

High Peaks Bible Fellowship

The True Wisdom of the Gospel 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

Introduction: God's Wisdom

- There is a distinction between God's wisdom and man's wisdom which is based on the "distance" between man and God. The infinite Creator has wisdom which is incomprehensible to those He has created.
- Man's finite, limited, and fallen wisdom cannot even be compared to God's wisdom (see Isa 55:8-9; Rom 11:33).
- The Potter and the Clay analogy (see Rom 9:20-21).

It is True Wisdom to a Specific Group of People (1 Cor 2:6a)

- "Yet" = Paul sets up a contrast. Although the gospel was viewed as foolishness from a worldly perspective, Paul denies that his message was foolishness. Here he literally says, "Wisdom we ARE speaking!"
- "Those who are mature" (*teleios*) = finished, brought to fulfillment, lacking nothing for completeness. Only people who are characterized by this quality are able to see the true wisdom of the gospel. Who are the mature?
Two Interpretations:
 1. Mature Christians (as distinguished from babes in Christ).
 2. Believers (as distinguished from unbelievers).
- This refers to simple believers. It was not babes in Christ who considered the gospel to be foolishness - it was the unbelievers of the world. The contrast is between the *wisdom of the world* and the *wisdom of God*, not between the rudimentary and advanced doctrines of salvation.
- It is the finished work of Christ on our behalf that has been brought to completeness in our lives, especially in the final application of that work at the moment we put our trust in Christ as our Savior. From that moment our salvation is complete and assured. It is those "who are being saved" (1 Cor 1:18), and especially those who are growing to Christian maturity, who are able to see the wisdom of God's plan in the gospel.

It is True Wisdom Because of Its Unique Source (1 Cor 2:6b-9)

- Negatively, this wisdom does NOT have its origin in:
 - "this age" = this passing age of temporal created things.
 - "the rulers of this age" = those considered to be of the highest rank among mankind.
- Positively, this wisdom DOES have its origin in God Himself.
 - "Wisdom in a mystery" = something not previously revealed which is now being made known (see Rom 16:25-26; Col 1:26; Eph 3:4-5).
 - "God predestined before the ages" = God's existence is outside of time, and in that sense God's plan of salvation could be said to be "predestined before the ages" – before the ages of created time or history began. This is a direct contrast with "this age" in 1 Cor 2:6b.
 - "To our glory" = God had us in mind when He predestined this wise plan!
- "For if" = second class conditional clause meaning that the conclusion is false or unfulfilled. God knows all of the future, both actual and possible. This is one of those "possibilities" which God knows could never have happened.
- The wise plan of God was to pay the penalty for their sins by being crucified by His own creatures. Could a little understanding on man's part have foiled the wise plan of God? NO! This phrase might give the impression that if mankind had only known about God's plan, then they would not have participated in fulfilling it. But this is not the case.
- "The rulers of this age" = Who crucified Christ? Was it only the rulers of the Jews, or does this include the highest and best of all mankind? (see Acts 4:27-28)

- “Lord of glory” = the person who was crucified was definitely a divine person!
- Paul cites their crucifixion of Christ as proof of their ignorance of the wisdom of God.
- “Just as it is written” = Paul is giving the general idea of Isa 64:4 (although not quoting it verbatim). Look at the context of the passage Paul cites here:
 - Isa 64:3 says God does things that we do not expect.
 - Isa 64:6 says that all of our so-called righteous deeds are like filthy rags.
 - Isa 64:8 proclaims, “But now, O LORD, You are our Father, We are the clay, and You our potter; And all of us are the work of Your hand.”
- The original context of Paul’s reference here clearly points to the Creator-creature distinction. This emphasizes that none of His creatures can completely understand the ways of God. This is why we desperately need what Paul is now going to address in the next section of this passage!

It is True Wisdom Because of the Way it Was Communicated (1 Cor 2:10-16)

Receiving True Wisdom by Revelation (1 Cor 2:10-11)

- “FOR” = Paul gives additional explanation for saying “we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom of God” (1 Cor 2:7).
- “To us” = to those to whom this revelation was made, namely the apostles and prophets (Eph 3:5). Who were the recipients of New Testament revelation? The apostles and prophets of the pre-canon period when the New Testament was still being written.
- The Revelation of Scripture:
“God revealed” (*apokalupto*) = to make known what was previously unknown.
- “Through the Spirit” = through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit; He is the agent.
- “The Spirit searches” (*ereuna*) = to search accurately or diligently, so as to have a thorough knowledge. This does not mean that He searches as people do, but that He already has the kind of knowledge that people would only obtain through a process of research. This expresses the omniscience of the Holy Spirit. He understands the plans and counsels of God.
- Paul illustrates his point with an analogy on the human level:
 1. Just as no one knows the thoughts of a man but the man himself, so no one knows the thoughts of God but God himself.
 2. Just as every man does know his own thoughts, so the Spirit of God knows the thoughts of God.
- The point to be illustrated here is the knowledge of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is thoroughly qualified to deliver the revelation of God’s wisdom.

