

Fools for Christ's Sake
1 Corinthians 4:6-13

Good Morning.

In the ***Book of 2 Samuel***, we read the narrative of God's people, under King David, defeating the Philistines and bringing back the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem.

The Ark is one of the most instrumental symbols of faith and of God's presence, which contained the two tablets of God's Law.

After many years in captivity the Ark is brought home to the nation's capital and David and many others greatly rejoiced.

2 Samuel 6:20 Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal (mee kawl) the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said,

"How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!"

2 Samuel 6:21 So David said to Michal(mee kawl), "It was before the LORD, who chose me instead of your father and all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel. Therefore I will play music before the LORD.

2 Samuel 6:22 And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight. NKJV

As Christians, when we truly stop and realize how we have been chosen by an all powerful, all holy God through Jesus Christ,

...we too will want to celebrate God's love and grace toward us.

The Lord Himself invites us to be expressive in our gratitude toward Him, and sometimes being undignified like King David.

The Christian life is one of joy and celebration yes; but it is also one of humility and appearing foolish to the lost, godless world.

Please open your Bibles to *1 Corinthians 4* as we continue.

Two weeks ago in our *1 Corinthians* study, Paul once again touched on human wisdom verses godly wisdom, as he explained how we are stewards of the Gospel.

We must rely on, and surrender to, the Holy Spirit in order to operate within God's wisdom.

Then we learned as a child of God, we are co-heirs with Christ; so we should get your eyes off of men and place them on Jesus.

Paul said we are Servants of Christ. We are simply *stewards* with the Lord being the rightful owner of everything we possess.

Last week Andy taught out of the *Gospel of John*; Christians are **hated** for **Christ's sake** and this morning in *1 Corinthians*, Paul will teach us that we are to be, "**Fools** for **Christ's Sake**".

I. Example for following Christ.

Read *1 Corinthians 4:6*

What did Paul mean, "*Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes*"

First, the statement, “***Now these things***”, points us back to what Paul had been teaching about how *the Corinthian church were glorying in men, and this was wrong.*

I read several commentaries on this passage which agreed with the others. *Jamieson, Fausset & Brown’s* commentary explained

*“I have represented under the persons of Apollos and myself what really holds good of all teachers, making us two a figure or **type** of all the others.”* (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown*)

So Paul is using himself and Apollos as the example of all of Christ’s servants, not just the leaders in the Church; he was showing these believers how they all should represent Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”

Wiersbe said, “*God’s servants are stewards of His truth, and the key test is, ‘Have they been faithful to obey and to teach the Word of God?*

Not just faithful preaching, but faithful practicing as well’.”

Paul says, “***Not to think beyond what is written.***” In other words, do not add to or **take away** from scripture.

How important is this for us today?

So many people claim something is biblical without any biblical evidence or they take God’s Word completely out of context.

I have said many times, we can make this book say anything we want it to say if we do not use proper context.

Revelation 22:18 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;

Revelation 22:19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. NKJV

John Walvoord said, *“What a solemn warning this is to critics who have tampered with this book and other portions of Scripture in arrogant self-confidence*

...that they are equipped intellectually and spiritually to determine what is true and what is not true in the Word of God.”

The Bible is God’s Word; and if we add or take away to fit our **own agenda**, we are in real danger.

This is how Christians get off track with a new wave of doctrine, going through the church.

...whether it is the wealth doctrine or laughing in the Spirit or any other false theology.

Allow me to give a couple of real quick modern day examples...

A verse taken out of context can say, if one person comes to faith, then the whole family is saved; of course that’s wrong.

Acts 16:31 "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." NKJV

In context, what *Acts 16* is teaching was the Philippian Jailor could be saved and so could other members of his family by, each of them, placing their faith in the finished work of Christ.

Another example; some denominations say if a believer has a certain sign gift; then and only then, do they have proof of their own salvation.

But later in *1 Corinthians*, Paul asks a rhetorical question in *1 Corinthians 12:29, Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?*

1 Corinthians 12:30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

1 Corinthians 12:31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. NKJV

Many people want a god of their own **making**; but the Lord is God and every man a liar.

Thomas Campbell: "*Where the Bible Speaks, We Speak; Where the Bible Is Silent, We Are Silent*"

So here again, Paul says ***do not think beyond what is written;***

Why? ...that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other

When these Christians used unbiblical standards to judge certain leaders, they started liking one and hating another based on bad standards; all based upon the sin of pride.

If the Corinthians learned *not think beyond what is written*, they would not have taken sides based on personalities of the teachers.

The Church needs to keep the Word of God being taught correctly, as the most important thing about a fellowship.

These puffed up Christians showed there was a pride problem, demonstrated through cliques favoring different leaders.

