

THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD

[1 Corinthians 1:18-31]

"Weak, feeble and foolish as it may seem to people, the simple story of the Cross is enough for all mankind in every part of the globe." J.C. Ryle.

Introductory Points: Context: "For", continuation of the verse 17, "For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power."

- Paul turns the attention of Corinthians from giving excessive importance to human leaders to the great significance of the message of the gospel, the work of Christ on the cross.
- In 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, the word "wisdom" (*in Grk. sophia*) is used 9 times and "wise" 4 times. Paul was showing the contrast between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God.
- Paul is addressing two groups and their perspectives here: The Greeks and the Jews.

1) FOOLISHNESS OF GOD MANIFESTED IN THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST [1 Corinthians 1:18-25]

➤ **THE WAY GOD OFFERED HIS SALVATION SOUNDS FOOLISH**

- ❖ **Scripture - ¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**

What is the word (logos) of the cross? The complete gospel of Christ—the crucifixion of Christ on the cross for the salvation of sinners.

Folly to those who are perishing: The Grk word for folly is "moria" (complete nonsense), from which the English word "moron" comes, meaning, "very stupid person." Why? We'll see later.

There are only two kinds of people in the word—the perishing and the saved.

What is being saved—salvation is *past* [justified], *present* [being sanctified] and *future* [final redemption].

Gospel is the power of God—power in Grk here, "dunamis", from which we get the English word "dynamite."

- Gospel is more powerful than any power in the world, wiser than any human wisdom. Gospel is the power of God which saves and transform sinners. Just as God's creative power is awesome, so is the power of gospel.
- ❖ **Scripture - ¹⁹ For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."**

Comment: Citation of Isa. 29:14, from a context in which Isaiah proclaims God's judgment on Israel for her hypocritical spirituality] In Isaiah this is said right after saying, "These people worship me with their lips while their hearts are far from me." (29:13)

- ❖ **Scripture - ²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? [to Greeks] Where is the scribe? [to Jews] Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?**

Comment: The world was seeking God, answers for life's questions through other means but God made it foolish by not revealing Himself to the world the way it wants to be revealed.

- ❖ **Scripture -²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.**

Comment: The world cannot know God's by its own wisdom; God is known only through the gospel of Christ, which is God's self-revelation. Through this foolishness, God save others. How foolish?

- ❖ **Scripture - ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,**

Jews demand signs:

Mark 8: ¹¹ The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. ¹² And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation."

John 2: ¹⁸ So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "It has taken forty- six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"

Greeks seek wisdom:

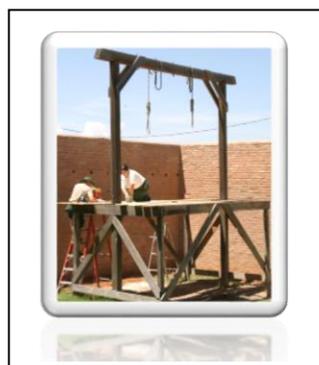
Acts 17: ²¹ Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

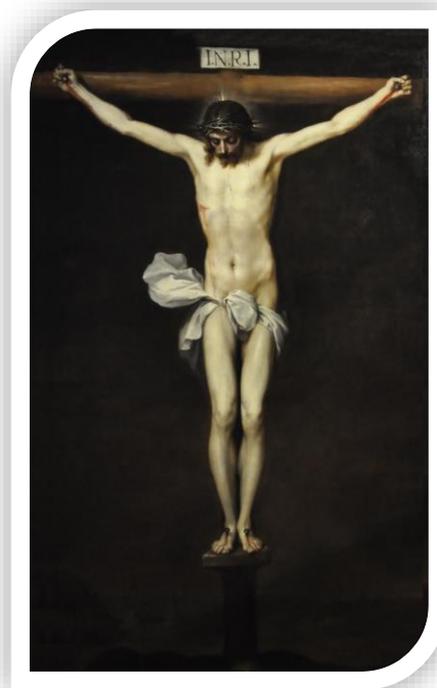
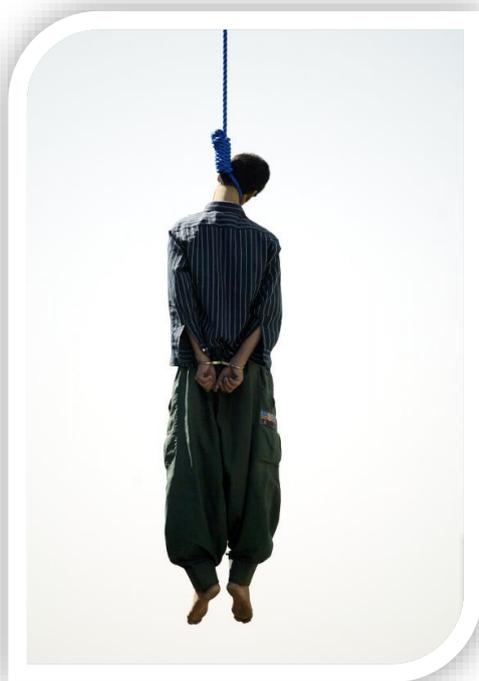
It is said of them, "All Greeks were zealous for every kind of learning."

