

Man's Foolishness, God's Power

1 Corinthians, Vol. 3

HBC 10/16/19

1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16

The fact that people in Corinth were choosing to align in groups based on allegiance to teachers and leaders proved to the Apostle Paul that they were over-valuing human wisdom and failing to properly value the gospel. Hence, our text is an attack on human wisdom as opposed to the wisdom and power of God wrapped up in the gospel.

I. **Fortified Foolishness** (1:18-31)

1 Corinthians 1:18: *For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

There are two categories of people, the **perishing** and those **being saved**. The world regards our message as **foolishness**. On the other end of the spectrum is **the _____ of God**.

1 Corinthians 1:19: *For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE."*

What happens to those whom the world calls "wise?"

1 Corinthians 1:20: *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?*

Who, in our world, are the "wise, the scribes, and the debater of this age?"

1 Corinthians 1:21: *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 message preached to save those who believe.*

If you want God to be well-pleased with you, proclaim the gospel to as many people as you can.

1 Corinthians 1:22-24: *For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

Most who reject the gospel, stumble over its _____ .

What are two more definitions of Christians here?

Verse 21:

Verse 24:

1 Corinthians 1:25: *Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

The preaching of the cross is actually **foolishness fortified with power**. God's apparent weakness is far stronger than anything man can do. Man cannot save himself.

1 Corinthians 1:26: *For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;*

List the kinds of people who do and don't get into the family of God.

1 Corinthians 1:27-29: *. . . 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, 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, so that no man may boast before God.*

Those whom the world considers foolish shame the ones the world deems wise. Those whom the world considers weak shame the strong when God vindicates them. Those whom the world consider invisible and base, shame the ones the world calls noble. They put to shame **things that are** deemed important by the system of the world.

1 Corinthians 1:30-31: *But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."*

<p>It's not foolish preaching that brings lost ones to Christ and Christians to maturity. It is the "foolishness" of preaching the power of God to save.</p>
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II. **Mysterious Wisdom** (2:1-9)

1 Corinthians 2:1: *And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.*

1 Corinthians 2:2-5: *For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.*

It was never about **persuasive words of [human] wisdom**.

1 Corinthians 2:6: *Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away;*

Paul distinguishes two sorts of **wisdom**, God's wisdom versus the world's wisdom.

1 Corinthians 2:7-8: *. . . but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;*

Write down the definition of **mystery**:

1 Corinthians 2:9: *. . . but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."*

III. **The Thoughts of God (2:10-16)**

By this time anyone reading 1 Corinthians should want God's wisdom and should be wary of the world's wisdom. The rest of chapter 2 explains how you can thoroughly know the things pertaining to God. To know the thoughts of God, you need the Right Source, the Right Helper and the Right Relationship.

The Right Source

1 Corinthians 2:10a: *For to us God revealed **them** through the Spirit;*

The Right Helper

1 Corinthians 2:10: For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for **the Spirit searches all things**, even the depths of God.

1 Corinthians 2:11: For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

Depths of God (verse 10) is the equivalent of the _____, here in this verse.

1 Corinthians 2:12-13: Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

What was the “secret” of Paul's message and ministry?

The Right Relationship

1 Corinthians 2:14-16: But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For **WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM?** But we have the mind of Christ.

What two kinds of people are in the world?

Back in verse 6, Paul says **we speak wisdom**. Here he explains how that is true. He makes it clear that it is the work of the Holy Spirit, who superintends the transmission of truth at all levels.

1. The unseen things of God are undiscoverable by the natural laws of man (v. 9)
2. God has chosen to reveal these unseen things to chosen men (vv. 10-12)
3. The revealed things are communicated in Spirit-taught words (v. 13)
4. These Spirit-taught words, in which the revelation has been expressed, are discerned only by those who are **spiritual** (vv. 14-16)