

THE “STUPIDITY” OF GOD

–MESSY (BUT BEAUTIFUL) CHRISTIANITY, WEEK 5–

1 Corinthians 1:18-25 (NIV)

I. THE “STUPIDITY” OF _____

¹⁸ 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.

II. THE “STUPIDITY” OF THE _____

¹⁹ For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

²⁰ Where is the wise person?

Where is the teacher of the law?

Where is the philosopher of this age?

Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

III. THE “STUPIDITY” OF _____

²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him,

God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

²² Jews demand signs

and Greeks look for wisdom,

²³ but we preach Christ crucified:

a stumbling block to Jews
and foolishness to Gentiles,

²⁴ but to those whom God has called,

both Jews and Greeks,
Christ the power of God
and the wisdom of God.

²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

THE BOTTOM LINE

_____ the “_____” of the _____
...by _____ yourself to the _____ and _____.
...by _____ the _____ of _____ kill all _____.

“This paragraph [1:18-25] is crucial not only to the present argument (1:10-4:21), but to the entire letter as well. Indeed, it is one of the truly great moments in the apostle Paul—and in the whole of Christian Scripture. Here Paul argues, with OT support, that what had always been the divine intent, and thus had been foretold in the prophets, God has now accomplished through the crucifixion: The creator and sustainer of the universe has brought an end to human self-sufficiency as that is evidenced through human wisdom and devices. No, Paul argues with his Corinthian friends, the gospel is not some new [wisdom] (...or philosophy), not even a new divine [wisdom]. For [wisdom] allows for human judgments or evaluations of God’s activity. But the gospel stands as the divine antithesis to such judgments. No mere human, in their right mind or otherwise, would ever have dreamed up God’s scheme for redemption—through a crucified Messiah. It is too preposterous, too humiliating, for a deity.

It is altogether likely, of course, that Paul’s Corinthian opponents would also have sensed the humiliation of that message, and that is why they had ‘moved on’ to ‘higher’ things, far beyond the mere ‘milk’ that Paul had offered them. But Paul recognizes that to move beyond the cross is not to ‘move on’ at all, but is to abandon Christ altogether. Hence he here argues that the message of the cross is absolute—and fundamental—and as such stands over against the mere human wisdom of their present position” (Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 70-71).

“One can scarcely conceive of a more important—and more difficult—passage for today’s church than this one. It is difficult, for the very reason it was in Corinth. We simply cannot abide the scandal of God’s doing things God’s way, without our help, and to do it by means of such weakness and folly! But we have often succeeded in blunting the scandal by symbol, or creed, or propositions. God will not be so easily tamed, and, freed from its shackles, the preaching of the cross alone has the power to set people free. Paul does not tell us how so here, but the whole story makes it plain. In the death of his Son, God has judged us who were responsible for it. Christ has thereby not only taken on himself our sins and guilt and ‘removed them.’ He has disarmed us in the divine presence by forgiving us when we richly deserved death. Thus forgiven we are set free not only from our sins but to become God’s new people in the world. It thus achieves what the god of human expectations cannot achieve—it creates disciples who will trust the one true God for life. Such ‘weakness’ in God is scandalous to those who think of themselves as righteous and thus not needing forgiveness; but to those who recognize themselves as in need of mercy this is the good news that sets us free to follow our Savior. Thus this weakness is also the ultimate power, and therefore the true wisdom of God” (Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 81).