

Week of July 8-14

THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD?

Scripture Reading: Read 1 Corinthians 1

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where someone asked you a question and your mind went blank? It can be pretty embarrassing when it happens, can't it? I remember one occasion years ago when it happened to me. I was at my denomination's state headquarters undergoing an oral examination as part of the ordination credentialing process. One of the questioners asked me to list some of the attributes of God and my mind went blank. Now, mind you, I was a college graduate with a biblical studies degree at the time but I couldn't come up with even one attribute of God. Fortunately, a former youth pastor of mine was at the table and he looked over at me and said something like, "You know, Ray, the 'omni's,' as in, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent." Fortunately, the folks around the table had seen the "deer in the headlights" look before in a candidate and gave me the benefit of the doubt and I received my credentials!

Interestingly, one of the attributes that was never mentioned that day was God's foolishness. God's weakness didn't make it to the table either. Yet, both of them are mentioned as "attributes" of God by Paul in today's chapter reading: *"For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength."* God is foolish? God is weak? Paul, what are you saying?

Here is where context is so important. According to Paul in this chapter, his proclamation of a crucified Savior resulted in two opposite conclusions from his audiences. To those who rejected the message, the cross was seen as foolishness or as a stumbling block to faith. How could anyone condemned to die on a cross as a criminal be the Savior of the world? How could an all-powerful God allow Himself to be so humiliated on the cross? This surely isn't the way the world's wisdom would have planned it.

On the other hand, to those who were being saved, who, through faith, trusted God's plan, the cross was seen not as foolishness or weakness but as a display of God's wisdom and power. The problem for the world is that this display came in a fashion they weren't expecting. How so? Well, the world, by its wisdom, couldn't save anyone. But God, in his wisdom, used what the world considered foolishness, a crucified Messiah, to open the door of salvation to the world. In addition, the world, by its strength, couldn't overcome the power of sin. God, though, used what the world considered weakness, the death of Jesus, to pay the penalty for our sin and free us from the power of sin.

So, you see, it really depends on how you look at it... from our perspective or His. God's "foolishness," as the world sees it, turns out to be a whole lot smarter than man's wisdom after all when you see it from God's perspective. The same holds true about God's so-called weakness. Through the eyes of faith, we come to see that the cross became God's greatest triumph. It was there where he took what the world considered foolish and weak and turned the tables on human wisdom and human power and stripped the world of its self-reliance and self-indulgent boasting. Seems pretty smart of God to me!

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Reread I Cor 1:18-25 in light of today's devotional. Spend some time thanking the Lord for being "foolish" and "weak" at the cross.

Take-a-way: *God's "least" is always better than our "best."*