

The Cross of Jesus is the Power: Part Two

1 Corinthians 1:13-25

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I've done lots of foolish things in my life. So have you. Your foolish things are different than my foolish things. When the speedometer hit a one hundred and the road was going by in a blur, I realized it would be even more foolish to make the motorcycle go faster. When I was arguing and my voice got louder, my face turned redder, and my fists were clinched, I realized it would be foolish to carry on with that conversation. When there was one cookie left in the brand new package of cookies, I realized it would be foolish to eat any more.

My foolishness, your foolishness separates us from God. We call this sin. The apostle Paul in his letter to the church in Corinth addressed the issue of foolishness, human wisdom, the cross. The problem in Corinth had lead the believers to be divided by who had brought them to Jesus.

Has Christ been divided into factions? Was I, Paul, crucified for you? Were any of you baptized in the name of Paul? Of course not! I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, for now no one can say they were baptized in my name. (Oh yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas, but I don't remember baptizing anyone else.) For Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speech, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power. The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God. 1 Corinthians 1:13–18 (NLT)

There are trillions of foolish ideas, but there is one truth: Jesus. All that we try to do is outsmart ourselves and God. I like to think about foolishness, wisdom, and knowledge this way. Knowledge is what we know, information and facts. But wisdom is different. It is putting that knowledge to use. The action that follows can be wise or foolish.

We had knowledge that round things roll, that followed up with the wheel, which leads us wagons, bicycles, and cars. That is the wisdom of knowing something and what to do with what we know. We had the knowledge that birds can fly, that led Orrville and Wilbur to the airplane, that led to bigger planes, which led to people flying to the moon. There was wisdom at work taking information and turning it into something bigger and better.

But then we're foolish with our knowledge. Just because the speedometer on the motorcycle says 180 doesn't mean we have to go that fast. Just because we can fly doesn't mean we have to jump out of a perfectly good airplane.

We not only try to outsmart ourselves by being foolish, we also try to outsmart God, demonstrating our lack of wisdom. We know that a cookie is satisfying, but it's foolish to eat all the cookies in the jar. God knows what we're eating. No matter how hard we try we can't fool God. We know that a glass of wine each day may help our digestion, but a whole bottle with lunch may be foolish. God knows what we're drinking. No matter how hard we try we can't fool God. We know that a telling a story gets a laugh, but insulting people – both friends and strangers – is foolish. God knows what comes out of our mouths and what's in our hearts. No matter how hard we try we can't fool God.

God has known from the beginning that we would try to outsmart Him. In the Garden of Eden, at the tempting of the serpent, Adam and Eve thought they were smarter than God. At the Tower of Babel the people thought they could get to God by building a tower. When Noah started building an ark to prepare for the destructive flood, the people mocked and ignored him. When Abraham and Sarah were told they would have son in their old age, they used a surrogate. When Moses led the people out of slavery with one miracle after another the people begged to go back and even created a golden calf as their god. When God's people received the Law through Moses, they started adding their own rules. When David saw Bathsheba he believed he could hide his sin from God.

Today, we trust in our own desires over the wisdom of God. We create our own truth instead of believing Jesus is the truth. Jesus is the only truth no matter what people think of the cross. To them it is foolishness. Jesus took it on as the answer to our salvation. He used the cruelest form of death and punishment as the only way to save our souls.

Jesus saw all of our foolishness, lack of wisdom, boastful knowledge and chose the cross to make us right with God. Jesus was right with God, in perfect relationship with Him, but we weren't. The cross made it possible for us to be forgiven of every foolish thing we have ever thought, said or done.

1 Corinthians 1:18 (NLT) The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.

We're drawn to foolishness, although we know God has a better way. People are headed for destruction. I say that because every day somebody we know is doing something foolish. That's an underestimate, because there are trillions of foolish things done each day. In every situation it's a choice about what we want. Those choices are made intentionally or unintentionally thinking God won't know, or we don't care if He knows.

But God knows about our foolish choices. God sees us every time we reject Him. God said enough of this foolishness, I'll take care of the problem. God's choice to have Jesus die on the cross as our sin only looks like foolishness to us. Someone had to pay for all the foolishness. That someone is Jesus. Jesus faced every situation we face, but was never foolish in God's eyes. Our foolishness had to be taken away. The only way for it be removed was for one person to gather up all of it and put it on His back, become that foolishness, and then die as the fool. That someone is Jesus. Never a fool, never a sinner.

Every fool, thinking that God doesn't exist, or God doesn't need to know about their sins, or doesn't care if God, knows likes their foolishness. Fools think their foolishness provides something they need. Every billionaire thinks they need more money. It's like an addict, once you get a shot of foolishness, you want some more. Every bitter, angry, violent person justifies their foolish thoughts, words, and actions based on their bitterness, angry, and violence. Every do-gooder and people pleaser turns their lifestyle into the foolishness of believing they deserve heaven. Every down on their luck, nothing good every happens fool, has convinced themselves that their problems are the fault of someone else.

People foolishly chase foolishness because they don't know a better way. The bitter, angry, violent person sees their way as the only way. The do-gooder and people pleaser believe that's the only way. The person down on their luck is convinced that any luck is bad luck. They don't know a better way.

