

The Wisdom of God vs The Wisdom of the World

Key Text:	1 Corinthians 1 & 2
Key Verse(s):	“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” (1 Corinthians 1:10)

Background to the Study

Corinth was a wealthy and influential Greek city in Paul’s time, but it was also infamous for immorality. In this challenging environment, Paul planted a church made up mostly of Gentile believers who had turned from paganism to follow Christ. After he moved on, the church began to struggle – disagreements grew, divisions formed, and loyalties shifted toward certain leaders instead of Christ Himself. Hearing of these issues, Paul wrote to urge them back to unity and to remind them that the Cross must remain the unshakable foundation of the Church.

Paul was writing to a church in which some members were not doing as well as others spiritually. Possibly, some in attendance had not yet been converted. Some were saved but not yet sanctified. Others were sanctified but not yet filled with the Holy Ghost. Others had all three foundational spiritual experiences, yet were unwise in their use of the Spirit-endowed gifts they possessed. Paul’s goal was to point all of them to higher ground. Today, too, we have the same goal every time we hold a church service. Some comments may be directed to sinners, but that does not mean everyone in the meeting is a sinner. The spiritual level of those in the audience is varied, and so it was in the Corinthian church.

To people who did not believe, the message of the Cross defied expectations. Many Jews could not accept a crucified Messiah; they longed for a political rescuer marked by miraculous signs and national glory, not someone subjected to a shameful public execution. Greeks, devoted to logic and philosophy, saw the Cross as weakness and death as final defeat. Corinth’s culture celebrated eloquence and intellectual skill, yet Paul – though highly educated – chose to proclaim only “Jesus Christ, and Him crucified,” relying wholly on the Spirit’s power instead of human persuasion.

Paul wanted them to see that the Gospel is not unlocked by human reasoning or shaped by physical appetites; it can only be understood when the Spirit opens a person’s heart. The natural mind dismisses it as foolishness, but the spiritual person, guided by God’s revelation, grows steadily in faith and understanding. His call was clear: fix your eyes on Christ, let the Spirit lead you, and build your lives on the truth of the Cross.

Testimony from Our Day

In my final term at university, I was assigned to work with a young man I had a strong sense I was meant to meet. From the first day of class, I had quietly looked for an opportunity to share the Lord with him, and eventually it came. He explained his beliefs: God, to him, was not a personal being but a kind of force behind nature – something humanity expresses in different ways. I shared the Gospel story in full, from creation to Christ, and as we discussed life's origins and purpose, it became clear our worldviews were deeply different.

He considered my conviction about Christ “intolerant” of other religions, though he acknowledged this reaction clashed with his own view of tolerance. He also dismissed the sacrifice of Jesus at Calvary, likening it to the death of a soldier who gives his life for others – an honourable act, but not proof of divinity. Without believing that Jesus is the Son of God, or even that such a Being exists, the Cross was, to him, just another death.

That conversation showed me that without personally experiencing salvation, the message of the Cross feels like foolishness. But for those who have encountered its power – the smoker instantly freed from addiction, the prisoner forgiven, the marriage healed, the frightened child comforted by a loving Saviour – it is life-changing. These lives bear witness that the Cross is not folly, but God's faithfulness in action. And it is in that faithfulness that even those who doubt can begin to see the truth that “the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Corinthians 1:25).

A Closer Look

Question 1	What was the initial point of dissension in the Corinthian church that Paul addressed in his letter? (1 Corinthians 1:12)
Question 2	In order to live in harmony with other believers, certain behaviours are required. What three things did Paul admonish the Corinthians to do in order to maintain oneness? (1 Corinthians 1:10). How can we be sure that we have an attitude of unity toward fellow Christians?
Question 3	What does it mean to have “the mind of Christ,” as opposed to worldly wisdom? (1 Corinthians 2:16) How will possessing the mind of Christ affect unity within the church?
Question 4	What two general groups of people were the focus of Paul’s message, and what was each group’s response to the preaching of the Cross?
Question 5	What statement in our text identifies Paul’s approach when preaching to the Corinthians? Why do you think he chose this approach? I Corinthians 2:1-5
Question 6	What is your response when you encounter those who consider your faith to be foolishness? What should your response be? I Corinthians 2:14

Take Home

Unity under God is essential in the Body of Christ. We must care for our fellow believers, not strive with them! It is only the Spirit of God that can draw people to the Gospel. Do not be surprised if others fail to understand your desire to follow Christ; in the logic of men it is foolishness. Pray that the Spirit will direct your life so that, through you, God can reveal His wisdom to others.