

1 Corinthians Study 2

Read CHAPTER 1:18-31

KEY VERSE—

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1:18)

SUMMARY—

The wisdom of the world has always allured God’s people. The cultured Greek and the pious Jew would scorn the gospel’s message that was based on such an ignoble death on the cross. The trouble with such an interest in this wisdom though, was that this wisdom was antagonistic to the gospel. To idolize worldly wisdom—which drew men away from God—was to idolize the wrong thing. God would bring to nothing the wisdom of the world (1:19-20), worldly wisdom would cause them to stumble (1:21-25), and the worldly wise were already noticeably absent from their own ranks (1:26-28). There was a very good reason for God to choose such simple, unassuming things—that man might glory in the Lord rather than himself (1:29-31).

QUESTIONS—

- 1) Why does Paul turn to a discussion of wisdom and foolishness? What is the connection between this discussion and the previous section (1:1-17)?
- 2) What do some people think about the gospel (1:18)? What kind of attitude does this betray?
- 3) What things are described as being “the power of God” (1:18,24; 2:2,5)? How are these things God’s power?

4) In the following verses, identify the different ways Paul stresses the inability of human wisdom to save:

⇒ 1:19—

⇒ 1:20—

⇒ 1:22-23—

⇒ 1:26—

5) What was the original context of the statement quoted in 1:19 (cf. Isaiah 29:14)? What did the wisdom of men tell the Israelites to do about the Assyrian threat and Egyptian alliance (you may have to do a little research)? Where did wisdom finally show them their deliverance would come from?

6) What is the answer to the first three questions in 1:20?

7) What kind of things blinded the Jew and Greek to the gospel (1:22-23)? How was the gospel message a source of stumbling to each group?

8) The Jews sought after a sign (1:22). Did God give them one (cf. Matthew 12:38-42)? What was this sign? What did they do with it? 1 Corinthians 8 Lessons by Rob Harbison

9) The Greeks sought after wisdom (1:22). Did God give it to them (cf. 1:30)? What was this wisdom? What did they do with it?

10) The message of the cross would appear to have little success against this background of Greek culture and Jewish tradition. What made it so successful then (1:19,21,24-25)?

11) Who are those who are called (1:24)? What kind of calling is this (cf. Hebrews 3:1)? What kind of people does it draw (1:26)?

12) What do we see about God's attitude toward the wise, mighty, and noble of this world (1:26)? In what way does God show no partiality to them as a group? As individuals? What do we see about their attitude, as a group, toward Him (1:26; cf. James 2:5-7)?

13) What is the surprising irony in this discussion about wisdom and its drawing power (1:26-28)?

14) Considering the type of people who have been called (1:26-28), where is our opportunity to boast (1:29)?

15) What is the "wisdom" that we can glory in (1:30)?

16) How much righteousness, sanctification, and redemption do we obtain on our own? Where do we find it (1:30)?

17) What is the contrast between those people who trust in the wisdom of the world (1:26) and those who trust in the wisdom of Christ (1:30)?

18) What are two conclusions for us to draw in this discussion about wisdom and foolishness (1:25,31)?

19) Why has God chosen such simple, unimpressive things to save men (1:29,31)?

20) How concerned should we be about impressing the world with worldly credentials? Can the church ever impress the world with our credentials? Where will the boasting have to come from (1:31)?