

## **FIRST CORINTHIANS**

### **God's Wisdom I Corinthians 2:6-13**

Are Christians a bunch of religious fanatics who never think? Are they intellectual pygmies who are deathly afraid of all interaction with the secular, intellectual world? Are Christians anti-intellectual because they oppose all worldly wisdom? The answer is a resounding, "No!" Christians have entered into the highest wisdom, which is found in the gospel. They must not only be acquainted with the worldly philosophies of their day but must be involved in propagating the highest wisdom, God's wisdom, which is the gospel. This is a spiritual wisdom which can only be known, lived and propagated by one who has the Holy Spirit working in him.

By way of review, Paul was writing the Corinthians about the fact that human reasoning is in no way connected with our wonderful salvation in Christ. Up to this point some might logically conclude Paul had no use for wisdom and that Christian truth is outside the realm of the intellect. Paul counters this argument by showing the gospel or the truth of God contains the highest of all wisdom. It is not wisdom like human philosophy, but it is the only true wisdom. It is the highest of all wisdom to be understood only in the spiritual realm.

Paul is showing the absolute worthlessness of human wisdom for salvation and Christian living. One of the objections raised against Paul at Corinth was that he was not a philosopher. His answer was that philosophy cannot save people. Only Jesus Christ and Him crucified can save a soul. Whatever value human philosophy may have within its own sphere and for its own ends, it is worse than useless as a substitute for the gospel. Paul was not for doing away with philosophy in the classroom but in the pulpit. He knew all the secular philosophies of his day. He was a wise man and he placed his confidence in God, the Word of God and the living Christ for salvation and Christian living. Paul was not illiterate nor did he preach nonsense. He preached God's wisdom which is the highest wisdom to which people can attain.

#### **GOD'S WISDOM AND THIS AGE 2:6-9**

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom. Paul does claim a wisdom for Christianity and it is the greatest wisdom of all. This is God's wisdom and it is contained in the gospel. The gospel, in its narrowest sense, refers to the truth about salvation. In a wider sense it refers to all of Christianity, a whole way of viewing life from a God-centered perspective. This wisdom, therefore, is a body of truth, explaining the way of salvation and all that is related to salvation. The gospel or the Cross is the key to understanding divine, spiritual wisdom. This is a wisdom which comes from God not man. The "we" probably refers to the Apostles who were given divine revelation from God and later penned this revelation for others.

Among the mature. This is a reference to those who are full grown, the competent, and must refer to those who are spiritually mature Christians. The wisdom Paul is talking about is potentially available to all Christians because all Christians have the Holy Spirit, but it is only understood and appreciated by those who are properly prepared to receive it; that is, those Christians who have reached practical spiritual maturity. Only those who are mature spiritually are able to grasp the deep things of God and enter into the highest type of wisdom. This statement about God's wisdom being grasped by the mature was a subtle slam by Paul at the Corinthian Christians who thought they were very mature because they had head knowledge and had mystical experiences but in reality they were babies in Christ. As babies, they were exalting leaders and were impressed with human wisdom which caused division in the local church. They were also running their individual lives and their local church on human wisdom, indicating they were baby Christians who never grew up.

But not the wisdom of this age. God's wisdom is completely different from that wisdom which the world knows. The wisdom of this age is merely human reasoning. The world has one basic philosophy with man at the center. This secular philosophy may take many forms -- eastern mysticism, humanism, transcendental meditation, New Age self-improvement, etc., but it is always man-centered. Even the great religions of the world, Mohammedanism Confucianism, Hinduism, etc., are man-centered because they teach man must do something to be saved. Every plan of salvation that is devised by man is a plan based on works; in contrast, Christianity is based on grace. God gives forgiveness to men on the basis of what Christ has done for them. Christianity is the only religion, the only plan of salvation, whereby man's forgiveness and acceptance before God is not based on human works, acts or motivations, but on the pure grace of a sovereign God.

Or of the rulers of this age. This means more than just the unsaved officials of Paul's day (Jews and Romans) but must be expanded to the leaders of thought, the mind benders, the shapers of public opinion, the philosophers, sociologists, the politicians of any day. These brilliant minds know nothing of God's wisdom. They do not understand this body of truth and that is why all their proposals, schemes and plans never really solve anything in the long run.

