

Greetings to you! The theme for our meditation today is that, "The wisdom and power of God are most clearly revealed in the 'weakness' and 'foolishness' of the cross." The Christian's choice of the cross as the symbol of their faith is surprising when we remember the horror with which crucifixion was regarded in the ancient world. Paul's message of the Cross was to many of his listeners 'foolishness' even 'madness' (1 Cor 1:18, 23). How could any sane person worship as a God a dead man who had been justly condemned as a criminal and subjected to the most humiliating form of execution? Paul says that the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. The message of the cross is that Jesus Christ came into this world as a human being to offer himself as a sacrifice on the cross for the sins of all humanity and that all those who believe in him will receive the forgiveness of sins and life eternal. This offer of forgiveness and life can only be appropriated by individual faith in Jesus Christ. The other side of the message is that those who choose to reject the message of God's Son make God out to be a liar and therefore will be judged. The point that is made is that the message concerns a crucified Christ. The recipients of Paul's message were also 'ordinary' people who were not considered as the 'wise' of the world (1:26-31). And Paul's own preaching was not characterized by the cleverness designed to impress an audience. He says, "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power." (1Co 2:4-5 NIV) But Paul is saying that the cross is foolishness for those who are perishing.

How is the cross which seems to be a symbol of weakness and death give power to those who are being saved? The cross gives us power by showing us that death is not the last step for us. Jesus defeated death on the cross by rising up on the third day. Therefore, there is the hope of the resurrection. Secondly, because of the Cross God's righteous anger against human sin has been propitiated by the offering of his own Son on the cross and therefore he is able to forgive our sins because the penalty has already been paid. Thirdly, the powers of darkness have all been defeated on the Cross. Jesus died and rose again defeating all the powers of darkness put together which tried to keep him down. Finally, the Cross is the transformative power in our lives. It is because of the Cross that our lives are being transformed into the likeness of His Son Jesus.

How is the wisdom of God revealed through the weakness and foolishness of the Cross? The Jews were always looking out for signs and wonders in order to believe that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. The Greeks on the other side took pride in their intellect and their wisdom and therefore thought that it was an affront to their intelligence to trust in a crucified Man for their salvation. They were always seeking after what would bring them success in politics, the courtroom, philosophy, or in everyday affairs of trade, love or the household. However God's way for salvation was indeed the way of the Cross which is a stumbling block to many.

How do we respond to the Cross of Christ. It is indeed God's power and wisdom for those of us who are being saved or is it 'foolishness' and 'weakness' that we do not need it? The cross paradoxically offers us life. May we receive it by faith.

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