

Text: 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, Part 1

Title: Revealed Wisdom

Truth: The world does not know God's wisdom.

Date/Location: Sunday February 16, 2020 at FBC

Introduction

The prior section (2:1-5) ended with the affirmation that Christians' faith does not rest in the wisdom of men. Rather, it is reposed in the power of God. However, this does *not* mean that what Paul was saying was foolishness or unwise. In fact, his teaching reflected not only the power of God and the work of the Spirit, but it also demonstrated the wisdom of God. This is the force of the "however" or "yet" at the beginning of verse 6. Paul *is* speaking wisdom, just not a kind of wisdom that is embraced by the world.

Go back to verse 4's phrase "not with persuasive words." Paul denies the persuasive words *of human wisdom*—that is, humanly or worldly persuasion. His ministry is neither based on corrupt motives nor appeals to corrupt motives. But he does engage in persuasion/reasoning/proofs *from the Bible*. Christian doctrine is eminently persuasive to the believer in Christ; it is a system of coherent truth that explains everything. About his method, see for example Acts 17:2-4 and 18:13.

I. Help in Understanding This Passage

In the prior verses, Paul's focus was on the method of delivering the message. In the present section, the focus is on the message itself—how God conveys it to humans and in what way humans can understand it.

- A. First note the number of times that the words *wisdom*, *things*, and the related pronouns are used. Read the passage and connect those ideas.
- B. Note the main verbs which express what was happening with the wisdom from God: Paul **spoke** the gospel of Christ, which previously had been **revealed** to Him from heaven, which he received, and then he spoke. He surely hoped that many would receive it, but people without the Spirit **do not receive** these things, and in fact are **unable to know** them. But the person whom God has graced with the Spirit **receives** those things and welcomes them (1 Thess. 2:13).
- C. It is also helpful to see how the apostle Paul uses the Old Testament to convey the truth. See the next two sections of these notes for more info.

II. Adaptation of Isaiah 64:4

- A. Meaning in context. The latter portion of Isaiah speaks of deliverance and salvation from the Lord for the nation Israel. The prophet and his people call for God to come down and confront their enemies and make His name known (64:1-2). They reminded God that He had done so before at Sinai (64:3; see Exodus 19:18); they were simply calling upon Him to come down again. This was unprecedented in world history (64:4) because people have not heard or seen any other so-called god act this way for the people who wait for (trust in) him. The people recognize that they need to be saved because of their sin (64:5). They knew there was no other god besides the true and living God who could do this for them.
- B. Use in 1 Corinthians 2:9. The apostle does not quote the passage, but rather alludes to it in an adapted form. He mentions the heart alongside the ideas of hearing and seeing as points of sensory input to the human mind. By this, Paul points out that the things concerning God are not knowable by mere human methods. This is an explanation of why people do not know the things of God and why they do incredibly sinful and stupid things like what is written in verse 8b. [By the way: application: when you don't know God's word well, you also are liable to do stupid and sinful things, or at least think stupid and sinful thoughts.]
- C. Observation. The Jewish people longed for God to tear open the heavens and come down as he did at Sinai. This in fact happened, though not in the glorious way that they envisioned. Nonetheless, heaven came down when the Lord Jesus became incarnate in the womb of Mary and was born in Bethlehem. John the apostle testified that they heard him and saw him and observed him and touched him with their hands. So in fact their request was answered. One more time at the second coming, Christ will come down, and it will again be said that no man has ever seen or heard of a God who does the kinds of things that our God does.

III. Adaptation of Isaiah 40:13

- A. Meaning in this context. In 40:12-14 Isaiah extols God by asking a number of rhetorical questions. These questions are all answered with an understood "no one." They make the point that God is alone in power and wisdom. No one is like Him. No one is superior to Him. No one is more powerful. He cannot go to someone wiser than He is in order to find more wisdom. He has all wisdom and might and dominion.
- B. Use in 1 Corinthians 2:16. The apostle Paul uses this truth in conjunction with the last phrase of verse 16 "we have the mind of Christ" to explain why the unbelieving world cannot properly evaluate a believer. If the Lord has instructed the believer by His Spirit—and He has—then

someone who does not understand the things of God is not qualified to evaluate the believer properly. No unbeliever has known the mind of the Lord, so he cannot properly instruct, evaluate or judge the one who *has* the mind of the Lord.

