

## 1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-16

### INTRODUCTION

Paul has been contrasting the wisdom of the people of Corinth with the wisdom of God. To most of the Corinthians the wisdom of God was foolishness but to those who believed Paul's message in Corinth this wisdom saved their souls. In this section that we are looking at Paul is still dealing with the subject of wisdom and he makes two points about divine wisdom.

#### 1. TRUE WISDOM IS NOT HUMANLY DISCOVERED (vs. 6-9)

The gospel, which Paul preached, was a message of wisdom but it was not recognised as wise by the people of Corinth but only those who were 'mature' (v 6) meaning those who have come to faith in Christ. It is those who accept the gospel and turn in faith to the Christ of the gospel that understand and recognise this gospel as God's pure wisdom (v 6).

God's wisdom is not like the wisdom of this world there was nothing like it in all of Corinth even though Corinth was the centre for human wisdom. The rulers of Corinth were considered to be very wise in the eyes of the people but God's wisdom is way above their wisdom for these so called wise rulers and these rulers and their wisdom were coming to nothing or as another translation has it are 'passing away' (v 6). However God's wisdom is eternal. But God's wisdom is also a secret wisdom (v 7) the word is really the word 'mystery,' which means truth once, concealed now revealed.

In other words at one time the gospel in its full glory was concealed we only had hints and shadows of this gospel throughout the Old Testament period. But now this secret has been fully revealed with the coming of Christ and with the proclamation of the gospel. But only those who have come to embrace it have really discovered the revealed gospel; to everyone else it is still concealed.

Therefore the gospel is not a secret in the sense that only a few can hear or discover the gospel, Paul preached the gospel clearly and openly but the gospel is a secret to most in Corinth who have not yet had their eyes opened to its truth and relevance. However to those who God has revealed this gospel truth to and have come to understand it fully and have turned in faith to embrace it then this truth, which once was concealed from them, has now been revealed to them.

But this mystery wisdom is not something that mankind with their intelligence can see clearly. The truth is clear to understand but there must be a spiritual opening of the eyes of our heart if one is going to embrace the gospel. This is why Paul says that this wisdom was hidden but not from everyone. For God had decided in eternity that he was going to save a people for himself.

The way that he was going to do it was through the gospel of His Son who came to earth lived died rose again so that we could be saved and ultimately brought to glory. Now this is the wisdom that has been preached in Corinth and this is the wisdom that has been revealed to those who believe it. Again the emphasis is on the fact that God's wisdom is not discovered purely by human means, God's wisdom is spiritual and therefore it must be spiritually revealed.

This is exactly how God had planned it from the very beginning in his great wisdom God decided to save people and the method he would use was the gospel.

The application for us is twofold. We must make sure that gospel proclamation is at the centre of all that we do. In our church we have changed our evangelistic methods in an attempt to reach out to more people, but there is one thing that we must never change we must change the importance of proclaiming the gospel. It's through the gospel that God will save his people and bring them to

glory this is his plan. The second application is that we need to understand that most people will think that our message is strange and out of date and irrelevant.

People might laugh at us when we tell them the gospel but we must remember that the significance of the gospel is not discovered by human wisdom, it needs the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal this gospel to the hearts of sinners. So we must not lose heart and we must be convinced that the preaching and proclaiming of the gospel is God's method of reaching sinners so that they can be saved and brought to glory.

That has always been God's plan, which he decided in eternity and in time is bringing it to fruition through gospel proclamation. So even though times are hard and the gospel seems to be so irrelevant to so many we must continue to share it and proclaim it whenever the opportunity arises for it is God's method of saving sinners and bringing them to glory.

But the people of Paul's day did not understand the gospel they rejected gospel wisdom for their own man made wisdom. We know this because the crucifixion is clear proof that they did not have God's wisdom (v 8); for had they understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. Sadly neither the leaders of the Jews to whom the gospel was a stumbling block nor the leaders of the Gentiles to whom it was foolishness understood God's divine wisdom.

In their willing ignorance they executed the Son of God for in their eyes Jesus was anything but glorious yet in God's eyes Jesus is the very Lord of Glory. Human wisdom cannot see the glory of Christ such wisdom simply sees him as an enemy of wisdom, yet he is wisdom personified.

But this should not surprise us for gospel wisdom is not humanly discovered; this is why Paul quotes from Isaiah 64:4. Paul's point is that the natural eyes, ears and hearts of men cannot know or comprehend God's wisdom. Such wisdom is prepared only for those who love him.

