



First Corinthians 1:18 - 22

Verse 18 –

For the preaching. The Greek word translated here as **preaching** should be familiar--it is the word, Logos. It is not a verb in the Greek, but a noun. When we speak the Scripture (or *graphe*) we do it with logos (words).

Of the cross. The word of Scripture or message, is **the cross**. The phrase literally reads, *For the word of the cross*. We should not think of this as a pastor or preacher standing up in front of a church. The word of the cross is a message everyone needs to present; to neighbors, coworkers, bosses, bankers, grocers, mail-carriers, family, friends, truly anyone we come in contact with. The word of the cross is life-changing for eternity.

But when the word of the cross is presented get ready for opposition because, **it is to them that perish foolishness**. Perish means lost. Those who are eternally lost; to them it is foolishness. Can a person who is lost be saved? Yes, God has not chosen some and damned others. Whosoever will may come. But unless a person believes, he will be lost and the gospel will fall on deaf ears. We need to pray for our lost acquaintances and family members.

Unto us which are saved it is the power of God. Once a person believes he is saved. The words **which are saved** carry the idea of those who are *being saved* (Young's Literal Translation). The cross is no longer foolishness because the one saved realizes what has happened. Belief has provided him with everlasting life. It is the mighty work of the cross. The cross of Jesus Saves. There is no other power for salvation.

Verse 19 –

For it is written. This phrase always refers back to an Old Testament passage. If you are using a Bible with cross-references, Isaiah 29:14 will be referenced.

"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."

Without Paul's quote we would not know Isaiah was prophesying about the cross.

Paul is reaffirming his point in verse 18. Who are the **wise**? The Greek word is *sophos*. You might see the word **sophisticated**. It means the cultivated or learned ones; Greek **philosophers** and orators, even Jewish theologians. Great learning will not lead a person to the cross.

The cross is foolishness to unbelievers, no matter how wise they may be. The cross is a wonder.

Verse 20 –

Paul asks the question, **hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?** His question references verse 18 which says the *word of the cross is foolishness to them that are perishing*. Worldly wisdom can get in the way of believing the truth. Through the cross, God shatters worldly wisdom.

How will the world come to know God? Not by worldly wisdom but only by the word of foolishness.

All worldly wisdom,

The wise (Greek: *sophos*). That is, the sophisticated one.

The scribe (Greek: *grammateus*) The one who wrangles with letters of a document.

The disputer (Greek: *suzetetes*) The debater. Notice the word *tete*? It means face. (We use a phrase *tete-a-tete* meaning a face-to-face meeting.)

All of these have been made foolish by God. Worldly wisdom may be good for worldly knowledge, but for supernatural knowledge it falls flat. The illiterate, unsophisticated, introverted babblers can come to the cross, for it's power saves, not man's power.

Verses 21,22 –

How is a person saved? Not by **signs** or **wisdom**, but by the **foolishness of preaching**. Here the word **preaching** is the Greek word, *kerygma* which is *that which is proclaimed by a public crier*. In this case the proclamation is the *cross of Christ* (1:17).

The Gospel must be proclaimed! Man is saved by the clear revelation of God through the Gospel.

The Jews require a sign...Greeks seek after wisdom. People seek after signs today. Many churches work hard to appeal to emotionalism; even lighting in a church to help *set the mood* so people can be more easily *manipulated*. These are signs people seek today. Some large churches do more to produce a Broadway show than they do preaching the Gospel; *The Gospel is too simplistic-people won't come back if that's all we teach! We must give them signs!*

Churches today also try to provide wisdom: Financial seminars, how to lose weight classes, aerobics, on and on, trying to give their people wisdom. Often it is just the same wisdom of the world that can be found by *Googling* the subject. Everything is being taught *but* the Gospel.

Neither **signs** or **wisdom** will save.