我們不應該不好意思提到十字架。有些人會因為被定為罪人而覺得反感。但如果我們不承認自己是罪人，我們就不需要救主。同樣，如果我不認為自己有病，為什麼要去看醫生，同意診斷並接受治療？神並沒有呼召我們去傳一個道德福音，讓人們對自己感覺更好。祂並沒有呼召我們去傳社會福音來改變社會。神呼召我們去傳祂的福音，只有耶穌才能給我們新的生命。很多時候，一些基督徒把福音沖淡了，因為他們不想冒犯別人。我開車時都收聽同一個基督徒的音樂電台。它的使命是播放「積極和鼓舞人心的音樂」。節目主持會談論家庭、食物、寵物和其他事情。但他們很少提到聖經和神。我知道他們的目的不是要直接傳福音，並呼召人信耶穌。但對我來說，他們有一個很大的平台，可以用神的真理來服事信徒和非信徒。我們不應該改變我們的信息來迎合人們的胃口。一些非信徒不喜歡我們說的話，因為他們討厭神和福音。只有神才能把痛恨神的人變成愛慕神的人。

CONCLUSION 結論

耶穌基督是唯一的救贖之門。十字架的信息直截了當，就連一個三歲的孩子和一個八十歲的長輩都能理解。神看每個人都是一樣的。我們在罪中迷失，而耶穌基督是回到天父的唯一道路。十字架使聰明人謙卑下來。神不會因為他們的智慧而欠他們在天堂的位置。十字架也消除了清心者的自憐。沒有人會因為他不像其他人那樣有學問、長得漂亮或富有而被取消資格。這些因素都不重要。耶穌正在呼召那些不認識他的人：「到我這裡來，接待我並跟從我。」耶穌也在差遣信徒：「去把那些需要聽到福音的人帶進來。」