Human wisdom or human means cannot discover God. God's truth is not discovered through rational thinking or through observance of what we can see and hear but it must be divinely revealed. Human wisdom and human means will always turn a person against God's truth; ultimately human wisdom leads men to crucify Christ. However those who have come to love God have had this truth revealed which leads me to my next point.

## 2. TRUE WISDOM IS DIVINELY REVEALED (vs. 10-16)

Man cannot discover the truth of the gospel on his own, for God's wisdom cannot be discovered using man's wisdom. However what mankind cannot do God does by revealing his wisdom to sinners by His Spirit (v 10). The Holy Spirit reveals God to us in three ways,

**a) By Revelation (vs. 10-11)** – The Holy Spirit is God's agent for transmitting his truth and for communicating His truth. The first step of this transmission of God's truth is revelation. As a member of the Godhead the Holy Spirit knows the mind of God perfectly. God did not entrust the revelation of His word to angels but God used the Holy Spirit to reveal his truth to the Apostles who recorded it for us (v 10).

The Holy Spirit is the divine author of God's word. Although many human agents were used to write down God's truth, the message given to them was God's message and the Holy Spirit moved upon the human agents to write down the exact words that God wanted them to write (2 Peter 1:21). Now to highlight the Holy Spirit's unique qualification for revealing God's truth to us, Paul compares the Spirit's knowledge of God's mind to a human being's knowledge of his own mind.

No other person can know us as well as we know ourselves. Not even our husbands or wives who know us better than anyone else can know us more intimately than we know ourselves. Only we

know our innermost thoughts and the deep recesses of our own hearts and minds. Now in a similar way, only God's own Spirit can know Him intimately and this is the very One that has been sent to reveal God's wisdom to us.

The Holy Spirit knows the depths and thoughts of God because he is God, he is the third person of the trinity and he has revealed God's wisdom, God's truth to those of us who believe. Yes he has given his word to us in written form but he has done much more than that for he has revealed it to us personally by His Spirit which brings me to the next way God reveals his wisdom to us.

**b) By Inspiration (vs. 12-13)** – God's truth cannot be discovered through the wisdom of men but it can be received from God. However in order to receive God's truth it had to be offered first of all and Paul says that God's truth could be received because it was freely offered or given (v 12). God's truth was given to Paul not by the spirit of the world in other words not by human wisdom but by the Spirit who is from God that is the Holy Spirit.

Now Paul's 'we' here (v 12) is not referring to Christians in general but to himself and his fellow apostles to whom God's truth was originally given. God's word is for all believers but it was revealed first of all to the Apostles and the other writers of Scripture. Only of these men could rightfully be said that they were inspired. But we need to be careful when we use that word inspired. What do we mean by it?

Paul and the other writers did not record for us their own ideas and thoughts and some how the Holy Spirit gave life to the words nor did they give to us their own interpretation. No! They recorded what they received from the Lord and only what they received from the Lord. Although the Spirit used human authors and used the words that human writers knew and used, he selected them and arranged them in precisely the order he wanted them so that we can say that these are the very words that God wanted to be written. We are told that all Scripture is God breathed or inspired (2 Timothy 3:16) and that is because God has freely given his word to his Apostles through the work of His Holy Spirit.

But you might rightfully ask what does this have to do with us, for the Apostles are long dead. Well the Apostles recorded God's word for us and Paul calls this process of recording God's word as "expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words" (v 13). Another way of saying that is to say that the New Testament consists of spiritual truths placed in spiritual words.

Do you realise what is in your bible? It is nothing less than the finished product of the Spirit of God revealing to us the truth of God. When we read God's word or hear it proclaimed or preached we should be seeking the help of the Holy Spirit to open up to us the deep things of God. We need to realise that the bible is the mind of Christ revealed to us; therefore we are blessed people to have the word of God and our attitude to it must show that appreciation.

It is this word of God that the Holy Spirit uses to introduce us to Christ for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). Think about your own life. How did you learn about sin or about salvation or about heaven and hell? You were taught these great truths from the word of God. The cross and its meaning were explained to us from the word of God. Therefore we must appreciate what a treasure we have we must read it and get to know it for this is God's truth and we must use it to tell others about the deep things of God.