II. All you possess was given to you.

Read *1 Corinthians 4:7*

In this verse, Paul asks 3 questions to deal with their pride issue

1. Who makes you to differ from another?

Our different gifts are all given to us because of what God has done in us, so there is no reason for personal pride.

John the Baptist said in *John 3:27* "*A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.*

John 3:28 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.'

John 3:29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices

greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.

John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease. NKJV

2. What do you have that you did not receive?

Everything we have is a gift from God; so no reason for pride.

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. NKJV

3. Why do you glory as if you had not received it?

If what you have spiritually is a gift from God, how bad is it to steal His glory by acting as if you did not receive it from Him?

Warren Wiersbe said, “If we glory in men, even godly men like Peter and Paul and Apollos, we are **robbing** God of the glory that He alone deserves.” (Wiersbe)

When something of **eternal** value happens through one of Christ’s servants, Christ alone deserves the glory.

III. A sarcastic correction.

Read *1 Corinthians 4:8*

The word Paul uses here for **full** is usually about food; in other words you have a full belly or a feeling of being satisfied.

Contrast with Jesus' word *Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.*

Hunger and thirst are basic human needs and the desire for food and water can also be described as a passion or strong desire.

Most Christians have been fooled into believing that something from the world will fulfill the strong **cravings** within our lives.

King Solomon had everything you could imagine, but he could not find meaning in a worldly, sensuous life; his soul was never satisfied and he found all these things, vain and futile.

Spiritually speaking, there is a hunger for God down in our hearts that is often not recognized for what it is.

Some of us have an empty feeling, a sense of longing, even loneliness, so we try to fill it with things of the world.

Here the Lord tells us that we should hunger and thirst for things He can offer that will satisfy our deepest **cravings**.

It is God's will to fill us with every good thing, to the point of overflowing.

So why is Paul saying something here contrasting Jesus' saying

G. Campbell Morgan said, "Though Paul uses strong sarcasm, his purpose isn't to make fun of the Corinthian Christians. He wants to shake them out of their proud, self-willed thinking."

“He was laughing at them with holy laughter, and yet with utter contempt for what they had been doing.” (Morgan)

The quickest way to have an ineffective ministry is pride.

A good leader must constantly be on guard against believing their own headlines and allowing pride to creep in.

Paul gave his protégé Timothy the qualifications of an Elder;
1 Timothy 3:6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. NKJV

Because of his pride, the devil was disqualified and removed from his position as a messenger for the Lord.

A prideful leader within Christ’s Church can become disqualified from their role in the church;

The Lord may remove His hand of blessing from anything the prideful leader tries to accomplish.

We said this two weeks ago; remember Nebuchadnezzar was speaking of his personal greatness and of his kingdom.

Just then, the Lord spoke to the king and instantly, he became insane and was driven out of the palace to live as a **beast** eating grass, for seven years.

The Corinthians thought they were self sufficient like the Stoics, with a false sense of being full, rather than satisfaction in Christ.

Leon Morris said, “*Paul goes so far as to express the wish that they really were in the royal position they imagined.*”

Then perhaps he and the others might be associated with them in this splendor, and be benefited by their progress in the faith.”

Paul as their God-given leader is saying, “*I really wish you were kings, because then we could **reign** as kings with you.*”

Paul said in ***Romans 12:3***, “***For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. NKJV***

IV. The real cost of discipleship.

Read ***1 Corinthians 4:9-13***

The word ***spectacle*** in Greek is “*theatron*” from which we get our word “theater.”

Paul is communicating that true disciples are **hated** by the world and are displayed as humbled and low members of society.

Spectacle is a picture of when an army won a battle; they would have a ceremony to publicly celebrate the success of a battle.

The conquering Roman General would ride in a horse-drawn chariot through the streets in a procession with his troops.

Behind the procession of soldiers, the spoils of war as well as all of the **captives** were displayed in the parade for all to see.

There would be cattle, oxen and other animals that had been taken during the battle, as well as silver, gold, and even slaves.

The Roman army made a *spectacle* of their enemies to demonstrate just how great the victory was against the enemy.

Paul said we are a *spectacle*, showing the apostles humiliated; which was a horror to Corinthians who were proud of their own spirituality, and embarrassed of Paul's "weakness" and humility.

Wiersbe said, "*Paul was a fool according to the standards of men. Had he remained a Jewish rabbi, he could have attained great heights in the Jewish religion.*" (Wiersbe)

"Or had he sided with the Jewish legalists in the Jerusalem church and not ministered to the Gentiles, he could have avoided a great deal of persecution.

But when Paul asked the Lord, "What wilt thou have me to do?" in Acts 9:6, he really meant it."

vs. 10 we are fools for Christ's sake.

