

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

1 COR. 2:6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

10 But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of

man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

NOTES

Power to Impart Wisdom

Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

Related Scriptures: Proverbs 8:12-31; Isaiah 63:15—64:4;
John 3:1-8; 1 Corinthians 1:18—2:5; Ephesians 1:15-21

TIME: between A.D. 54 and 56

PLACE: from Ephesus

GOLDEN TEXT—"We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (1 Corinthians 2:7).

Lesson Exposition

WISDOM AMONG THE MATURE— 1 Cor. 2:6-11

Paul began by telling the Corinthians that he did, in fact, preach a message full of wisdom, but it was a kind of wisdom completely unfathomable to the Corinthians in their immaturity (vs. 6).

The "princes" of this present age did not know that wisdom, for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (vs. 8). The comment was made about the rulers and influencers who brought about Jesus' crucifixion.

Only the Holy Spirit can truly know the thoughts of God, just as only individual persons understand their own thoughts (vs. 11). The Corinthians' experience of the Holy Spirit was meant to help them understand God's mind, leading them into Christian maturity.

Paul urged the Corinthians to imitate him (4:16; 11:1). Paul's experiences before coming to Corinth would have served as an example about what Spirit-imparted wisdom looks like in action. Previously, God led Paul and his missionary team to Philippi. Despite the harsh treatment in Philippi, the missionary team dared to forge on to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1; cf. 1 Thess. 2:2). Opponents there accused

Paul of using flattery and employing religion to turn a profit. Paul asserted that his ministry there was driven by pure motives, and the people knew that was true. Paul also stressed that he did not impose on them to supply even his basic needs; he had worked tirelessly to avoid being a burden to the Thessalonians. He shared his very own life with them.

That was Paul's recent experience when he came to Corinth, where he undoubtedly modeled the same cruciform life and servant's heart. The news that the Corinthians were now pursuing and celebrating status distressed Paul, prompting him to emphasize Jesus, the crucified Messiah who gave His life for others. The cross of Christ carried a stigma of shame, but its glory will endure.

WISDOM AND THE MIND OF GOD— 1 Cor. 2:12-16

When the Corinthians came to faith, they were not given "the spirit of the world" (vs. 12). Nor were they enabled to delve into false teaching or speculative gobbledygook about God's divine nature, as their pagan counterparts did. Rather, God's Spirit enabled them

to understand the gospel. That is what Paul meant when he wrote that they received the Spirit of God so that they might “know the things that are freely given to us of God” (vs. 12).

Paul preached that God gave Jesus the Messiah to be crucified to save sinners (1:23-24). That message endures eternally. In contrast, worldly wisdom, with all its speculation, passes away, along with the elites who cherish it.

Paul now asserted that human beings, in their unsaved natural state and prior to the Holy Spirit’s miraculous work in their lives, lack the capacity to welcome or accept the truths taught by God’s Spirit (2:14). Such unbelievers naturally think that the truths taught by Him are pure foolishness.

That inability of unbelievers to grasp spiritual truth reflects the doctrine of human depravity. God did not impart depravity to humans at Creation. As Genesis reports, God created humans “very good” (1:31). Depravity only became a human trait at the Fall (3:1-7), and now it is transmitted from one generation to another.

Paul then explained that Spirit-led believers discern everything. Paul was speaking ideally; while Spirit-led believers discern everything, the Corinthian believers were not living up to the ideal.

Paul then added, perhaps to chide the Corinthians for their judgmental attitude toward him, that spiritually led people are not to be judged by those who are spiritually immature. Paul would later add a caveat that claims about spiritual truth must be tested by other discerning believers (cf. 12:10; 14:29), thus preventing Christians from assuming that their opinions are always beyond question.

Paul’s larger point was that he had received God’s Spirit, who had enabled him to make right judgments. In contrast, the immature Corinthians judged him according to the standards of an unredeemed Greco-Roman culture. In their judgment, Paul was not learned,

wise, or eloquent. Later in his argument, Paul let the Corinthians know that he cared little about whether they or any other humans judged him; what counted to him was how the Lord judges His servants (4:3-4).

To support his argument, in 2:16 Paul cited Isaiah 40:13, which praises God for His unfathomable greatness and wisdom that no one can (naturally) discern. But believers, Paul quickly added, have the mind of Christ.

—James M. Leonard

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Corinthians not recognize the wisdom of Paul’s message about the cross?
2. Who were the “princes of this world” (1 Cor. 2:8)?
3. What comparison did Paul make between the Holy Spirit and a person’s knowledge of his or her own thoughts?
4. What is the purpose of our experience of the Holy Spirit?
5. How did Paul’s recent experiences before coming to Corinth likely influence his reaction to the Corinthians’ love for the wisdom of the world?
6. What does it mean to “know the things that are freely given to us of God” (vs. 12)?
7. What was the content of Paul’s “spiritual” message (vs. 13)?
8. What doctrine is taught in verse 14?
9. Does every true believer exhibit perfect spiritual wisdom? How do we know that from the context of 1 Corinthians?
10. Why might Paul have been eager to point out the inability of the spiritually immature to judge those who are spiritual (vs. 15)?

—Matthew Robinson

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Unlike God's wisdom, the worldly wisdom so many adore is soon passing away (1 Cor. 2:6-7).
2. Worldly wisdom leads to utterly foolish actions (vs. 8).
3. Loving God makes His wisdom known to us through His Holy Spirit (vss. 9-10).
4. We learn God's ways through God's indwelling Spirit (vss. 11-12).
5. The wisdom we preach is a crucified Messiah (vs. 13).
6. Unbelievers cannot understand godly wisdom without the Holy Spirit's intervention (vs. 14).
7. We believers have the mind of Christ, and we should remember that daily (1 Cor. 2:15-16; cf. Phil. 2:5).

—James M. Leonard

Golden Text Illuminated

"We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (1 Corinthians 2:7).

The wisdom of God is mysterious, hidden, and beyond human comprehension. God's wisdom navigates all of history to the ultimate outcome, namely, to reveal his character—full of truth and grace. God's wisdom means that He fulfills His plan despite the raging and plotting of human and demonic opposition.

The clearest display of God's wisdom was seen in the death of His Son. Paul said that if the world rulers had understood God's wisdom, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

What is wisdom? Wisdom is living in God's way, according to God's Word, by God's power, in conformity to Christ.

How do we obtain wisdom? By thinking God's thoughts, adopting His perspective on everything as our own.

What are the practical effects of wisdom in our lives? First, wisdom results in holiness. Proverbs 14:16: "A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil." Second, wise people edify and equip others. Proverbs 15:7: "The lips of the wise disperse knowledge." Third, wise people have self-control over anger. Proverbs 29:8: "Wise men turn away wrath." Fourth, wise people bring spiritual healing to others with their words. Proverbs 12:18: "The tongue of the wise is health."

Wisdom matters, and the glory of God matters. We should desire His glory above all things. That requires a commitment to the Word of God as the fountain of wisdom.

—Jerod A. Gilcher

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. What things made Corinth unique and challenging to Paul's ministry (Acts 18; 1 Cor. 16:10-18)? You can read more about Corinth in a good study Bible.
2. What differences are there between wisdom that is revered today by the world's elite and Christian wisdom (Prov. 1:7; 1 Cor. 4:8-13)?
3. How do you discern godly wisdom from worldly wisdom (Ps. 119:105; 1 Cor. 12:8)?
4. What has the Holy Spirit taught you about the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:10)?
5. When you share God's wisdom with unbelievers, how can you help them understand it (14:24-25)?
6. In what way do believers have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5)?

—James M. Leonard