**c) By Illumination (vs. 14-16)** – The third step in the Spirit's transmission of God's wisdom is that of illumination. You see it is possible to read the bible even from many different versions and yet not understand it in a saving way. The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees of Jesus day were highly trained in the Old Testament yet they missed its core and central message of salvation.

They completely failed to recognise the promised Messiah when he came and lived among them (John 5:37-39). They did not believe Jesus because they did not truly believe Moses the great lawgiver in whom they placed their hope (John 5:45-47). They did not accept the things of the Spirit of God because those things seemed to be foolishness to them. Because they did not belong to God they could not understand spiritual things because such spiritual truths are spiritually discerned (v 14).

Those teachers of the law and those Pharisees are like everyone else who rejects God and his truth they live without the Spirit; therefore they have no desire to understand the spiritual nature of God's word. People without the Holy Spirit cannot know or understand the things of the Spirit because such truths are spiritually discerned but those with the Spirit have been given the help that they need to grasp God's truth, God's word and to see it's clear message.

The man without the Spirit is spiritually dead they cannot see it or understand it yes they can read God's word but they cannot comprehend its message in any saving way. But those who have the Spirit are made alive spiritually and therefore are able to read, understand and embrace God's truth for themselves.

This is why we need to pray for ourselves and for others. We need to pray that God will open our eyes and the spiritual eyes of others to see the wonderful truth in God's word (Psalm 119:18). No one can understand the word of God simply by reading it alone we all need the help of the Holy Spirit to illuminate its pages so that we can see the deep things of God.

As we read God's word every day we ought to start by asking for the help of the Holy Spirit to open our eyes and heart not just to accept God's truth but also to obey it in our lives. We ought to be praying for the preaching of God's word that God may help each preacher to understand God's truth and then that he will grant them the ability to communicate God's word to his people.

We ought to pray for every congregation that God may grant his Spirit to each person so that they will see God's truth and obey it with the help of the Holy Spirit. Most of all we should pray for sinners that God would open their blind eyes by his Spirit so that they will see their need of salvation and turn to Christ in repentance and faith. But they will not do that unless God sends His Holy Spirit to them and opens his truth to them.

Therefore pray towards this end for each person that you know that is outside of Christ and in need of salvation.

However for those of us who have the Spirit then we are able to make judgements about all things (v 15). The all things is a comprehensive word we are able to see and understand spiritual truth and also appreciate that men and women without the Holy Spirit are in a desperate state before God. We are also able to view all that goes on in our world from a godly perspective we are able to see the world through God's eyes.

On the other hand the world does not understand Christians (v 15). It is just as hard for them to understand believers as it is for them to understand his word. The world tries to make judgements about Christians but their judgements are always wrong. They may accurately evaluate our faults and shortcomings and may even be able to see areas in our lives that are inconsistent with our faith but the world can never understand or evaluate our faith.

If the gospel is a stumbling block to them or if it is foolishness to them so then is our faith in Jesus Christ. Christians will always be misunderstood and sadly mistreated because that is what happened to our Master. We will always be laughed at, mocked and even in some places of the world killed for our faith. The reason for this persecution is simple the world does not understand faith for they do not possess the Holy Spirit.

Paul gives a reason why no unbeliever is able to make a correct assessment of the Christian faith (v 16). Who knows the mind of the Lord? Certainly not the unbelieving world with their worldly wisdom for they do not possess the Spirit of God. This is why unbelievers who might want to discuss our faith with us will always contradict God's word with their arguments. They do not think God's thoughts therefore they can only think like an unbeliever thinks.

Ultimately unbelievers who might want to disagree and even argue with us about our faith are not really disagreeing with us but with the Lord. Unbelievers are actually seeking to instruct the Lord by their arguments and views but how can a creature instruct their Creator? It is simply foolish but that is exactly what unbelievers are they are foolish people because they refuse to accept God's truth and refuse to turn to Him for salvation.

However for those of us who are Christians we have the Holy Spirit therefore we seek instruction from the Lord, we seek the help of the Holy Spirit to teach us spiritual truth from his word and therefore we have the mind of Christ. The Holy Spirit reveals Christ to us therefore the Christian does not see things from a worldly viewpoint but he sees things from the viewpoint of Christ.

He does not see the world and all that happens in it through the eyes of earthly wisdom but the Christian see this world through the eyes of heavenly wisdom through the eyes of Christ who is the Wisdom of God.

Amen