Transmitting True Wisdom by Inspiration (1 Cor 2:12-13)

- “Now we OURSELVES” = the emphatic pronoun indicates the apostles and prophets who were the recipients of God’s NT revelation. The context shows that the apostle is speaking of revelation and inspiration, and therefore we must mean we apostles, and not Christians in general.
- “Not the spirit of the world” = not the spirit which operates in and controls the fallen world system (the one that the “rulers of this age” have).
- “So that” = a purpose clause, meaning “in order that; for the purpose that.” God took action so that men might know of His wise plan. There was not only an eternal purpose in the mind of God (1 Cor 2:7), but a revelation of it to the apostles and prophets so that others might also know of God’s plan.
- The Inspiration of Scripture:
See 2 Pet 1:21. Though spoken through the instrumentality of men, the Scriptures are the Word of God. The Bible is not a human product breathed into by the Divine Spirit, but a Divine product produced through the instrumentality of men.
- “The things freely given” = the things revealed by God to the New Testament writers. Often this passage is applied to what all believers can know about the blessings they have been given in Christ. But the meaning of every passage is limited by its context. This clause does not refer to the spiritual blessings enjoyed by all believers, but to what God has revealed to the apostles (see 1 Cor 2:10).
- “Which things we also speak” = Paul is saying, “We not only know (by revelation), but we also communicate the

things which God has revealed. This was not accomplished by words of human wisdom.

- “Combining (*sungrino*) spiritual thoughts with spiritual words” = this can mean not only to mentally combine or compare, but also to explain. Joining spiritual things to spiritual words means to explain the things of the Spirit in the words of the Spirit.
- Often this verse is used as a proof-text for the doctrine that “Scripture interprets Scripture,” that believers are to compare one portion of the Spirit’s teaching with another. This is a very important principle of biblical interpretation, however this specific verse should not be used as its basis. The context of this passage makes it clear that this is not what Paul is teaching here. Paul is explaining how the inspiration of the Holy Spirit operates in the lives of those to whom God had chosen to give New Testament revelation.

Understanding True Wisdom by Illumination (1 Cor 2:14-16)

- “A Natural Man” (*psuchikos*) = “soul-ish” (notice that Paul does not use the term “flesh,” *sarx*). He chooses a word that describes the unregenerate man at his very best, but a man who is limited to the realm of the soul.
- “Does not accept” = they bounce right off. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that makes it possible for us to accept the things of the Spirit of God.
- “He cannot understand (*ginosko*) them” = to come to learn, to gain an intimate personal knowledge of something, especially in the sense of loving or approving of these truths. It is not simply that the unrenewed man does not do it or that he will not do it, but he cannot do it. He needs to be changed by the influence of the Holy Spirit before he can understand the truth.
- “They are spiritually discerned” (*anakrino*) = spiritually examined or investigated; to follow up (*ana*) a set of particulars in order to distinguish (*krino*). It is used for examining the Scriptures with the idea of proving or coming to a conclusion (Acts 17:11). This describes the ability to perceive God’s wisdom with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- The Illumination of Scripture: This is the special ministry of the Holy Spirit for helping the believer to understand the truths of the Bible. This requires His indwelling presence in the believer, which precludes an unbeliever from experiencing this special aid to understanding God’s truth.
- “The Spiritual Man” (*pneumatikos*) = one who is filled with and governed by the Spirit of God. This person meets the requirements for the ministry of illumination by the Holy Spirit.
- “All things” = the spiritual man is qualified to understand God’s revealed wisdom because he has his heart illuminated by the Holy Spirit. What are “ALL things?” The context of this passage limits the meaning to the things of the Spirit.
- “Yet he himself is appraised by no one” = the natural man is not even equipped to examine the evidence, let alone to pass judgment on a spiritual man.
- In 1 Cor 2:16, Paul quotes Isa 40:13 which is a passage describing the majesty and infinity of the Creator, as distinguished from His creation. This again clearly points to the Creator-creature distinction. Paul is providing additional explanation for his previous statement that the natural man is not qualified to judge the spiritual man.
- “But we OURSELVES have the mind of Christ” = the emphatic pronoun identifies we as the apostles and prophets (see 1 Cor 2:12).
- “The mind of Christ” = the wisdom of God which was the result of divine thought. This points to the wisdom of God that was being revealed and communicated through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- The Greek philosophers and the Jewish theologians had judged Paul and pronounced his preaching foolishness. Here he declares that they are not competent judges! The natural man cannot discern the things of the Spirit and is incompetent to judge those whom the Spirit has taught.

Points of Application

- From eternity God predestined this wise plan of salvation, but now that He has revealed it to us this plan is not meant to be kept hidden. God intends that those of us who now know about His wise plan should share it with anyone we meet!
- Every believer has access to the illumination of the Holy Spirit, but in order to experience it we must be actively reading and studying the Word of God. We must be “moving forward” in reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating in order for the Holy Spirit to guide and teach us special insights into His revealed truth.

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Our primary purpose is to uphold the truths of the Word of God.

I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)

Our primary responsibility is to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-12)