

To be wise, become a fool

Ponder: A foolish sage?

Scripture: “But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:23-24, NKJV).

What picture comes to your mind when you see the word “fool”? A court jester, perhaps? Then think of a wise man. What do you see? Is it a skinny, bearded fellow sitting cross-legged on the ground with his eyes closed and his thumbs and index fingers together as he chants “omm, omm, omm”?

Neither of those matches the Bible’s concepts of wisdom and foolishness. In Scripture, a fool is one who is naive, dull-witted, and gullible. Fool may also refer to an immoral person, even if he is intellectually sharp. By contrast, a wise person perceives reality clearly and applies sound reasoning when making decisions.

Our challenge consists of seeing the difference between wisdom as the world views it and wisdom as God knows it. The Scripture cited above is from Paul’s first letter to Corinth, a Greek city. The Greeks held their philosophers in high regard. The very word philosopher means a lover of wisdom. So the Corinthians knew much about wisdom as the world understands it, and they were quite proud of it! However, none of their philosophers contemplated one of their gods becoming a man and giving himself as an atonement offering to pay for the sins of all humanity. When most Greeks heard about Jesus doing that very thing, they thought it was foolishness!

Nobody enjoys being seen as a fool. The saints at Corinth felt pressured to compromise the gospel to keep from looking foolish. In numerous ways we face that pressure today. The world mocks our confidence in the Bible as the inspired, authoritative word of God. People with PhD degrees rail against the very existence of God, not to mention the validity of the Christian faith. Paul wrote, “We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ” (1 Cor. 4:10). Of course his comment on how wise the Corinthians were was pure sarcasm. In today’s parlance he might say, “Oh yes, you Corinthians are SO wise! (NOT!)”

Whose wisdom will you accept: the world’s, or God’s? Are you willing to be accounted as a fool for Christ?

Song: “I Know Whom I Have Believed”

Prayer: All-wise Heavenly Father, the world’s wisdom cannot begin to compare to Yours. We would be fools indeed to exchange the truth of Your word for the speculations of men. Help us, we pray, to be truly wise like Jesus; and when the world mocks us, let us be content to be fools for Jesus’ sake. In His name, Amen.