

1 Corinthians 1:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

Analysis

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God (ho logos gar ho tou staurou tois men apolonymenois mōria estin, tois de sōzomenois hēmin dynamis theou estin, ὁ λόγος γὰρ ὁ τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῖς μὲν ἀπολλυμένοις μωρία ἔστιν, τοῖς δὲ σωζομένοις ἡμῖν δύναμις θεοῦ ἔστιν)—Paul contrasts two responses to the cross. **To them that perish** (tois apolonymenois, τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, present passive participle: "those being destroyed") the cross is moria (μωρία, "foolishness, absurdity")—not mere silliness but scandalous stupidity. A crucified God is intellectually offensive and culturally shameful.

But unto us which are saved (tois sōzomenois, τοῖς σωζομένοις, present passive participle: "those being saved") it is dynamis theou (δύναμις θεοῦ, "the power of God")—not mere influence but divine, saving power. The contrast is absolute: foolishness versus power, perishing versus being saved. There is no neutral ground. The present tense participles emphasize ongoing process: those currently on the path to destruction versus those currently being saved.

Historical Context

Crucifixion was the Roman Empire's most degrading execution method, reserved for slaves, rebels, and the lowest criminals. To claim that a crucified man was Lord and Savior was absurd to Greeks (who valued wisdom) and scandalous to Jews

(Deut 21:23: "cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"). Yet this offensive message is precisely where God's power resides—not in eloquence or philosophy but in the shameful cross.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. Why is the cross inherently "foolishness" to the perishing—what makes it so offensive intellectually and culturally?
2. How have you experienced the cross as "the power of God" in your own life and salvation?
3. In what ways might we be tempted to soften or repackage the cross to make it less offensive?

Interlinear Text

Ο	λόγος	γὰρ	ό	τοῦ	σταυροῦ	τοῖς	μὲν
G3588	the preaching	G3056	G1063	G3588	G3588	G4716	G3303
ἀπολλυμένοις	μωρία	ἐστιν	τοῖς	δὲ	σωζομένοις	ἡμῖν	
that perish	foolishness	is	G3588	G1161	which are saved	unto us	
G622	G3472	G2076			G4982	G2254	
δύναμις	θεοῦ	ἐστιν					
the power	of God	is					
G1411	G2316	G2076					

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 2:14 (References God): But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Romans 1:16 (Salvation): For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

2 Thessalonians 2:10 (Salvation): And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

2 Corinthians 4:3 (Parallel theme): But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

1 Corinthians 1:21 (Salvation): For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

1 Corinthians 3:19 (References God): For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

1 Corinthians 2:2 (Salvation): For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 (Parallel theme): For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

Acts 13:41 (Parallel theme): Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

Hebrews 4:12 (References God): For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

