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# 1 Corinthians

**...that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.**

1 Corinthians 2:5

In the preceding verse Paul spoke of his speech and preaching. When he came to those at Corinth, it wasn't with "persuasive words of human wisdom." Instead he came with a "demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Now in this verse he explains why - it was for the benefit of his audience. If he came preaching with eloquence and the wisdom of men, they would have been swayed to him and to a message which was devoid of the gospel. But in order to show that his words were to glorify God, he kept them directed to the message of Jesus.

When we hear a message and are swayed by it, we place our faith in it. If we hear a great presentation about the newest product that will help us lose weight, we are bound to put our faith in what we've heard and buy the product. If we hear a politician with an ear-tickling message of wealth and prosperity, we may put our faith in him and cast our vote for him.

Whatever the presentation, if it is smooth and properly targeted, we may exercise our faith in what has been said and accept the premise. People do it with products, people, and even religions - all regardless of whether the message is true or not. This is the reason why Paul wrote these words in Galatians 1:6-9 -

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you,

let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed."

In his words to the Galatians, he uses the term "we or an angel from heaven." Paul was an apostle. Should another apostle come with another message, it is to be rejected. Only the message of the true gospel is acceptable. This is important because even today many claim to be apostles, and yet their message isn't directed to Jesus. The Bible is written and we are accountable to compare what we hear with the words which have been written.

Angels are considered authoritative speakers who carry heavenly messages. Both Islam and Mormonism claim their message was received by angels. And yet both of them proclaim a message other than the one recorded in the Bible and therefore they cannot be of God. Unfortunately, many are swept up into these false religions because they don't check with the Bible.

Only through the one true message of Jesus Christ can we avoid falling into a pit of false religion. In the gospel, however, is found the true "power of God." When the message is received, the believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit and the soul is converted to everlasting life. Paul speaks of this again in 2 Corinthians 4:7 -

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."

Life Application: Test all things and hold fast to what is good. Stand firmly on the truth of the Bible and in the gospel of Jesus Christ alone.

**However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.**

1 Corinthians 2:6

Verse 6 begins with "However." This is given to contrast his preceding argument which encompassed verses 1-5. Without words that were persuasive or which contain merely human wisdom, he notes that "we speak wisdom among those who are mature." The "we" is specifically speaking of the apostles, but it is inclusive of the body of believers. This is certain because in verse 10, he will use the term "us" when speaking about spiritual matters revealed to the body. He will continue with the use of "we" and "us" throughout the chapter. What is available to Paul, is also available to all in the body - it is the knowledge of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

This wisdom is "among those who are mature." What he is implying is that what we know as believers is more mature than all of the other heady knowledge of the world which he has been speaking about. He has relayed to us the various wisdoms which people hold to. The first was the wisdom of the Greeks which relied on the philosophic disciplines, mentioned in 1:22. Next in 2:7, he mentioned the "wisdom of God" which is the message he preached. And now, in this verse he speaks of the "wisdom of this age."

There are intellectual wisdoms, of which there is nothing wrong in knowing, but they are wisdoms which are futile when devoid of the truth of God. Only when those wisdoms are combined with a knowledge of our Creator do they become true wisdom. As the Bible states on several occasions, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10). This is why Paul says that the message of the gospel is for those "who are mature." It is the highest type of knowledge because it gives the highest form of understanding to all things. The reason for every "what" or "why" is ultimately found in God. Apart from Him, there is always going to be a disconnect to the final resolution of any intellectual matter.

Therefore, the gospel is "not the wisdom of this age." It is a wisdom which transcends time and goes directly to the mind of God. It is something which cannot be found in the thoughts "of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing." These people, the "rulers of this age," implies anyone who bears a high degree of intellectual knowledge, but which is devoid of God. If we were to equate them to people of today, we would call them the "evolutionists," the "global warming scientists," the "big-bang theorists," and etc.

These are people who are working on agendas which have removed God from the picture. They are pursuing knowledge, but doing so without including the ultimate reason for all that has or will happen. And therefore, their findings will always "come to nothing." In the end, without considering God as the "first Cause" there can be no foundation for how things started or where they will end.

Life application: The universe didn't create itself. If it did, it would have had to exist before it existed; a logical contradiction. This is the type of stupidity which the "rulers of this age" must rely on in order to deny God. Have a little faith, use a little common sense, and be assured that God created, God sustains, and God will keep His promises to those whom He has called.

**But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory... 1 Corinthians 2:7**

"But" is given to contrast "the wisdom of this age" and also "the rulers of this age" which he had just mentioned. Those so noted are, despite their high status now, those "who are coming to nothing." Many arguments and philosophies come and go which attempt to answer how we got here, why we are here, what our purpose is, and even how we can control our surroundings and our destiny. But without including God in the equation, the ruminations are futile and ultimately lack true wisdom because they lack the final answers. Understanding this, Paul says "But..."