As a Spirit filled Christian, we appear *foolish* to a dying world that values humanistic wisdom over the ways of the Lord.

To be a Christian who is obedient to God's Word and follows the direction of His Spirit, you will appear as an utter fool.

Again here in ***vs. 10***, Paul was sarcastically showing how foolish it is for the Corinthians to think that they are more spiritually privileged, blessed, or endowed, than the apostles were.

These Christians were embarrassed that followers of Christ, would be persecuted by the world, the way Paul was describing; after all, *would God truly allow His servants to suffer like this?*

Some things in the Bible may seem foolish to the natural man who may have a tough time understanding God's ways

Wiersbe said, *“Those who have been called by God's grace, and who have responded by faith, realize that Christ is God's power and God's wisdom.”*

Not the Christ of the manger, or the temple, or the marketplace —but the Christ of the cross.

It is in the death of Christ that God has revealed the foolishness of man's wisdom and the weakness of man's power.”

We are fools for Christ's sake, but we are wise in Christ!

Sold out Christians seem foolish to the world; but not self-pitying, defensive, miserable, or “oh-poor-me” fools, rather unashamed, happy, hope-filled fools for Christ.

Re-read ***1 Corinthians 4:11-13***

This goes against the prosperity Gospel who would say, the Lord desires His followers to be full, wealthy and healthy.

Paul's description of his ministry shows humiliation, which those in the world, hate.

In their pride, these folks wanted to avoid persecution at all cost.

And we labor, working with our own hands.

Before conversion, Paul was a Rabbi trained in the best schools

After his conversion, Paul relied on tent making to support himself in Corinth on his second missionary journey.

Acts 18:1 After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.

Acts 18:2 And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them.

Acts 18:3 So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.

Acts 18:4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. NKJV

It was standard practice for Jewish rabbis to have a trade. Paul did tent making so he was not to be a burden to the churches he was teaching and to avoid accusations he was preaching for gain

The Corinthians thought manual labor was only for slaves.

Being defamed, we entreat; when we are slandered; we should return **kindness** to those who slander against them.

Matthew 5:44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, NKJV

This was offensive to the Greeks; they believed a man was a wimp if he didn't fight back when he was slandered.

Paul used the words filth and off-scouring, meaning he is both despised and a sacrifice on their behalf.

When considering Christian leaders; there is a level of respect because of the office given by the Lord...

But Some Christian leaders desire the admiration of the world; instead of having the heart of the Apostle Paul.

There are so called reverends that show up, at news worthy events; which stands in contrast of the description by Paul.

Think of Paul's pedigree after salvation: he was run out of towns, accused of rioting, rarely supported by the ministry, arrested and imprisoned several times.

Who today would hire Paul as a pastor?

David Guzik said, *"Our problem is we often want a middle road: a little popularity, a little reputation, but still the anointing of God."*

*"We want the **power** without the cost. God help us to choose Paul's way, because it is really God's way."* (David Guzik)

V. Practical Application.

I know I have been a fool in many things in my life. I have made poor business decisions, acted in the flesh and behaved rudely.

But the things the Lord has called me to do, which made me appear foolish to the lost and dying world, are actually gain.

Those times of obedience that seemed foolish, will all turn out for gain for me and honor for the Kingdom of Christ!

Think about when God called Noah to build the Ark out in the middle of the desert, where it had never even rained before the Lord told him to build that boat...

...I am sure, most of the human population at that time thought this guy was not only a fool, but probably demented as well.

Here is an extra-biblical quote from Noah, *“Sometimes faith will make you look stupid until it starts to rain.”*

Because the Corinthians were wise in their own eyes, they looked down on Paul’s explanation of a fool for Christ’s sake.

They said preaching of the cross was incomplete, and even foolish. They were more concerned with the wisdom and intelligence of the world, than simplicity of the Grace of God.

They were offended by someone who would tell them they need to be foolish for the sake of the Gospel.

If a Christian is considered a fool for their faith, they must stay true to **proclaiming** Jesus Christ and the power of His Gospel.

Christians know the Word of God is true; we know in whom we believe; we may seem foolish to worldly people, who are blind and spiritually dying; but Christ followers have everlasting life.

As King David said in *2 Samuel 6:22* ***And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight.***

As Christians, when we truly stop and realize how we have been chosen by an all powerful, all holy God through Jesus Christ we too will want to celebrate God's love and grace toward us.

The Lord Himself invites us to be foolish for Him, while expressing **gratitude** towards Him.

The Christian life is one of joy and celebration yes, but it is also one of humility and foolishness towards the world.

If we humble ourselves in the sight of God, He will lift us up!

If we are foolish for trusting God He will not be put us to shame