1 Corinthians 1:18, 21-24 (NIV)

18 For 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.

21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. 22 Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

INTRODUCTION: (Scripture reading: 1 Cor 1:18-24)

–My last message [“The Foolishness of the Gospel”] came from v.18a, “...the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.” Today’s title is “The Power of the Gospel.” The last sermon addressed Greek wisdom-seekers in v.22, Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom... Now, we’ll look at the Jewish sign-seekers, or those seeking the miraculous. –[Dan Wakefield in “In Search of Miracles,” says, “We have moved from ‘death of God’ theology to intense interest in the supernatural.”] But New-Agers have a big problem: the God of the universe invested His personal power in a conventional box called the Gospel, so that by it He could transform sinners into saints. Sinners who trust their own ideas remain sinners and ultimately die as sinners. This is why...

I. God Hides Himself from the Sinner’s Wisdom

A. Man’s wisdom asks, “Why doesn’t God just show up?” – v.21a. For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him...—

God wisely remains hidden from sinners*

1. *When their pride of knowledge blinds them. (He won’t let them succeed spiritually in the vanity of their own wisdom.)

2. *When religious knowledge makes them controlling [Think of the abuses of powerful ministers; the ugly atrocities of religious persecution.]

B. God’s wisdom says, “I did show up, and you crucified Me.” – v.21b.

God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. — Man thinks God’s investment foolishness, because:*

1. *It eliminates human effort in salvation (Law says, “do and live” but Christ declares “it is finished ... Come unto me!”)

2. *It trades the goal of self-fulfillment for self-denial (Jesus says, “Come, take up your cross and follow Me.”)

3. *It makes trust in God’s plan the threshold of God’s blessing.
What pleases God is not intelligence, moral effort or self-achievement, but faith in His finished work on the Cross. For Christians, the vision of worldly power is not a calling, but a distraction. It is a temptation Jesus rejected, not because it was dangerous, but because it was trivial compared with his mission...]

4. To follow fortune-tellers and horoscopes instead of instructions from God’s Word. [Being set free from Gong Hee Fat Choy, my answer now to “What’s your sign?” is “I was born under the sign of the Cross!”]

To follow fortune-tellers and horoscopes instead of instructions from God’s Word. (Being set free from Gong Hee Fat Choy, my answer now to “What’s your sign?” is “I was born under the sign of the Cross!”)

Referring to the bronze serpent raised on a pole for Israel to look at for healing from poisonous snake bites, an old Jewish writing says Moses complained, “This serpent is a stumbling block to the world.” God replied, “Not at all. It shall be for punishment to sinners, and life to upright men.”] Jesus explained His Cross by telling us in John 3:14-15. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. To some this message is still a stumbling block, BUT...

CONCLUSION:
–Some call the Gospel foolishness, because they’ve never experienced it. Their argument is, “I’ve never felt God’s power!” [Spurgeon wrote: “a blind man is no judge of colors, a deaf man is no judge of sound, and a man who has never been quickened into spiritual life can have no judgment as to spiritual things.”] –Others say, “I prayed, there were no flashing lights, and God didn’t give me what I wanted!” These people need to face some questions: “What are you looking for? Your will or God’s will? Your plans or His plan? What are you really after? A thrilling experience with special effects? Or do you want to receive God’s transforming power?” (God doesn’t offer spiritually peaceful feelings: He usually disrupts our lives! He doesn’t promise supernatural fireworks: His Gospel changes hearts! Through the Cross of Christ, God has invested His personal power for one great purpose: to transform sinners into saints.