On the other hand, and completely different from their futile contemplations, "we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery." As noted in the preceding verse, "we" is speaking of the true believer in Christ. It is not speaking of the "mature" in Christ, nor the "learned" in Christ, but all Christians. This is because all Christians possess the necessary starting point and finishing point of all wisdom - Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word. This then is not referring to "deep knowledge" but simply the gospel message which Paul has been referring to all along and which is summed up in verse 2:2 - "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

It is true that there is much deep and intellectual study which can be obtained from the Bible and the many disciplines it reveals, but every one of those disciplines finds its true meaning and fullness in Christ. Apart from Jesus, the most intellectual person on earth can pick up the Bible and find interesting things - interesting patterns of many sorts for example, but they cannot be properly understood without knowing Christ personally.

Because of this, Paul calls it "the wisdom of God in a mystery." A "mystery" in the Bible is something that was once concealed, but is now revealed. It is not something attainable only to certain enlightened people, but something which is attainable to all who are found in Christ; that Christ died for our sins and was resurrected for our justification.

This truth is "the hidden wisdom of God ordained before the ages for our glory." And this is the "mystery" which is rejected by those who think that they have all of the great answers available without God. They become so blinded by their own intellect, power, understanding, or nobility that they cannot see the work of Jesus for what it truly is. And thus, they are excluded from the wisest information of all. And yet, it is wisdom that truly even a young child can grasp. This wisdom from God turns the world upside down. This is the wisdom from God which Paul speaks of.

Life application: Don't get sidetracked by folks who use Paul's terminology concerning the wisdom of God to place themselves above others as if they have secrets others can't perceive. Paul always brings his theology back to the cross of Jesus Christ. If you have this knowledge, and have accepted Jesus' work based on it, then you have the most important knowledge of all.

**...which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 1 Corinthians 2:8**

Paul is continuing the thought from the previous verse which said, "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory,..."

This "wisdom of God" was hidden from the eyes of the "rulers of this age," both Jew and Gentile. Paul says that if they, in fact knew what was coming, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." And yet, this is exactly what was needed in order for we as humans to be saved from our sins. There had to be a perfect Substitute to take our place.

The question then arises, "What does it mean that if they had 'known, they would not have' done what they did?" The reason this is important is because it can be looked at from two different perspectives:

- 1) If they knew that Jesus was the incarnate Word, the Son of God, they wouldn't have dared to crucify Him, knowing who He truly was.
- 2) If they knew that His crucifixion would prove that He is Lord, they would never have crucified Him; thus they would have attempted to thwart God's plans.

In Acts 2:36, it states this, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Knowing this even after the resurrection, they still rejected him for the most part, though many believed. So the question remains open. What does it mean that if they knew the outcome of the cross of Christ, they wouldn't have crucified Him? These people were utterly and completely ignorant of the wisdom of God revealed in Christ, but today the "wise" of the world have heard the message of Christ and they still reject it. In fact, from time to time someone will utter the immensely stupid words, "When Jesus comes back, kill Him again."

If Jesus is to come back, it implies a few things:

- 1) He is alive (and thus over 2000 years old in His humanity);
- 2) He really came out of the grave, having prevailed over death;
- 3) Death cannot hold him (see Acts 2:24) and so "killing Him again" is utterly ridiculous;
- 4) He must be God incarnate;
- 5) If He is God incarnate, then the words of the Bible which testify about Him must be true;
- 6) He then is the only way to be saved.

And yet, despite these logical deductions, His rule and authority are still rejected! Thus, it is not inconceivable that Paul is saying that rather than not crucifying Christ because they would have loved Him, instead they may not have crucified Him in order to thwart the plans God had to exalt Him because of His work; in essence they would have hated what the cross meant, just as the world hates it and fights against it today.

The leaders of Israel knew Him to be a man of God, they saw His miracles, they heard His words, and yet they rejected Him. But the very rejection that they planned was a part of God's own plans for them, or for anyone who would be willing to drop their fists, humble their hearts, and call on this wonderful Lord of glory. This is the amazing thing about the work of God in Christ. Even those who participated in His crucifixion could only be saved *because* of His crucifixion. What an amazing demonstration of the wisdom of God in Christ.

Life application: Never underestimate the hardness of the human heart. Those who reject Christ are at enmity with God. Even knowing who Jesus is and what He did for us, many hate Him all the more. Be ready to defend your faith, proclaim it boldly, and sometimes to do so many times. With witness, prayer, and perseverance even the hardest heart may soften.

**But as it is written:**

**"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,  
Nor have entered into the heart of man  
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."**

1 Corinthians 2:9

This is one of the many verses which is more often than not misapplied by those who quote it. It is not speaking of the future state of the Christian in heaven. From the surrounding context, we see that it is speaking of the same continuous thought which Paul has been writing about for quite a while - the wisdom of God displayed in the gospel message.

