

1 COR. 1:18-25 MAN'S WISDOM VS. GOD'S WISDOM

The Corinthians, being Greek, had a love of wisdom, which is what philosophy means. Their society was built around that, as a matter of fact, as it was all important to them. To them, philosophies explained how man got here, what the meaning and purpose of life was, and where everything was headed. Philosophy covered many areas including politics, religion, education, the economy, the social order.

The problem of philosophy is that it is the opinions of man and when man thinks of things without using the wisdom of God, he will always stray from what is truth. Man's standards are far from the absolute standards of God. When there are many different standards that are theorized and believed in, there become many different parties of philosophy that vary vastly from each other. The Greeks had as many as fifty movements or parties that would debate each other on the issues of life. This created factions as they disagreed on some of the most basic elements of what was true and what was right and wrong.

The party spirit that had developed in the Greek world was very much present in the city of Corinth. As some of those Corinthians became Christians, they carried much of their past learning over into the church. Their love of wisdom was still part of their lives, and as each person had their own line of philosophy that they lined up under that was espoused by their favorite philosopher, the differences of viewpoints were very apparent. They had their own leaders they followed and this is where the factions came. They trusted in Christ but they kept their philosophies and philosophers and as a result the differences effected the unity in the church. As we saw in the previous section of this epistle, there were people in the church that were following their favorite teacher, such as Paul or Apollos, Peter, or Christ. The factions that had developed had become quite a problem. They should have dropped their philosophy and just trusted in the message of the cross.

The Corinthian believers really did not need their human philosophy. It might have had some truths about life, but when you know Christ you have all you need pertaining to life and godliness. If the ideas are agreeing with scripture, it is unnecessary. If the ideas disagree with scripture, it is unnecessary. Philosophy, therefore, is unnecessary. It is the word of man and is fallible, unreliable, and is only speculative and opinionated which causes many factions. Paul wrote to the Colossians "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." Paul is saying the same thing to the Corinthian church as he knows their divisions and confusion. They had the revelation from God and no longer needed the philosophy that had been so much a part of their lives before Christ. They now had the truth that was absolute. He is telling them to not be misled and be split because of human speculations. It had effected their church relations and fellowship.

This problem that goes back 2000 years is no different today. There are so many ideas and opinions of how man got here, who he is, and where he is going. Those are the most important thoughts people can have but if they are separated from the authority of God's Word, the conclusions are entirely worthless and meaningless and yet man continues to put faith in them.

Paul is addressing this issue very early in this epistle as he warns them of their party spirit of favoring different leaders and their divisions. Paul tells them that the message of Christ crucified and the Word of God is all they need. Without this truth man does not have the resources to find the answers about himself, sin, God, morality, ethics, the spirit life, salvation, and the future of human life.

1. THE DIFFERENT EFFECTS OF PREACHING 1:18

A. ATTITUDE OF THE LOST

The Perishing—Christ rejecters

2 Cor 4:3

Those who are already lost and perishing are saying that the preaching of the cross is foolishness. The very words of their mouths indicates their character.

The unbeliever is already in the process of being destroyed in eternal judgment. They think they have no need of God's wisdom because their own wisdom is much better than His.

The word of the cross is **foolishness** (Moria) moronic, nonsense
Acts 17:32

As they relied on their own wisdom, this message was stupid to them. The cross demands death of one so there would be life.

Offensive---To the natural mind this is offensive and unacceptable.

Their intellectualism—The cross does not make sense with all the blood, violence, and death for sinners.

The Gospel demands death of a righteous one. They might admire the life of Jesus, but ignore the death of Jesus. They might accept the cradle of Jesus but hate the cross. The cross means death to human effort. Cicero said, "the cross speaks of what is so shameful so horrible, it should never be mentioned in polite society."

Actually, the cross came to reveal-the impotent and impoverished state of sinfulness.

"Hell is not populated altogether by bad people but by a lot of good people who thought they were not bad enough to be saved." Roy Laurin

The Gospel requires saving faith instead of good works and merit. Human wisdom can't understand the cross Mt 16:22 At that time, Peter had no place for the cross in his human thinking. It was only after the resurrection and ascension did Peter understand the cross and God's wisdom.