- C. Observation. It is surprising that the apostle has ascribed to the apostles, and in turn to Christian believers, that they have the *mind of Christ*. This sounds very lofty. What does it mean to have the mind of Christ?
1. It does *not* mean that we can think the infinite thoughts of God as He thinks them. Isaiah 55:8-9 chops down that lofty, arrogant speculation and reminds us of the humility of our finite and sinful state.
 2. Possessing the mind of Christ *does* mean that Christians generally possess a character that is like that of Christ, increasingly so, and are living lives that are marked by humility (Phil. 2:5) and readiness to suffer for the sake of Christ (1 Pet. 4:1). More specifically to the point of this context, it means that we have received the things of the Spirit of God and have the ability to understand them. The mind of Christ conveys the ability to understand the things of God. That is the same as the “wisdom” of which the passage speaks. It is the message of Christ; it is the gospel; it is the message of the cross; the message of Christ and Him crucified and all the pre-requisites and implications of it (1:18, 23; 2:2).

IV. The Nature of God’s Wisdom, v. 6-9

- A. Not from the world. The culture has its own brand of “wisdom.” That is, the world has its ways of thinking and acting, which are based on its core philosophies. For all time, this ‘wisdom’ has been based on personal pleasure and happiness. Today it is explicitly based on the philosophical foundations of atheism and evolution and is entirely man-centered.
- B. Not from the world’s rulers. They amount to nothing before God, even though they seem to be big shots. Take note of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4; or the rulers of the world in Psalm 2:1-4. The ruling class elites in all the nations are almost all high-level examples of worldly wisdom. More of that kind of thinking does not improve the basic nature of it.
- C. Hidden and mysterious. It cannot be discovered or known without the intervention of God. “Mystery” in the Bible describes not a “whodunit” that is hard to figure out. Rather it expresses that something is inherently unknowable unless and until God discloses it (Mark 4:11; Rom. 11:25, 16:25; 1 Cor. 15:51; Eph. 1:9, 3:3-4, 3:9, 6:19; Col. 1:26-27, 2:2, 4:3).

Verse 9 reiterates this when it uses Isaiah 64:4 to show that no one has seen in advance the kinds of things that God has “prepared.”

- D. Planned from before time. God has decreed from before creation, and therefore known all things that will occur in history. He settled the destiny of all things and permitted a level of moral freedom that allowed His creatures to get themselves into trouble. He planned the way of salvation and the ultimate outcome of his kingdom on earth and then in heaven in just the way that pleases Him. Any objections? They are all overruled, because God is *God*. He is in charge. Note also that God ordained (pre-determined) His wise plan to result in our glory.
- E. Preventative for evil. Note the conditional in verse 8: “if they had known it, then they would not have crucified the Lord...”
 - 1. The first part of the if statement expresses something contrary to the actual facts, but the second part expresses a counterfactual that would have been true if the conditional had been true. That’s a long way around saying that if the Pharisees, Sadducees, high priest, Roman governor Pilate and others had known God and His wisdom, they would not have laid a finger on Jesus. But since they were ignorant, they happily walked down the unjust path of crucifying the only man Who never sinned.
 - 2. As I understand it, this has a very broad and relevant application to each and every one of us today. If we are ignorant of truth that God has revealed, we are in danger of doing very stupid and evil things. But as the saying goes, ignorance is no excuse. You are still accountable for your evil actions, whether you knew or not. Better to spend some time familiarizing yourself with the Book lest you do some terrible things in your self-driven ignorance.

V. The Revelation of God’s Wisdom to Man, v. 10-12

VI. The Communication of God’s Wisdom, v. 13

VII. The Illumination of God’s Wisdom in Man, v. 14-16

Conclusion

We tap into God’s wisdom in one place: the Scriptures, and by extension wherever the Bible is truly taught. The Bible is where God has deposited the revealed wisdom He gave, in a permanent written record for all of time and humanity. We understand it primarily with the eye-opening help of God’s Spirit, Who requires that we invest time and energy into reading and thinking about the Word so as to apply what it teaches to how we live.

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