Turning again to Scripture, Paul loosely cites Isaiah 64:4 -

"For since the beginning of the world  
*Men* have not heard nor perceived by the ear,  
Nor has the eye seen any God besides You,  
Who acts for the one who waits for Him."

"But" surely confirms the analysis of the preceding verse which indicated that if the rulers of this age knew that Jesus' crucifixion would prove that He is Lord, they would never have crucified Him; thus they would have attempted to thwart God's plans. The "rulers of this age" were mentioned twice, in verses 6 and 7, as being those who lived by "the wisdom of this age" which is referred to in detail in chapter 1. Paul is giving a contrast to that very notion, one hinted at in the Old Testament.

Paul speaks of "the things which God has prepared for those who love him." It is evident that the "rulers of this age" didn't love Him and continued to fight against Him during Paul's time; and for the most part, they still do to this day. Therefore, it is likely that had they known the fullness of the plan of Christ in advance, they would have worked to undermine it. But God kept the details hidden, veiled in



seemingly obscure passages within the Old Testament. They only become evident in hindsight.

Even those who love Him were unable to clearly see what was coming. Jesus explained much of His work to the apostles and yet they couldn't understand what He was saying. The plan was so incredible that it could never have been comprehended. Even after the resurrection, Thomas doubted the words of the other apostles, seeking tangible proof before he would believe.

The true blessedness of the gospel is set apart then for those who have not seen but still believe. It is by grace through faith that we are reconciled to God. The many wondrous facets of the gospel then are "the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. It is the current state of the believing soul that is being referred to in this verse, not the future heavenly state.

Life application: In order to avoid misusing verses, ensure that the context of the verses you cite is always considered. By doing this, the hearer won't be misdirected by an improper use of what God intends.

**But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 1 Corinthians 2:10**

"But God" is given as a contrast to "the rulers of this age" who are emblematic of all the learned, wise, noble, mighty, etc. These people may have worldly advantages over others, but apart from understanding the work of Christ, they are devoid of the most important knowledge of all. Despite everything they can accomplish, they cannot attain, the precious facets of the "wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory."

However, those who hear and receive the message can attain them because He "has revealed them to us through His Spirit." Again, a verse arises which is often manipulated and used in a way which is unintended by Paul. This verse is not

speaking about a sudden illumination in the individual concerning a spiritual revelation apart from the Bible. Rather the Bible is the key to understanding these things because it was authored by the Spirit for our benefit.

Albert Barnes wisely notes the following three points concerning what is being relayed in this verse -

"(1) That people by nature are not able to discover the deep things of God - the truths which are needful to salvation.

(2) that the apostles were inspired by the Holy Spirit; and if so, then the Scriptures are inspired.

(3) that all Christians are the subjects of the teaching of the Holy Spirit; that these truths are made known to them by his illumination; and that but for this, they would remain in the same darkness as other men."

God spoke in times past through the apostles and prophets concerning the truths of Christ. As Peter explains in his second epistle to us that, "knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit." 2 Peter 1:20, 21

These writings are, as Jesus Himself says, what testify to Him. It is the Bible which is to be our standard concerning all spiritual matters. To rely on the Holy Spirit for spiritual matters without reading and knowing the Bible is a category mistake. It can only lead to bad theology which will, by necessity, devolve into heresy.

Because the Spirit is the one who guided the prophets and apostles as they wrote, we have the very depths of the wisdom of God revealed to us in the Bible. And the reason is given by Paul - "For the Spirit searches all things, yes the deep things of God." Everything within the Godhead is available to the Spirit of God.

This tells us a few things about the Spirit:

- 1) He has all the knowledge of God (omniscience)
- 2) Only God is omniscient
- 3) Therefore, He is, like the Father and the Son, an independent Person within the Godhead; but in no way separate - thus the doctrine of the Trinity is confirmed.

When Paul says that the Spirit "searches all things" it doesn't mean that He is looking for something. The word *erauna* is used. It indicates a continuous, complete, and detailed knowledge and enlightenment of "the deep things of God." Those things that are to be revealed by God in the Bible are from the eternal mind of God. Though some parts of the Bible were penned by Moses and some by John 1500 years later, and many authors in between them, they reflect a wisdom that is fixed, firm, unchanging, complete, accurate, harmonious, etc.

Because this is so, let us take special care to pay attention in our church gatherings. If something is spoken or taught that contradicts any portion of the Bible, then it cannot be of God. If God says that no more than three may speak in tongues and there must be an interpreter, then any presentation of tongues which doesn't match this is not of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible explicitly states that women are not to teach or have authority over men. Therefore, if a church has a female pastor, though she may be knowledgeable, eloquent, or uplifting, she is not being directed by the Spirit and the meeting is not authorized by God. In our pursuit of God, we must allow God to be God and be attentive to His words lest we be found disobedient.

Life application: God has spoken and His word is written, other than what is recorded there, what more do we need for the development and practice in our spiritual life? The answer can only be, "Nothing."