Without God at the center of man's thinking, the universe and life are a riddle, a maze and make no sense at all. We are the victims of a cosmic joke.

This divine wisdom cannot be learned in the secular university. No philosopher speaking outside the Christian framework ever unfolds this truth. No psychologist or psychiatrist who is not instructed from the scripture knows anything about this divine wisdom. This truth can only be taught by Christians because it is spiritually understood.

Who are coming to nothing. The best wisdom of secular man is temporary and is passing away. Often it is a mere fad which changes from decade to decade, and it never solves

anything permanently. Yet, the wisdom of God is eternal and unchangeable. "The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever" (I Jn. 2:17).

No, we speak of God's secret wisdom. God's wisdom is the Cross and the plans and purposes of God--the deep things of God. This wisdom is a "secret" or "mystery." A mystery is not something insolvable but a secret which man cannot penetrate by his own reasoning processes. A mystery is a secret that can only be known as God reveals it and makes it known. God's wisdom is revelation from Himself, and man must be aided by God if He is going to understand it.

A wisdom that has been hidden. God's wisdom has been and still is hidden from the world. The worldling cannot understand the gospel unless God works upon him to do so. God's wisdom is understood spiritually by faith and not by any human reasoning. The gospel is so profound; it is so subtle, so mysterious; it so surpasses the most exalted creations of human wisdom that it cannot be understood or appreciated by men unless they are aided by the Spirit of God.

And that God destined for our glory before time began. Salvation, brought to a believing sinner through the gospel by faith in Jesus Christ was no afterthought in the mind of God. It was a plan set in motion before the world ever began. In the eternal counsels, salvation was preplanned by God Himself. In eternity past, all three members of the Godhead covenanted together to save sinners through Jesus Christ on the basis of faith. God the Father covenanted with the Son and the Holy Spirit to elect a people to be saved; therefore the Father is the Originator of salvation. God the Son covenanted with the Father and the Holy Spirit to redeem to Himself through His own sacrifice those that the Father elected and gave to the Son; therefore, the Son is the Executor of salvation. God the Holy Spirit covenanted with the Father and the Son to come to this earth and apply the death of Christ to the elect by faith, awakening the hearts of people and bringing them the knowledge of Christ through the new birth so they would become the children of God; therefore the Holy Spirit became the Applier of salvation. The plan of the Godhead to save people is called in the Bible "the eternal covenant." "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, . . ." (Rev. 13:20). Theologically this is called the Covenant of Redemption.

Notice the words, "God destined for our glory." The salvation the Trinity planned in eternity was not only for the glory of God but also for our glory. This includes both our future glorification when we shall be sinless and our daily glorification as we are being changed progressively into Christ's likeness. "And we... are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (II Cor. 3:18). The gospel was designed to make men and women become what God originally created people to be. The Westminster Shorter Catechism says, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Christ somehow fulfills our humanity that has been marred by sin. Salvation was designed for the saint's glory and happiness. The gospel which is God's wisdom is designed to produce beautiful, godly, holy people, not only outwardly but inwardly as well—loving, compassionate, strong and yet merciful and tenderhearted people who are filled with grace, beauty and strength.

...crucified the Lord of glory. The great leaders of Paul's day, the religious Jews and the shrewd Romans, knew nothing about this divine wisdom, or they would not have killed the Lord of glory who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-Man. God's wisdom is so superior to man's wisdom that the rulers could not recognize it when they saw it. What they did was done in ignorance. This is why Christ said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk. 23:34).

However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him". Paul loosely quotes from Isaiah 64:4 to show that God has wonderful things prepared for those who take God's wisdom seriously and walk by faith in it. God's wisdom is not understood by natural processes. It does not come through the eye gate. A person may read the Bible from cover to cover; he may devour books on theology, but unless there is a work of grace by God, he will never comprehend the gospel. Nor does God's wisdom come through the ear gate. A person may listen to the gospel message every Sunday and never grasp the message. A friend may give an unsaved person tapes explaining the gospel or may sit down and tediously go through the gospel with him, but he will not comprehend the meaning without a work of God. Nor does it come by an emotional experience or a mere intellectual assent to facts about Christ. No, these things are entered into by an enlightening of the Holy Spirit and through faith on the part of the one grappling with the truth.

