

A The wisdom of God

- ❖ In Athens, Paul had used human wisdom to try to convince the wise men. From then on, he decided to use only divine wisdom.
- ❖ God Himself had sent him to preach His message “without words of human wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power” (1 Cor. 1:17 NIV).
- ❖ What is the divine wisdom preached by Paul?
- ❖ Contrary to all human logic, God's wisdom consists in "saving believers through the foolishness of preaching" (1 Corinthians 1:21).

B The madness of the cross

- ❖ The Greek word *mōria* (madness, folly, foolishness) is used five times in 1 Corinthians: 1:18; 1:21; 1:23; 2:14; and 3:19.
- ❖ The cross is foolishness to those who are lost; to those who do not know God (Gentiles); to those who only think about this world (natural man); to those who are governed only by their own wisdom.
- ❖ But the cross is a blessing for those who are saved, that is, for those who are willing to see the cross from God's point of view.

C The power of God

- ❖ The cross has the power to show the worst of man and the best of God (1 Cor. 1:18).
 - The worst of man: madness; rejection; self-destruction; perdition.
 - The best of God: power; acceptance; forgiveness; salvation.
- ❖ Those who reject the cross reap the consequences of their wrong actions, and will ultimately be destroyed by the One they rejected.
- ❖ The power of God, shown on the cross, is able to reconcile man with God by forgiving all his sins, and to grant him eternal life (Col. 1:20; 1P. 2:24).

D The message of the cross

- ❖ Why is preaching the message of the cross madness (1 Cor. 1:21-24)?
- ❖ The Jews were expecting a Messiah who would deliver them from Roman oppression. When Jesus announced that he was going to be crucified, his own disciples were horrified. Moreover, for a Jew, a man hanging on a tree was a person cursed by God (Deuteronomy 21:23). For a Gentile, who wasn't even expecting a Redeemer, the conclusion was the same: the cross is madness.
- ❖ However, for the angels, the message of the cross was something entirely different. Jesus, whom they had known in Heaven, allowed himself to be killed out of love for a race that had rejected him. This is the perspective Paul wanted to convey through his preaching.
- ❖ The message of the cross shows how far God has been willing to go to grant us salvation.

E The foolishness and weakness of God

- ❖ Is God in any way foolish or weak (1 Cor. 1:25)?
- ❖ Of course not, since God has no imperfections. Paul is simply making a figurative comparison: If God had any foolish thoughts, he would be wiser than the wisest thought of a person; or if there were any weak arguments in God, they would be much stronger than the strongest human arguments.
- ❖ All the wisdom gathered from the wisest people is incapable of conceiving a plan of salvation for humanity.
- ❖ Only God has been able to grant redemption, through the power of Jesus' sacrifice offered on the cross, "to those who are being saved" (1 Cor. 1:18); "to believers" (1 Cor. 1:21); and "to those who are called" (1 Cor. 1:24).
- ❖ Note that only those who believe in Jesus in response to the call of the Holy Spirit will be saved