

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

Introduction

Many times the preacher is faced with difficult passages which are not easy to explain. It falls to the preacher to supply the bridge between a message to first century readers, and people living in the twentieth century; a first century message applied to the twentieth century. On the surface, it was a very different world then, and they talked about things which today we do not necessarily discuss. The topic of wisdom was often discussed by thinkers in Paul's day, but today we consider it remote and academic. We prefer to discuss more tangible things, like politics, the economic situation, or social changes.

But Paul, to make the Gospel relevant, has to talk about wisdom and the wise in contemporary terms. σοφία is used 17 times, and σοφός is used 10 times. He uses their terms, which are so strange to us, to explain the Gospel and the meaning of Christ. So underneath this strange exterior we are going to see the meaning and relevance and the power of the Gospel and learn important lessons for ourselves.

The people were proud of their wisdom. They were so sure they knew all about God through using their own human mind. They were proud of the clever way they explained and argued about their beliefs. They were certain there was a God, but he was distant and remote, unable to feel things as we do, not a person, unable to communicate. Then along comes Paul and says this is all wrong. They would never find God through thinking and arguing. God has had to show us Himself. He sent His Son, who died for our sins. This shows the power and wisdom of God.

The whole thing was a joke to the people. Christ as the Son of God? Saving them by dying for them? So Paul explains God's wisdom and why they do not understand, and how they can know.

The Christian's possession of wisdom

Paul says we believe in wisdom, but it is a very different wisdom that comes from God. **God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began** (1 Corinthians 2:7). The wisdom he is going to explain is knowing about God and the way of salvation and spiritual things.

In the Gospel you find great truths about God and what He's like. That even before He created, He foresaw the entry of sin, and planned to save men. He chose a people for Himself. He sent prophets and priests, and then in the fullness of time, sent His Son who died for sinners on a cross. He raised Him from the dead, and raised Him to be at His right hand. He poured out the Holy Spirit, created the Christian church, which is the body of His Son. From every nation He brings men to know Himself. He forgives sin, and places the Holy Spirit within. He gives new life and changes people. One day this world as we know it will come to an end, at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then every knee will bow and every tongue confess. All will be changed, a new heaven and new earth.

We need to respond to this message by repentance and faith. Then live with Christ in glory forever. The alternative is being banished forever in misery and horror. That is Christian wisdom, the truth about this world, God, Christ and you. It was all planned and purposed by God even before He made the world.

Only Christians know the truth of these things. The rest of mankind have turned themselves against God. They rely on themselves and their opinions. Hence they have got it all wrong. We see just how wrong they are – because when God sent His Son, the Lord of Glory (what a wonderful title!), they did not welcome or turn to Him, but rejected and crucified Him. The rulers of that age – Pilate, Annas and Caiaphas – did not know God’s truth and wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:8).

We have a wonderful picture of God’s wisdom and the amazing sweep of His truth. It is so superior to the guesses and speculations of the human mind. Do not despise the mind and the intellect, but bring it in captivity to Christ. The opinion of blind and ignorant men, who would say that surrendering the intellect to the wisdom of God is intellectual suicide, is so wrong. But here we have the truth of God, let it sink into your mind. Being a Christian is being built on a rock with solid foundations. Not susceptible to the sinking sands of human speculation. But fixed on the rock of God’s eternal revealed truth.

*“Firm as a rock Thy truth shall stand,  
When rolling years shall cease to move”  
(Isaac Watts)*

Here is the wisdom of God. All who stake everything on Christ will never be confounded.

#### The source of the Christian’s knowledge

You may question how we come to know these things, and how we can be sure they are true. The answer is that God has taken steps to reveal these things and make them known through His Spirit. It is not a matter of guesswork. It does not depend on us, but on God. The only person who knows what is in God’s mind and His plans is His Spirit. And His Spirit has made these things known to us. We do not know what another man is thinking, only his spirit knows. I am thinking it is a certain time. You do not know unless my spirit searches my mind and then tells you. Similarly, the only person who knows God’s thoughts is His Spirit, and then He tells us.

The Holy Spirit rummages  $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\upsilon\nu\alpha$  in God’s mind (v.10) and then lets us know. (N.B. the Holy Spirit searches and knows God’s mind – He is a person, and a divine person at that.) Therefore the believer knows the truth, not because he is brighter or cleverer, but because the Spirit has disclosed it to Him. **This is what we (the Apostles) speak.... in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words** (1 Corinthians 2:13).

The words recorded in the New Testament Scriptures were taught to the Apostles by the Holy Spirit. Then He illuminates our minds as we read, and we understand the truth. Thus we can make spiritual judgments and have the mind of Christ. **The**

**spiritual man makes judgments about all things.. we have the mind of Christ** (1 Corinthians 2:15,16). Paul gives one example in v.14. Man has no idea about the wonderful things which God has prepared for those who love Him, but the believer knows because of revelation by the Spirit. These things are only seen if the Holy Spirit is working in the life. Natural man cannot understand these things. To him, they are foolish; his eyes are blinded to them.

Bishop Taylor Smith was once preaching in a Church of England church on the text “You must be born again”. He turned to the choir, the clergy and the dean, and told them they must be born again. After the service the puzzled dean came into the Bishop’s presence to say that he did not know what it meant to be born again. He had to be straightened out on that one.

Do we know what it means, or, like natural men, is it all foolishness to us? **Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law** (Psalm 119:18).

### The results from wisdom through the Holy Spirit

Firstly, gratitude for these blessings. What a blessing to be delivered from all the empty speculations and guesses and uncertainties of the human mind. We just have to be still, listen to God, submit to Him, and be led and taught by Him. Our feet are firmly on the solid, immovable rock of God’s truth. Our life is built on a firm foundation.

Beyond that, God’s truth gives us insight and understanding about so many things which baffle and concern so many people. Natural man does not understand us, we are an enigma. In answer to the many questions posed by the human mind – what is the purpose of life, what is right and wrong, what about life beyond, how are we saved – the believer has a yardstick, i.e. God’s revelation, by which to measure and answer these questions. When we listen to conversations, or watch the news, we can see what is happening in society, and in the light of God’s wisdom, we have insight, understanding, and spiritual discernment, a point of reference. We can bring the mind of Christ to it all.

But this does not happen overnight. This wisdom of God comes to the mature or full-grown or adults (v.6). We have to grow up spiritually to enjoy and use the wisdom which God gives. We start as spiritual babies, with so much to learn. We need to grow up, and tragically many Christians remain spiritual babies all their lives. They never unlearn what they have brought from the past. They never truly escape the entanglements of the thinking around them.

We need to make progress and advance in the Christian life. Go deeper in understanding. Spend time with the Scriptures, attend to the ministry of the Word, and seek light and illumination from the Holy Spirit. Cultivate humble and teachable spirit. Need to realize we have not arrived, for the Christian life is a process and not a plateau.

Our dominant aim is to be to know Him. **One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus** (Philippians 3:13,14).

Do not sit back, but keep moving forward in the Lord. Ask the questions: What does the Holy Spirit mean to me? What ministry does He have in my life? What am I asking the Holy Spirit to do in my life?

*“Spirit of God, my teacher be,  
Showing things of Christ to me”*

This calls for total daily commitment to the Lord, and saying, “Speak Lord, your servant is listening”.