God has prepared truths for the Christian that he could have never dreamed about as an unbeliever. These divine truths are open to those who love and keep on loving God. This wisdom is for those who are growing in grace and in knowledge and in commitment. God desires we should mature, grow up spiritually so we can enter into these wonderful things He has prepared for you. These things do not come to us by any natural processes but by faith which is motivated by the Holy Spirit.

God's wisdom cannot be discovered by listening to the great secular voices of the past nor can we read about it in secular history. Yet, God's wisdom is truth without which men and women falter and fail, marriages end in divorce, homes breakup, violence breaks out in society, and all the evils we see around us begin to flood in. Therefore, God's wisdom is the most vital truth the world can know anything about, and this truth is made known to men by the Holy Spirit through the Bible. These truths are available for the believer if he will claim them by faith.

#### GOD'S WISDOM AND THE HOLY SPIRIT 2:10-12

But God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. In context the "us" must refer to the Apostles. The wisdom of God was first revealed to the Apostles who in turn recorded it in scripture through the inspiration process. The truth is that God's wisdom cannot be known by the mind, the senses, nor by study and research. It can only be known by revelation. If the Christian is to understand Christianity, it must come as the Holy Spirit enlightens and illumines him to the truth. The Father has sent the Holy Spirit who is commissioned to instruct us with the Word of God and lead us into the truth of God which will change our lives and expose us to the secret, hidden wisdom of God. When we begin to discover God's wisdom, life is going to be more exciting and adventurous because as we begin to encounter God's wisdom more and more we are set free to be the men and women God had designed us to be.



The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. God the Holy Spirit is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father. He knows the deep things of God. He knows God. He knows everything about the character and purposes and motivations of God. The Holy Spirit is immanently qualified to make the revelation of God known to men. The Holy Spirit penetrates into the deep things of God because he is God; there is nothing beyond the Spirit's knowledge.

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? Paul uses the illustration of a man's mind and his human spirit. Only the human spirit of a man really knows the inner workings of the man. No one knows what is going on inside a person except the person himself.

In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Only God the Holy Spirit knows the inner workings of God; therefore, the Holy Spirit alone can teach the perfect workings of the Father. What is Paul driving at? There is this great Being of God in our universe a fantastic Being of infinite wisdom, power and holiness. Yet, how can we know Him? We cannot unless God discloses Himself to us personally. By natural investigation man will never find his way to the heart of God.

We (Apostles) have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God. The Apostles did not receive the spirit of human wisdom which the world comprehends. All that Paul and the Apostles had they received directly from God. The "spirit of the world" seems to indicate that there is an intelligent being behind the whole thinking of the world. The "spirit" seems to be the Devil himself.

"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient" (Eph. 2:1-2).

The world does not understand that Satan is behind all human wisdom, and there are many Christians who do not understand. Worldlings are like so many dumb animals led to the slaughter without realizing what they are doing. The Apostles did not have the spirit of the world motivated by Satan when they spoke and wrote, but they received their information from God alone.

That we may understand what God has freely given us. Now the "we" and "us" might refer only to the Apostles but it more likely refers to Christians in general. The Apostles recorded the message of the gospel of salvation, the wisdom and deep things of God, that we Christians might know experientially the things freely given to us by God. These are the things God has prepared for those who love Him. How can we know these things? By the Holy Spirit who indwells every Christian. We have the Holy Spirit in us and we have the inspired record of the Apostles, the New Testament. A person indwelt by the Spirit of God has the capacity for illumination; that is, he can be taught by the Holy Spirit.

It is not God's purpose that we should stumble along and know Him only by trial and error. He wants us to be related to the Holy Spirit so that we can learn His Word and apply it to our experience. What we need to learn to do is abandon all worldly wisdom and enter into God's wisdom, yielding and submitting to the Holy Spirit. We must also have open hearts to the truth as it is found in scripture.

