

The Power of God

And The Foolishness of Men

TO THE UNREDEEMED, THE THINGS OF GOD SEEM FOOLISH. THEY CITE QUESTIONS LIKE:

- How can someone believe God created the earth in seven days?
- How can anyone believe in a universal flood?
- How can anyone believe that in one day multiple languages began at the tower of Babel.
- How can anyone believe that holy men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit to pen the Word of God without error?
- How can the blood of a lamb take away sin? How can, how can, how can . . .”

Ironically, these same people say they believe in UFO's, aliens, ghosts, pyramid power, and any number of conspiracies. Some even believe itchy palms and finding a horseshoe brings good luck. Others believe that walking under a ladder along with breaking a mirror, and opening an



umbrella inside a house will bring bad luck. Some even claim that you can reverse the bad luck by spilling salt over the shoulder or by knocking on wood twice. I even read that 7% of Americans still believe Elvis is alive,. Men will believe all this foolishness but they will not consider the verifiable claims of Christianity.

God promised that one day He “will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent” — 1 Cor. 1:19.

In this lesson we will examine that statement and in doing so we will learn of God's power and His grace.

1. **The 1 Corinthians 1:19 passage is a quotation from Isaiah 29:14. What was Isaiah referring to when he wrote that passage, and how does this apply to Paul's thought in 1 Corinthians 1:19-20, 27-28?**

ANSWER:

"For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent" — 1 Corinthians 1:19.

"Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid" — Isaiah 29:14.

The Isaiah passage has two-items in view.

- a. First, is the ultimate fulfillment. It will come when all of man's philosophies and objections will be swept away and Christ will reign unopposed and unobstructed as Lord of lords and King of kings. Rev. 17:14 says, "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful."
- b. Second is the immediate fulfillment that Paul is referring to. Isaiah's prophecy serves to illustrate the foolishness of man's wisdom. When Isaiah made this prophecy, Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, was planning to conquer Judah. The Lord told Isaiah not to worry or fear, because Assyria's plan would fail. But it would not be because of Judah's army, or her plans. Rather it would be because of the Lord.

Isaiah is declaring that the plans of Judah's king and his advisors would fail.

"For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid" — Isaiah 29:14b.

- d. Judah would be saved solely by God's power, with no human help. God destroyed 185,000 men of the Assyrian army with just one angel (Isaiah 37:36). The full account is given in 2 Kings 17.

Paul purpose in quoting Isaiah 29:14 is to point out that God has, "made foolish the wisdom of this world?" – 1 Cor. 1:20.

For "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; ²⁸ And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are" – 1 Cor. 1:27-28 .

2. **The Scripture lists many things that men considered foolish. But God does this to confound the wise. Notice the three things God uses. 1 Corinthians 1:27-28.**
- a. "But God hath chosen the foolish _____ things of the world to confound the wise.
 - b. God hath chosen the weak _____ things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

- c. God chose the base things of the world, and things which are despised . . . and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are”

Examine the following passages and discuss how the world might see these things as foolish, weak and despised.

A THING MEN COUNTED AS FOOLISH IS FOUND IN EXODUS 12:3, 6, 7, 13

ANSWER:

- a. Some men are so wise, and know so much that they can stand for hours quoting history. Some can write out complicated scientific equations or speak fluently on any variety of subjects without notes. But as wise as some men are, they can become very foolish and miss true wisdom.

- b. God chose to use foolish things of this world to confuse the wise and show His power. An example of this is found with men spreading the blood of the Passover lamb on the door posts. **Exodus 12:3, 6, 7, 13**

“In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: . . . ⁶ And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. ⁷ And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. . . . ¹³ And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.”

