

## The Wisdom of God

I Corinthians 1:28-31

9/25/05

### Intro

We begin the first letter of Paul to the church in Corinth.

Corinth was a wealthy commercial center on the isthmus connecting the mainland of Greece with the Peloponnesus.

Today there is a canal very close to the city connecting the two oceans. It used to be that captains would rather have their ships dragged across the isthmus that go around the treacherous cape.

In our day, the word **Corinthian** means something special. The car has **Corinthian leather** we say with an accent. But in Paul's time, it was a city with a reputation for everything worldly and sinful. In other cities they could use the name like an accusation.

**Illus** – Mothers could say to their daughters as they were trying to leave the house dressed inappropriately, “You look like some Corinthian hussy.”

Paul started the church on his second missionary journey in about 50AD. He was the first to introduce the gospel, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles (Acts 18:1-11).

There was a letter written before this one which was lost and then this one was written about 5-7 years after the church as started. It was still fairly young at the time and the young Christians were acting in worldly ways.

There is much for us to learn from it, especially living in a country that is similar to it in many ways.

This first chapter begins with Paul confronting them by reminding them that God's wisdom is greater than man's.

They lived in a Greek culture that loved to debate wisdom. There were many philosophers of the day that loved to

debate and many factions existed in the city. This tendency toward division was in the church as well as other worldly practices.

**This Christian faith is not about man's opinion; it's about God and His wisdom. These are principles of the wisdom of God.**

### **I. God Makes Worldly Wisdom Foolish**

#### A. Man's wisdom is from man

- That's where the problem lies.
- Men come up with all kinds of crazy ideas about God and about life.

**Illus** – **The ancient story of the four blind men trying to describe an elephant lacks truth – 1) God speaks; 2) they aren't touching God.**

**Colossians 2:8-9, “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. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.”**

#### B. You cannot know God by earthly wisdom

- Man's wisdom has man being the ones who saves.
- Without God's wisdom, we have no help;

- **The wisdom of man** sees selfishness, but has no cure for selfishness.
- It can see that hatred brings destruction, but has no cure for hatred.
- It can see that man cannot get along with man, but cannot see that the problem is that man cannot get along with God.

**Romans 1:21-22, “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools,”**

**Romans 1:28-31 When men reject God, the results are predictable**

**Illus- Chuck Smith was visiting in China and the leaders there asked him what made Christianity different.**

He said, “The difference is that in Christ there is the power of God, not just for salvation, but to change men’s hearts.

*Illus-* The drivers of the trucks that hauled rice were stopped for inspection, but the Christian drivers were recognized and let through. They knew there were no rocks in the rice.

## **II. God’s Wisdom is a Paradox**

A. God is pleased to save through foolishness

- Vs 18 – The word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.

- Vs 21 – 22, Christ crucified is foolishness to the world.
- Some in the Church have tried to make it easier to accept by changing the meaning. “Christ was resurrected only spiritually, not physically.”
- This is foolishness itself.

**Matthew 11:25-26, At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.”**

B. The foolishness of God is wiser than men

- This is an expression that captures the difference between God and man.

**Isaiah 55:8-9, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways.”**

- The context of these verses is that if we will return to the Lord, He will abundantly pardon, because His ways are not our ways.

**Illus – We hold a grudge, we refuse to forgive, but God’s ways are higher than our ways.**

- **And when we come to Him, he changes our ways to His ways**

### III. God Has Chosen the Foolish Things of the World

#### A. The foolish things – are us

- God in His wisdom chose the weak and the foolish in order to show the greatness of His power and wisdom.

**Matthew 4:18-19, Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”**

**Illus – Imagine using hippies and druggies to lead a worldwide movement in Christ.**

**II Corinthians 4:7, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;”**

#### B. So that no one may boast

- Verse 29 – “that no man may boast before God.”
- No one will be able to say to God that he has earned His right to be in heaven, or that God owes Him anything.

**Ephesians 2:8-10, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship,”**

**Illus – Why was Israel chosen; because they were a great nation? Not at all – it was because they were not...**

**Illus – When God wanted to give Israel a victory through Gideon, he deliberately reduced the army from 32,000 to 300.**

#### C. If we boast, we boast in the Lord

- There is great joy in telling what the Lord has done.

**Illus – We have a tendency to boast of ourselves by changing stories to make ourselves the hero, or focusing on that part that we did well.**

**Jeremiah 9:23-24, Thus says the Lord, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the Lord.”**

**II Corinthians 10:17-18, “But *He who boasts is to boast in the Lord.* For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends.”**

### Conclusion

**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Solomon asked for wisdom, “an understanding heart.” That only comes from the Lord.**