

# 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 “The Power of the Cross Today”

**BOTH to the cultured Greek and to the pious Jew the story that Christianity had to tell sounded like the sheerest folly.<sup>1</sup>**

**18 For the message (lit.: word; preaching) of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**

- **λόγος [logos /log·os/]** n m. From 3004; TDNT 4:69; TDNTA 505; GK 3364; 330 occurrences; AV translates as “word” 218 times, “saying” 50 times, “account” eight times, “speech” eight times, “Word (Christ)” seven times, “thing” five times, not translated twice, and translated miscellaneously 32 times.

**1** of speech.

**1A** a word, uttered by a living voice, embodies a conception or idea.

**1B** what someone has said.

**1B1** a word.

**1B2** the sayings of God.

**1B3** decree, mandate or order.

**1B4** of the moral precepts given by God.<sup>2</sup>

**John 1:1** In the beginning was **the Word**, and **the Word** was with God, and **the Word** was God.

**John 1:14** And **the Word** became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

**1 Corinthians 1:23-24**

**23** but **we preach Christ crucified**, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,

**24** but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

**1 Corinthians 2:2** For I determined **not to know anything** among you **except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.**

**Romans 10:14-15**

**14**How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? **And how shall they hear without a preacher?**

**15**And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!*”

<sup>1</sup>The letters to the Corinthians. 2000, c1975 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

n n: noun or neuter

m m: masculine

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<sup>2</sup>Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the test of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.) (G3056). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.

**Romans 15:20** **And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel**, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation,

- **“foolishness”** (Old word from μωρος [*mōros*])
  - Repeated: 8X in first 3 chapters of 1 Corinthians!
- Salvation is described by Paul as:
  - **as thing done in the past**, “we were saved” (Rom. 8:24),
  - **as a present state**, “ye have been saved” (Eph. 2:5),
  - **as a process**, “ye are being saved” (I Cor. 15:2),
  - **as a future result**, “thou shalt be saved” (Rom. 10:9).<sup>3</sup>

**19** For it is written: “I will **destroy** the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”

- **“destroy”**: to put out of the way entirely, abolish, put an end to ruin; to render useless; to kill.<sup>4</sup>
- The wisdom of the wise is often folly, the understanding of the understanding is often rejected. **There is such a thing as the ignorance of the learned, the wisdom of the simple-minded.** God's wisdom rises in the Cross sheer above human philosophizing which is still scoffing at the Cross of Christ, the consummation of God's power.<sup>5</sup>

**20** Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

**21** For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

- **Where is the famous Greek philosopher?**
- **Where is the Jewish scholar?**
- **Where are great intellectuals with their university degrees?**

**1 Corinthians 2:14** But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; **nor can he know them**, because they are spiritually **discerned**.

- **ἀνακρίνω** [*anakrino* /an·ak·ree·no/] v. From 303 and 2919; TDNT 3:943; TDNTA 469; GK 373; 16 occurrences; AV translates as “examine” six times, “judge” six times, “ask question” twice, “search” once, and “discern” once.  
**1** examine or judge.  
**1A** to investigate, examine, enquire into, scrutinise, sift, question.

<sup>3</sup>Robertson, A. (1997). *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Vol.V c1932, Vol.VI c1933 by Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. (1 Co 1:18). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems.

<sup>4</sup>Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the test of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.) (G622). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.

<sup>5</sup>Robertson, A. (1997). *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Vol.V c1932, Vol.VI c1933 by Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. (1 Co 1:19). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems.

v v: verb

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*IAI* specifically in a forensic sense of a judge to hold an investigation.  
1B to judge of, estimate, determine (the excellence or defects of any person or thing).<sup>6</sup>

### 1 Corinthians 3:19-20

**19** For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “*He catches the wise in their own craftiness*”;

**20** and again, “*The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.*”

**22** For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;

**23** but we **preach Christ crucified**, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,

**24** but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

- **But we preach Christ crucified** (ἡμεῖς δε κηρυσσομεν Χριστον ἐσταυρωμενον [*hēmeis de kērussomen Christon estaurōmenon*]). Grammatically stated as a partial result (δε [*de*]) of the folly of both Jews and Greeks, actually in sharp contrast.

**We proclaim, “we do not discuss or dispute”** (Lightfoot).<sup>7</sup>

- Greeks were known for their love of learning and gathering of wisdom.
- Jews loved the miracles and power of God.
  - How could a crucified man ever demonstrate wisdom or power?
  - How could being crucified show God’s power?
  - The Greeks argued that if God can feel joy or sorrow or anger or grief it means that some man has for that moment influenced God and is therefore greater than he. So, they went on to argue, it follows that God must be incapable of all feeling so that none may ever effect him. A God who suffered was to the Greeks a contradiction in terms.<sup>8</sup>
- The use of the word **crucified** without the article strongly emphasizes the character in which Paul preached Christ, as crucified (cf. 2:2; Gal 3:1). A Christ without a cross could not save.<sup>9</sup>

**25** **Because** the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

- Irony: the least of God’s wisdom is superior to the best of man’s wisdom.
  - Irony was a common rhetorical device

<sup>6</sup>Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the test of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.) (G350). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.

<sup>7</sup>Robertson, A. (1997). *Word Pictures in the New Testament.* Vol.V c1932, Vol.VI c1933 by Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. (1 Co 1:23). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems.

<sup>8</sup>*The letters to the Corinthians.* 2000, c1975 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

cf. *confer* (compare)

<sup>9</sup>Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : New Testament* (1 Co 1:21). Chicago: Moody Press.