B. ATTITUDE OF THE SAVED

Word of the cross Word is logos related to verse 17. It means word Or discourse. In this context it means the whole gospel message and

work, God's plan, His total revelation which focuses on the cross. Paul was not giving opinion, but the very word of God. The Greeks did not need any more opinions, but they did need the truth from God.

Power of God

Romans 1:16 The Gospel is so powerful that it converts one from spiritual death to life.

Either people are in the process of being saved or of being destroyed and their view of the cross determines which.

2. THE TRIUMPH OF PREACHING

1:19-21

A. WISDOM OF MEN WILL BE DESTROYED

Paul quotes from Isa 29 in this passage.. It was about the wisdom of men being destroyed by God. The king of Assyria was planning to conquer Judah but the Lord told his prophet not to worry because the king's effort with all his might would be defeated. Their wisdom would perish. God destroyed 185,000 Assyrians with just one angel.

Governors of nations would no longer rule well as God would remove from them sound judgment. He turns them into fools. He brings to nothing man's entire intellect so as to give it no standing in the kingdom of God. Isa 29:14, 37:36, Prov 14:12-There seems a way that is right to a man but its end is the way of death.

Where are all the smart people asks the Lord. How much closer are we to solving the poverty problem? Human wisdom has not solved the problems of man.

The three departments of philosophy

Wise man? *Thinker*, *Wise* Isa 19:12 He was referring to the wise men of Egypt. Soothsayers, mediums, and wizards, They led Egypt astray (14)

Scribe *Writer*

Debater *Speaker* argued about philosophy Its all folly Where do you get with all that rhetoric and nobody agrees with another.

God has ignored all of these in His plan of redemption.

It still continues today in the form of psychology, sociology, economy, science, and politics. There has never been a time more perplexing, confusing, and corrupt as our times. The wisdom of man fails in our time just like it did in the ancient times.. The problem is sin. It is the root, of which human wisdom does not recognize. It cannot offer solutions because it ignores God's wisdom. Human wisdom is the problem and because it ignores the cross will be doomed to its own folly.

B. GOD MAKES THEIR WISDOM FOOLISH

He has convicted their wisdom as utter folly.

No matter how much they know of the sciences they are in want.

They did not know God Acts 17:23

Man's increase in knowledge does not solve problems. The increase in knowledge tends to increase the problems. The more man looks to himself, the worse the situation becomes.

Impossible to know God intellectually Job 28:20, 28

God made sure that nobody would come to know Him by human wisdom. Humans don't have the power to change their nature. Only God does.

Man must see himself as a fool before God makes him wise unto salvation. 2 Tim 3:15

C. THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING

Preaching refers to the content of the message. It is Christ Himself.

It is not foolish preaching but is foolish to the world because it makes no room for man's glory.

1 Cor 3:18

Saved those who believe Salvation comes through the means of faith. Man can't figure out salvation they can only believe the truth of the cross.

3. THE SUBSTANCE OF PREACHING

1:22-25

CHRIST CRUCIFIED

A. THE REACTION

Jesus had done many miracles for them to see but yet they remained in their unbelief. The supernatural happened right before their eyes but they did not want to believe it. The greatest of all signs, the resurrection, they even rejected. They did not want a crucified Messiah. This was a stumbling block. They wanted to overtake the reign that the Romans had over them.

Jews—sign Jn 9:9, Mt 12:38,40

Greeks—wisdom Acts 17:21 They liked new ideas.

The Greeks wanted intellectual proof. It was not God's truth they wanted but an intellectual exercise. They just could not believe that a god could come to earth. The incarnation and crucifixion was ridiculous to them. It was absurd.

The Gospel is supernatural and sensible but it can't be discovered just by human reasoning.

The way to God is by a new birth. That new life comes through the cross.

The seed must die in order for life to come.

B. THE RESULT

Christ is God's wisdom for enlightenment of the human mind. He is God's power.

C. THE REASON

The Gospel may seem foolish yet it's wiser than all the wisdom of man. Salvation looks so weak, yet it is the power and wisdom of the divine Creator. God's "weakness" turns out to be profound wisdom.

The message of the cross is what the Christian has to tell. It seems so ridiculous and useless to the world but it actually demonstrates the greatest power and greatest wisdom.

If God had any weakness, it would be greater than all the wisdom of man. His power delivers man from sin and Satan.

God's power is true power and actually accomplishes something.. It does not come from man but is for man.