- d. The wise men of Egypt must have thought the blood of the lamb was a foolish thing to do. How could this act of smearing blood on a door post make any difference? Foolishness, to the unredeemed. Think of the wise men of Egypt, or the noble men, they may be wise to the things of this world, but to them the spiritual things are seen as foolish.
- e. In this event, God made a what men might consider foolish an item to display His power. The blood of the lamb protected the 1st born from death. God demonstrated His power, through a foolish thing. Of course, blood on a door post can only work when God is behind it. Greater than this, it pointed to the blood of the true Lamb that takes away the sin of the world.

ANOTHER THING MEN MIGHT COUNT AS FOOLISH IS FOUND IN EXODUS 17:1-7.

- a. The people wanted water. They were probably thinking Moses would lead them to a well, a river, a lake or a pond, but he did none of those things.

Ex 17:1 And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. ² Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD? ³ And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? ⁴ And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.

- b. Moses was instructed to take the people to a Rock.

Ex 17:5-6 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. ⁶ Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink.

- c. God's solution must have seemed foolish to the people. Here God took a foolish thing of the world and confounded the wise.

ANOTHER FOOLISH THING IS FOUND IN NUMBERS 21:5-7.

⁵ And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. ⁶ And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. ⁷ Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. **And the LORD said unto Moses, 'Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.'**

- a. Who would have thought a brass image fashioned on top of a pole could cure a snake bite. Certainly, in the natural world, this is not a normal method for healing people. But God said, 'put a brass snake on a pole and who ever looks upon it they shall live.'

God didn't say, place a tourniquet on the wound and then bleed the bite site. Nor did He tell Moses to make anti-venom serum. God made a foolish object to confound the wise. It is God's power on display, and it was God's power that healed.

- b. In this case God used a foolish things of the world to confound the wise and to display His power.

HE ALSO USES THE WEAK THINGS OF THE WORLD TO CONFOUND THE THINGS WHICH ARE MIGHTY. BELOW ARE A FEW OF THE WEAK THINGS OF THE WORLD.

- a. **Exodus 4:2-3 — God used a wooden rod to defeat the nation of Egypt.**

Behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee. ² And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. ³ And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.

The rod did not have any power of its own, it was God who was using a weak thing of the world to defeat the mighty and display His power.

- b. **1 Samuel 17:1-8, 37-40, 48-51 — God used a young boy with a slingshot to bring down a giant and an experienced warrior.**
- c. **Judges 15:14-17 — God used a man with a jaw bone of a donkey to defeat the Philistines.**

GOD USED THE BASE THINGS OF THIS WORLD TO BRING TO NAUGHT THE THINGS THAT ARE.

- a. Judges 11:1-3, 21, 28-29: 12:7 — God used a **harlot's son** to be a mighty judge. Jephthah was an outcast of society, he was one who was considered beneath anything that was good. Yet God raised him up to deliver his people.

- b. Deut. 23:3 & Ruth 1:4 — God used **a heathen girl** from Moab to become part of the Messianic line
- c. Joshua 6:25, Hebrews 11:31; Matthew 1:5 — God uses a Moabitess, to be part of the Messianic line.
- d. John 4:17-18, 28-20, 39-43 — God used **an immoral woman** to become a great soul winner in her community. She brought many people to Christ.

3. What insights can we gain from the above passages? (Also see 1 Cor. 1:18, 27-28, 30-31; Ephesians 2:8)

ANSWER:

1. Men often rule God out. They cannot see beyond the natural realms. However, in each of these cases God broke into the natural realm. He used what men considered to be foolish to demonstrate His power. Even with this, men still refused to believe.
2. **In every case the power to deliver** was found in God. He used the blood of the lamb on the door post to punctuate the point that the blood of the lamb can save. He delivered Israel from Assyria, He brought forth water from a rock, He healed those who looked to the brass snake on a pole, He performed miracles when Moses raised the rod. All came from God.

God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; ²⁸ And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are. – 1 Cor. 1:27-28.

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” 1 Cor. 1:18

“That no flesh should glory in his presence. ³⁰ But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: ³¹ That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 1:30-31

“For by God’s grace are ye saved, through faith. Not of works lest any man should boast.” Eph. 2:8