I know a better way. What I know may look like foolishness to them. You know a better way. What you know may look like foolishness to them. We aren't charged with making the foolish realize what they are doing is foolish. We're charged with the command to let them know Jesus is the better way, the only way.

We may need to talk about the consequences of their foolish ways. That means we'll have to discuss some other foolish activities. But before we do that, we need the foolishness of the cross of Jesus to be seen in our lives. Our foolishness needs to be our witness. People need to see our foolish love for Jesus. People need to see our foolish love for others. People need to see our foolish love for fools.

1 Corinthians 1:19-22 As the Scriptures say, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and discard the intelligence of the intelligent." So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe. It is foolish to the Jews, who ask for signs from heaven. And it is foolish to the Greeks, who seek human wisdom.

When you believe the foolishness of God the Cross becomes powerful. Becoming a fool for the cross of Jesus is planting Gospel seeds. We know that the gospel message is the good news that Jesus died on the cross as our sin, then rose from the dead on the third day defeating sin and death.

We know that we needed that seed planted in our lives. We know that seed came to harvest when we gave our lives to Jesus. The gospel was foolishness to us before we believed. Our foolishness may have been pride, or selfishness, or self-destructive actions, or anything else that wasn't focused on Jesus, the wisdom of God.

In our backyard, in our neighborhood, at our jobs, and wherever we go there is somebody who needs the foolishness of the cross of Jesus. You and I plant seeds of the foolishness of God with our actions and with our words. It will include keeping unwholesome talk out of your mouth. It will include being kind, compassionate, and helpful. It will include Jesus, bringing glory and honor to Him with our words.

Your foolish preaching may water a dying seed. It may water a seed that is eager grow. The cross of Jesus, the Good News, is salvation to those who hear it and believe it. Some might not want to hear the name of Jesus. Some may not to choose the name of Jesus. Some may not follow Jesus. They are the fools.

Our mission is to preach the cross of Jesus. We can let God, through His Holy Spirit, change their hearts. Our responsibility is to preach the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The listening ear is responsible to choose to believe. As we act with kindness, compassion, and offer help, we also give testimony to the power of the cross in our lives.

Everybody on this planet has the same issues. We have the same problems. The difference is how we handle our problems. Do we give them to Jesus, or are we too foolish to think we can handle them ourselves?

We water seeds as we listen to the struggles of others, and then share how the cross of Jesus empowered us. With the exception of Jesus who could imagine that the foolish preaching of the cross could bring in a harvest. This is the foolishness of the cross and the power of the cross. This is Jesus.

Planting and watering may not bring an immediate harvest. Fools have lots of foolishness they need to abandon. The fool can't pick up the cross of Jesus, His saving grace, until they can say that they have been a fool, lived like a fool, and spoke like a fool. The power of the Cross of Jesus can turn any individual from their foolishness to the wisdom of God.

1 Corinthians 1:23–25 (NLT) So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense. But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength.

Even if all they want to hear is foolishness, preach Jesus and the power of the cross. We don't know which fool needs Jesus. I have at times been compelled to speak to the fools that gather around me. Students at a graduation ceremony. Grandkids who make mistakes. Adults who have insulted my ears and my soul. As you can tell I didn't know all of these people. Their foolishness and the prompting of the Holy Spirit released me to speak the truth. It wasn't relevant to me or the Holy Spirit whether I knew them or not. They need to hear the truth. I had to speak into their foolishness.

I think the point I'm trying to make contains two things. First, fools are everywhere. Second, follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit isn't nudging you, then zip your lip. But when the Holy Spirit of God, sent by our Savior and Lord Jesus nudges you, speak the truth to the fool. The Holy Spirit will give you the words. If fools want to remain fools we have spoken the truth.

Sometimes I'm in a position to stick around and help the fool leave their foolishness behind. That's ideal. But that doesn't always happen. Many times I speak the truth to the fool, but then we go our separate ways. I have to trust that the words given to me by the Holy Spirit planted or watered a seed of faith. I have to trust that the Holy Spirit used someone else in that fool's life to bring them to Jesus.

The more you hear this the more it will help you speak the truth to the fools. Our ministry is to preach the foolishness of the cross of Jesus. It is the truth. It is the only way to salvation. No fool can be saved without believing Jesus died on the cross for their sins. No fool can be transformed with the wisdom of God without believing Jesus died on the cross for their sins. No fool can live as a messenger of the Good News without believing Jesus died on the cross for their sins.

There is no greater truth than the foolishness of Jesus living, dying, and rising again. No matter what part of your life still clings to the foolishness of this world, you need to give it to Jesus. No matter what part of you still believes you are wise, you need to give it to Jesus. It is only by seeing and surrendering our wisdom to Jesus that we are able to give up this foolishness. By surrendering to Jesus we make the wisest choice of all time.

You and I don't know what will happen today or tomorrow. Some fool could change our lives, end our lives in an instant. A tree could fall on your house. The wind could blow your house away. Jesus could return at any moment.

Stop being foolish and choose Jesus. Choose the foolishness of God over the wisdom of this world. Choose Jesus as your Savior and Lord. When you choose Jesus, the foolish sins of your past, present and future will be forgiven. You will be filled with the Holy Spirit's knowledge and wisdom. You will find yourself empowered by the cross of Jesus who died to save your sins. Jesus is calling you to let go of your foolishness and your sins, putting your life in His hands. Choose Jesus.