

Moria

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1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Bunkertown COB

A large company, feeling it was time for a shakeup, hired a new CEO. The new boss was determined to rid the company of all slackers. On a tour of the facilities, the CEO noticed a guy leaning on a wall. The room was full of workers and he wanted to let them know that he meant business. He walked up to the guy leaning against the wall and asked, "How much money do you make a week?" A little surprised, the young man looked at him and replied, "I make \$400 a week. Why?" The new CEO then handed the guy \$1,600 in cash and screamed, "Here's four weeks pay, now GET OUT and don't come back!" Feeling pretty good about himself, the CEO looked around the room and asked, "Does anyone want to tell me what that goof-ball did here?" From across the room came a voice, "Pizza delivery guy."

Ever do something that made you feel like a complete moron? Some days I think I could fill a whole notebook. But there is a big difference in doing something idiotic and actually being called one. There is a big difference in someone saying "That was foolish" as opposed to them saying "You're a fool". And yet, this is exactly what people were saying in Paul's day about "Those Christians". That God would lay down His life so that we, the created, may have eternal life, was foolishness to those living at that time.

Listen to what Paul has to say in his first letter to the Corinthian church (**Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25**). The message of the cross is basically that God has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. Paul came to this city and claimed that all who believe in Christ are forgiven, not because they deserve it, but because of God's grace. He made this offer to everyone, not just the Jews (which really ticked them off), and He made this offer to those who don't deserve it (which totally contradicted the Greek wisdom at that time). It was foolishness to them. And the word Paul used here in verse 18 is the Greek word *Moria*, which is where we get our English word *Moron*. In Paul's day, people thought Christians were morons. Not much has changed, not much at all.

Do an internet search for “Foolish Christians” some time. I couldn’t believe all the “Wise” people who think they have cornered the market on biblical interpretation. They come along with their enlightened wisdom, and correct the believers who have stood firm on the truth of the cross for nearly 2000 years. These people can’t understand grace because according to the world’s standards a person should merit grace. They can’t understand the resurrection because scientifically it’s impossible. They claim that to have faith you must close your eyes to reason (a quote from Benjamin Franklin, by the way). And they call us fools. Well, anyway, I’m reading these things, and thinking. “Yea Paul, you’re right. Things haven’t changed much since you wrote this letter to the Corinthian church”. But then it occurred to me, Paul wrote this letter to the Church. Paul was addressing the schism (or divisions) that were dividing this church. And here he is talking about the foolishness of the cross.

You know, the more I thought about this, the more I realized that this problem was not something “Out There” in the world, but something that was dividing this church. It appears that these Christians were becoming divided over personal interpretations of scripture. And the problem was that many of these new believers had brought with them the popular philosophies of the day. They let their emotions and feelings sway the truth of scripture (*You say, “I am allowed to do anything” - but not everything is good for you. You say, “I am allowed to do anything” - but not everything is beneficial.*¹ 1 Corinthians 10:23). They interpreted Paul’s message based upon what they knew and could reason (*But tell me this - since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead?*² 1 Corinthians 15:12). It appears that when these Corinthian Christians came to Christ, they brought with them an incorrect understanding about what God’s word is, and what it must do to all who believe. And I suspect we all do this in some small way. When we come to Christ as well, we bring with us thoughts and feelings that we should have left behind.

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

²Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

Like the Corinthian Christians, we believers become divided on scripture because we incorrectly interpret God's Word. And I want to take a moment this morning to go over some of the mistakes we make when we read our Bible; mistakes that cause us to be divided over some of the central truths of the Gospel.

- One of the mistakes I see people make is that they have a thought or an idea, and then try to find Bible verses that make it seem believable. Rather than allowing the Bible to speak for itself, these people try to force the Scriptures to concur with their own beliefs. A good example of this would be the Prayer of Jabez (1 Chronicles 4:10). It's been claimed that we too should pray his prayer so that God will bless us, keep us from trouble and pain, and expand our territory. Somehow, I imagine God chuckling at those who view this as some magical, mystical, chant so they can get what they want.
- I am concerned about those who interpret scripture based upon feelings; where they read a verse or two then ask how it makes them feel. However, a Christian must allow scripture to tell us how we should feel or what it tells us to do. I don't feel like turning the other cheek when someone slaps my face. But scripture demands that I rise above my feelings and do what I should. Scripture says I should pray for those who persecute me (a foolish teaching according to the world's wisdom). If I view this in light of how it makes me feel, I just might come up with some wild interpretation that makes me feel better.
- Some people interpret scripture based upon what we know and see in nature; what we can reason. In other words, if what the Bible says cannot be proven scientifically, then the Bible must be in error. Based upon the complexity of the universe, it's impossible that it was all created in six days. We can't conceive it, so it therefore must not be accurate. In other words, we create God in our own image.

You know, when we start interpreting scripture in these ways, we are the ones who are the fools. We become the morons. For it is so easy to become divided when personal feeling, personal experiences, and personal wisdom become the standard by which we measure the Word of God.

Let me finish by sharing a few thoughts on how to keep ourselves from becoming divided on the Word of God.

1. The number one thing to remember, and Paul alludes to it here in chapter two, the essential, core beliefs of scripture are not complicated or difficult to understand. We all need grace. God offers grace to those who are broken and humble through Christ the Son. And because of the resurrection, we who are saved have a promise of future glory and peace.
2. Be submitted to scripture; don't make scripture submit to you. Read scripture so that it will change you. If there is a passage that is difficult to understand or comprehend, it's not the Word of God that needs to change.
3. Read the whole Bible. The best way to understand scripture is in light of all that God has said. The best way to understand the New Testament is in light of what is revealed in the Old.
4. This one is important. Read the scripture in light of what the author was trying to say. Who was he speaking to? This is what we are doing here in this study of Corinthians. We take a look at what Paul has said in light of what was going on in the church at that time. We ask questions about why something is said, or to whom it has been said. For example, later on we'll ask the question, why did Paul only mention head coverings to the church in Corinth?

Through all of this I'm reminded of a time in my life when I actually believed there was a gate in the city of Jerusalem called the "Eye of the Needle"; in reference to what Christ says in Matthew 19:24 (Easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God). Someone told me that this was a reference to a small opening, and the camel had to stoop low to the ground. So for a while I went around teaching this to others. I truly felt like a fool when, after proper study, I learned that there is no such gate.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that we must allow this book to change our lives. We must surrender to its authority. If not, we will quickly and easily become divided. But God does not intend for us to be divided or confused. He gave us this book to instruct and unite us. And if studied properly by all Christians, I believe that's just what it will do.