

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God

by William MacDonald

Transcript

“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 Cor. 1:21)

Some in the church in Corinth were trying to make the Gospel intellectually respectable. Their preoccupation with the wisdom of this world made them sensitive to those aspects of the Christian message which were offensive to the philosophers.

There was no thought of their abandoning the faith, only of redefining it so that it would be more palatable to the scholars.

Paul came down hard on this attempt to marry the world's wisdom to God's. He knew only too well that the achieving of intellectual status would result in a loss of spiritual power.

Let's face it! There is that about the Christian message that is scandalous to Jews and foolish to Gentiles. And not only that—most Christians are not what the world would call wise, mighty or noble. Sooner or later we have to face up to the fact that instead of belonging to the intelligentsia, we are foolish, weak, base, despised—in fact, we are nobodies as far as the world is concerned.

But the wonderful thing is that God uses that message, which seems to be foolish, in saving those who believe. And God uses nonpersons like us to accomplish His purposes. In choosing such unlikely instruments, He confounds all the pomp and pretension of this world, eliminates any possibility of our boasting, and insures that He alone gets the credit.

This is not to say that there is no place for scholarship. Of course there is. But unless that scholarship is combined with deep spirituality, it becomes a deadening and dangerous thing. When scholarship sits in judgment on the Word of God, claiming, for instance, that some writers used more reliable sources than others, it represents departure from the truth of God. And when we court the approbation of scholars like that, we are vulnerable to all their heresies.

Paul did not come to the Corinthians with excellence of speech or of wisdom. He determined to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He knew that power lay in the simple, straightforward presentation of the Gospel, not in occupation with knotty problems or unprofitable theories, or in the worship of intellectualism.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-macdonald/for-after-that-in-the-wisdom-of-god-the-world-by-wisdom-knew-not-god/>

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