

Lesson 3: Division over preachers: "Worldly wisdom versus God's wisdom" 1 Corinthians 1:18 – 2:16

"For the message of the cross is foolishness..." [1 Cor 1:18-25]

1) For people who are impressed with philosophies and sophisticated arguments ("the wisdom of words", 1:17), what does "the message of the cross" appear to be? [1:18; cp Galatians 1:6-8; 3:1; see also Colossians 2:1-10; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; Titus 1:10-11; etc]

-- What does Paul unashamedly call people who think this way? [1:18; cp 2 Cor 2:14-16]

-- By contrast, what does Paul call those who receive "the message of the cross"? [1:18]

- What does this type of person consider the gospel to be? [1:18; cp Rom 1:16-17]

2) Quoting from Isaiah 29:14 (the prophecy was against Jewish popular "wisdom" – read the text from Isaiah 29 starting at v. 13!), what does Paul indicate is always the case when men attempt to establish their own wisdom above God's? [1:19; read Isaiah 29:13-14; cp also 2 Cor 10:3-6]

3) What three types of people does Paul then rhetorically ask them to look for (among themselves)? [1:20; cp 1:26; 2:1-2; the "wise" is 'sophos' (the sophist), the "scribe" is the religious 'grammateus', and the "disputer of this age" are those trained philosophers and orators (cp Acts 17:18-21; etc)]

-- Seeing as there are not many of these types among them, what is Paul's conclusion? [1:20]

- What is the result when the world tries to know God through (its own) "wisdom"? [1:21; cp 2:8; Rom 1:18-25; 10:1-3; etc]

- According to Paul, this paradox of "wise" people not understanding the truth of the world and of God Himself is due to what? [1:21]

- Because of this, what did God plan as the method by which people could come to believe in Him (and thereby be saved)? [1:21; cp Rom 10:17; Mark 16:15-16; etc]

4) Why is God's method particularly confusing to Jews? [1:22-23; cp Matthew 16:1-4]

5) Why is God's method particularly confusing to Gentiles? [1:22-23; cp Rm 1:18-25; Ac 17:18-19, 32]

"...there are contentions among you" – 1 Corinthians 1:10 – 6:20

6) To whom, however, does the method appeal? [1:24; cp 1:2, 26; 2:9; Rm 8:28-30; 2 Thess 2:14; etc]

-- Ironically, for this group of people, whether Jews or Gentiles in origin, what does Christ become to them as they listen to and believe the "message of the cross"? [1:24; cp 1:18]

-- Why is this the case, according to Paul's conclusion? [1:25]

- In practical terms, how is it that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men"? [1:25; cp 2:8; Deut 29:29; Is 55:6-11; Rom 1:18-25; etc]

- In practical terms, how is it that "the weakness of God is stronger than men"? [1:25; cp Matt 27:39-43; cp 2 Cor 12:7-10; etc]

"He who glories, let him glory in the LORD..." [1 Cor 1:26-31]

1) After speaking of God's message, which seems "foolish" to most of the world, Paul then begins to speak about those who received it. As the Corinthians examine their "calling" [1:26],

(a) Who was the first group of people ("according to the flesh") who were not called (that is, *they* did not respond to God's calling them by the gospel)? [1:26a; again this is 'sophos']

(b) Who was the second group who were not called? [1:26b; literally, 'powerful'; cp 1:25]

(c) Who was the third group of people not to be "the called"? [1:26c; literally, 'well-born']

-- Ironically, the Bible declares that all of these qualities belong to those who obey the calling of God's word. List three Bible verses (one for each quality) that show that "the called" are truly the wise, mighty, and noble ones (though not "according to the flesh").

- Christians, the wise:

- Christians, the mighty (powerful):

- Christians, the noble:

2) According to Paul, what was the *reason* God chose to do things as He did? [1:27-29; cp 2 Cor 4:7]

3) Are the Corinthians "in Christ Jesus" by wisdom, strength, or nobility? If not, then how? [1:30]

-- Therefore, what has Christ fully become (4 things) to those who believe in Him? [1:30]

-- What, then, should be the Corinthians' attitude, rather than boasting in the men whom they say they are following? [1:31; cp 1:11-12; see also Jeremiah 9:24]