

## 9 - The Foolishness of the Gospel

### KISS

You have probably heard the expression "Keep it simple, stupid!" This is good advice for anyone who is trying to explain something. We so easily get drawn into explaining unnecessary detail too soon. We need to start with the big picture and keep the focus on that, only filling in the detail as it becomes necessary.

### The Desire to Understand

God has given us intelligence and minds that like to understand the world we live in. Some people, like me, love to delve into the depths of a thing, to understand its inner workings. Others are not terribly interested in mechanics and just want to get to the point!

Some people, when hearing about the Kingdom of God want to know how it works, how God can forgive sinners, why Jesus died, what happened on the cross and so on. Of course we can help such a person understand some of this. But we must not make the mistake of thinking that an explanation of the inner-workings of the Gospel is the same as the gospel itself. I may understand how a car engine works without ever actually driving to the destination!

In truth, none of us understand much about what happened on the cross, and we must never forget that the Tree of Life is Jesus Himself, not knowledge *about* Jesus.

### The Gospel Explained

Jesus almost certainly spent more time talking and explaining than healing, as did the apostles. Paul clearly devoted much time and prayer to gain an understanding of how the good news of the kingdom was made possible by the death and resurrection of the Messiah. He also devoted himself to explaining the scriptures to the Jews:

Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. (Acts 18:5)

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. (Acts 19:8)

A young man named Eutychus sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. (Acts 20:9)

Talking and explaining things clearly are very important. Understanding the things of God is important.

But *truth* is not defined by what seems reasonable to us. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." (Romans 3:4). We must remember:

"The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power." (1 Cor 4:20)

### The Foolishness of the Gospel

It is natural that we try to proclaim the Gospel in a way that makes sense to people, and that sounds reasonable. But our reasoning and intelligence has been corrupted by the fall, so that what is reasonable to God looks like foolishness to us:

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. (1 Cor 1:21)

This very important scripture tells us that people do not get to know God through understanding a reasonable Gospel, but through the Holy Spirit granting faith in what seems to be a foolish Gospel.

Paul is writing about Jesus being crucified as appearing foolish to the Jews and Greeks. But that is not the only aspect of the Gospel that appears foolish:

"For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it." (Matthew 16:25)

"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." (John 6:53)

"If anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them." (Mark 11:23)

Jesus said many things that appear foolish to the natural mind:

The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. (1 Cor 2:14)

Part of the 'foolishness' of the Gospel is in Jesus' instruction to preach healing for the sick as the starting point for the Gospel. This appears foolish to us because not everyone we pray for is healed immediately – they may not be healed at all. Preaching sight for the blind when the blind remain blind makes us appear foolish. But we must accept that Jesus' wisdom is greater than our foolishness. We must continue to proclaim the gospel Jesus gave us, because that foolish Gospel is the power of God for salvation to those who are being saved.

## **Conclusion**

We have considered some of the warnings of scripture that the Gospel is not simply words of explanation about salvation, but it is the demonstration of deliverance into the Kingdom of God. This 'foolishness' is our mandate.