Before a person becomes a Christian, the Bible is as dry as toast, but after conversion, the Bible comes alive. It becomes the most exciting book in all the world. Things that once puzzled us now become clear, and we are fascinated with God's Book because it is God's wisdom. Many people spend hundreds of hours reading the Bible after conversion to Christ and wonder why they did not see these truths before. The reason is obvious. They did not have the Holy Spirit to illumine them. Many times after the newness of Christianity wears off, Christians lose that burning desire for the truth. Believers who are getting nothing out of the Bible, who have no appetite for God's wisdom, are people not depending on the Holy Spirit to teach them. Some sin is hindering the work of the Spirit, and there must be confession of that sin. When a Christian is not yielded to the Holy Spirit, he is not receptive to God's truth.

A poor, simple, ignorant Christian who can barely read or write, when he sits down with His Bible in dependence on the Holy Spirit of God, gets more spiritual truth out of a given passage of scripture in a half hour than an unsaved doctor of divinity or a doctor of psychology who studies it with his intellect unaided by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God opens the truth to those who depend on Him.

#### GOD'S WISDOM AND COMMUNICATION OF IT 2:13

This is what we (Apostles) speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit. As an Apostle, Paul is claiming a Spirit-led utterance when he preached. When he declared the message of Christ and Him crucified, the words were taught him by the Holy Spirit. Paul was claiming inspiration for the things he preached. If the Holy Spirit could inspire Paul's words in preaching, He most certainly could inspire the things he wrote. The Bible claims divine inspiration.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Tim. 3:16-17).

One of the real theological battles of our day is over the inspiration of scripture. People are asking afresh today, "Is everything in the Bible true? Does the Bible speak with authority in every realm? Is it true even when it speaks about scientific matters?"

Just a few weeks ago, Pope Paul II came out publicly saying that faith and science can coexist. He said that Darwin's theory was sound as long as it takes into account that creation was a work of God and the dignity of man and his spirituality are maintained. The Pope went on to say, "Fresh knowledge leads to the recognition that the theory of evolution is more than just a hypothesis." The Pope in essence has said that the human body and personality of man are no longer a unique creation of God or an instantaneous creation as the Genesis record declares but rather the product of a gradual evolutionary process. If man

is not a unique creation of God, he is of no value and has no greater moral worth than an animal or any living thing.

It is fascinating that the Pope put his approval on Darwinism when many of the progressive scientists (saved and unsaved) are throwing it out as non-scientific. The Pope is not only unbiblical and unprogressive but he is not up on modern science. Furthermore, if we cannot trust the Bible on creationism, why should we trust it on other doctrines like the virgin birth or the deity of Christ or the resurrection of Christ?

Expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. God gave the Apostles spiritual thoughts and so directed their minds that they chose the right words to express those thoughts as they were carried along by the holy Spirit. "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:21). God did not dictate to the Apostles. Somehow the Spirit of God enlightened their minds to understand revealed truth, and they chose their own words to express it so that every Apostle's personality comes through in the words he uses. Yet, in some supernatural, mysterious way the Apostles spoke and wrote exactly what God wanted.

## CONCLUSION

What does God want us Christians to learn from this section of scripture? First, God has prepared wonderful things for the Christian who must enter into this truth by faith. Second, truth can only be learned as the Christian is yielded and submitted to the Holy Spirit. Third, all truth that a Christian understands has been taught him by the Holy Spirit therefore, there is no room for pride about the spiritual knowledge we have. Fourth, we can trust our Bible because it is inspired by God. Fifth, life's greatest discoveries are when God and the Holy Spirit enlighten the believer so that he discovers the things freely given to him by God.

Do you now understand, non-Christian, why the Bible is a closed book to you? You are not touched by the Holy Spirit. You do not have the Holy Spirit living in you. You are not born of God's Spirit. The Bible says the Holy Spirit will convict men of sin, righteousness and judgment. Are you being convicted right now? If so, the Holy Spirit is working on you. If you see your need for Christ, turn to him by faith. When you do this then you will begin to understand the Holy Spirit has brought you to salvation and has taken up residence in you. Only after you trust Christ will the Bible come alive to you and you will get excited about the things God has prepared for you. Trust Christ and come alive to God!