

The Message of the Cross - Foolishness or Power? (1 Cor 1:18-2:5)

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Introduction: Why do so many reject the gospel?

A. The truth of the gospel is blocked to many *by the deceptions of Satan*. (2 Cor 4:2-4)

1. How does one “find the truth?”

‘Post-truth’ named 2016 word of the year by Oxford Dictionaries

2. Men scoff the idea of finding “truth.” (Jn 18:37-38)

Post-truth politics - is a political culture in which debate is framed largely by appeals to emotion disconnected from the details of policy, and by the repeated assertion of talking points to which factual rebuttals are ignored.

3. We can rightly recognize that each man must go through a struggle to find truth. This principled process *involves change, personal effort and time*.

B. Those who reject God and His word have abandoned *their only hope for real reason*.

1. When there is no commitment to truth and morality then deception is easy!

“But when religion loses its voice and the media worship success, when right and wrong become relativised and morality is condemned as “judgmental”, when people lose all sense of honour and shame and there is nothing they won't do if they can get away with it, no regulation will save us. .. - Morals: the one thing markets don't make

I. God has foretold the rejection of His merciful and powerful message (1 Cor 1:18-21)

A. The contrast between the two views is enormous. (1:18)

Foolishness - **μωρία** - what is considered foolish, intellectually weak, or irrational *foolishness, nonsense*.

1. How did these come to their conclusion? Many *never begin to think* by rejecting any supernatural actions outright.

2. How many times did the prophets and Jesus Himself *tell of this very reaction?* (Isa 53:1; Mt 13:14-15; Jn 16:1-2)

B. God, by design, gave a message that would *both conceal and reveal*. Why? (Jas 4:6)

1. He wanted to *save the humble seeker* and *put a barrier before the proud*. The arrogant lazy thinker will not accept the gospel by God's design! (1:19-20)

2. The one who finds the gospel must *overcome “stumbling blocks”* and control their emotions. (1 Pt 2:4, 7-8)

3. Those who have the greatest ability to reason often are *the easiest to be deceived!* This is due to the blinding power of pride and Satan.

Curse of knowledge - When better-informed people find it extremely difficult to think about problems from the perspective of lesser-informed people. (Jn 7:49)

C. The key to proper thinking is *an absolute commitment to honesty*. (Lk 8:15)

1. Honesty *begins with coming to recognize and know God*. Without God the “wisdom of this world” has no chance of finding plain truth. (1:21)

1. Imagine the foolishness of trying to outwit Satan! (Eph 4:14, 6:11-13; 1 Pt 5:8)

Wiles - **μεθοδεία**, ας, ῆ (also μεθοδία) method, procedure; in the NT in a bad sense, as scheming to deceive *craftiness, cunning, deception* (EP 4.14); plural *stratagems, cunning attacks, tricks* (EP 6.11)

2. Jesus tried to warn Peter about *the power of this great deceiver*. (Lk 22:31-34)

3. What *kind of thinking* could have led Peter to ignore this warning?

II. We must come to recognize and put away our natural prejudices (1 Cor 1:22-25)

A. All wrong thinking is a product of prejudices that can be called *cognitive biases*.

1. The Jews had a bias that *demanded a sign directly from God*. Where did they get this ideal? There are ways to obtain *emotion without commitment*. (1:22)
 2. Would a sign *actually accomplish what God wants*? He did give signs occasionally and those signs were affirmed by others. (Acts 4:16; Jn 20:30-31)
 3. *Did the Jews believe* when they saw these signs? (Acts 4:17; Lk 16:29-31)
 4. Where did God ever say to *judge truth on the basis of experiences or feelings*?
- B. The Romans exalted a worldly wisdom. The “proof” of their wisdom was found in *their “scholarship” and military conquest*.
1. They made a classic mistake in assuming their conquest was *solely a product of their wisdom and power*. History should not teach this to any people! THINK! (Rev 2:27; 12:5; 19:15)
 2. They simply *could not imagine* a “crucified king!” (Jer 10:23)
 3. God’s power and wisdom *by His purpose* will shatter those who exalt human wisdom and human experience. (1:24-25)
 4. I grieve at my brethren exalting theologians and being complexly unable to express or *defend their reasoning from the Bible*.

III. Throughout history the humble are the ones who come to know and serve God

- A. Let us open our eyes to this truth and *not accommodate exalted ways of the world*. (1 Cor 1:26-28)
1. We do not need to take one step in this direction! We can be accommodating an arrogance *that destroys faith and fights God*! (Rom 9:17, 22-23)
 2. Jesus let John know the ones *who gladly received Him*. (Lk 7:22; Mk 12:37)
 3. James reminded brethren the vanity of trying *to appeal to the rich with flattery and favor*! This will not lead to faith! (Jas 2:3-5; Jn 5:43-44)
- B. The world *will always despise what we stand for* and who we are! (1:28)
1. How then should we try to reach the lost *who are caught up in pride*? THINK!
 2. We should approach them with *the full truth of the gospel in compassion* and in all boldness.
 3. What if they reject it and attack me? How did Pharaoh respond? *Should Moses have “negotiated?”* (Ex 10:26)
 4. There will be many “Pharaohs” but there also will be a few “Pauls.”
- C. Our response is simply to glory in and to submit to *the plain wisdom of God*! When we do this, we will simply preach the truth! (1:29-31)
1. Why have some brethren *moved away* from such a stand?
 2. What have the emotional movements *brought forth*? What has been *the end product* of those exalting the wisdom of man? (Chart on descent)
 3. How was Paul *judged by brethren* who exalted human wisdom? (1 Cor 2:2-5; 2 Cor 10:10)
 4. May each of us be highly involved in the challenging but rewarding *commitment to serious Bible study*. Let’s stop being lazy!

Conclusion: Only God’s power will change my life!