- Jews and Greeks seek these to get answers for their life's questions.

- ❖ **Scripture - ²³but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,**

Comment: Show Power Point Images





Christ crucified, a stumbling block [skandalon] to Jews [Jews expected a political deliverer to deliver them from foes but Christ was executed by foes]

- Law says—cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree [Deut. 21:23]. Jews saw Jesus as a cursed person, so how can he be the Savior?

Christ crucified, a folly to Gentiles [Criminal dying on the cross, a punishment to worst criminals]

- Think about preaching the message of the gospel to Oxford University, Yale University...how do they respond?

Savior meant power, splendor, triumph. Crucifixion meant weakness, humiliation, defeat. During Roman times crucifixion is an ultimate legal punishment for criminals. Jesus died as a state criminal.

- ❖ **Scripture - ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.**

Comment:

- Christ is the end of all that man's needs. Christ is everything.
- The foolishness of God is wise enough to save people and weakness of God is powerful enough to transform lives.
- The Jews only understood the language of power. The Greeks only understood the language of human wisdom. Both missed to understand the language of love which was manifested to satisfy the justice of God.

2) FOOLISHNESS OF GOD MANIFESTED IN THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS [1 Corinthians 1:26-31]

➤ THE KIND OF PEOPLE GOD CHOOSE TO SAVE SOUNDS FOOLISH

- ❖ **Scripture - ²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.**
- ❖ **²⁶ For consider your calling: The state when God called you to salvation**

Comment:

- Not many were wise [intellectual-philosopher class] according to worldly standards, referring to Greeks [but some were]
- Not many were powerful or influential, referring to Jews [but some were]
- Not many were of noble birth or upper level society [but some were]
- ❖ **Scripture - ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,**

Note: ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁶ For consider your calling...^{27, 28} God chose three times [Salvation is God's Sovereign Choice, i.e. God saves whom He wants to save]

- But God chose what is foolish in the world [not many were wise] to shame the wise [by not saving through human wisdom and philosophy; they'll perish]
- God chose what is weak in the world [not many were powerful or influential] to shame the strong [by not saving through power and influence; they'll perish]
- God chose what is low and despised in the world [not many were of noble birth] to bring to nothing things that are. [by not saving through worldly status; they'll perish]

Note: Gospel is mostly received by those who are not much wise, much powerful and who are not from noble birth.

Keith Krell: God prefers losers. When God calls people to His family, He intentionally chooses those whom the world rejects. He prefers the weak over the strong, the forgotten over the famous, and the nobodies over the somebodies. He starts with the people the world chooses last. He actually prefers to choose the weak instead of the strong...He specializes in saving those whom the world counts as nothing.

- ❖ **Scripture - ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.** [Eph. 2:8— 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.]

Comment: No one can boast that God saved me because of my wisdom, because of my power and influence and because of my status in society. God hates self-boasting.

❖ **Scripture - ³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus,**

Because of Him you are in Christ Jesus [it is only because of God's gracious call and election, you are in Christ, not because of your social status]

❖ **who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,**

Christ is our wisdom from God:

- **Christ is our righteousness** [Christ has become our righteousness by taking our sin on Himself]
- **Christ is our sanctification** [Christ has become our sanctification by making our growth possible in grace in the Christian faith]
- **Christ is our redemption** [Christ has become our redemption by whom we are delivered from sin, hell and devil]

Mentioned earlier that salvation is past, present and future—Christ is our righteousness [past-justified]; Christ is our sanctification [present-being sanctified]; Christ is our redemption [future-final redemption]

❖ **Scripture - ³¹ so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. [ESV]**

Remember the context: Corinthian were boasting in human leaders [I follow Paul, I follow Apollos, I follow Peter]. Boast about the grace of God—how Christ died as a worst criminal in order to save unworthy people.

Summary: Foolishness of God

- 1) **Foolishness of God Manifested in the Crucified Christ [1 Corinthians 1:18-25]** How did God offer salvation? Through crucified Christ.
- 2) **Foolishness of God Manifested in the Corinthian Believers [1 Corinthians 1:26-31]** What kind of People did God choose to save? Foolish, weak, lowly and despised.

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- 1) What is the gospel to those who are saved?

- 2) How is God known?

- 3) What is the foolishness of God?

- 4) What is crucified Christ to Jews and to Greeks?

- 5) What kind of people were Corinthians when God called them?

- 6) What is Christ to us?

- 7) Why did Paul write 1 Corinthians 1:18-31?

- 8) How did God use this teaching to speak and encourage your heart?

- 9) Do you have any doubts or questions regarding the teaching?

The Foolishness of God

1) The Foolishness of God manifested in _____

2) The Foolishness of God manifested in _____