

Text: 1 Co 2.6-16

As we move through Corinthians, we will keep our place by developing the broad outline we started with.

I. Introduction (1.1-9)**II. Conditions reported to Paul (1.10-6.20)****A. Divisions in the church (1.10-4.21)**

¹ Cor 1.11 For I have been **informed** concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's *people*, that there are quarrels among you.

Divisions Revealed (10-12)**Paul's Opening Apologetic (13-17)****The Gospel vs. Wisdom (1.18-2.5)**

Section 1: the cross vs. human wisdom (18-25)

Section 2: the world's view of believers (26-31)

Section 3: the powerful effect of Paul's preaching (2.1-5)

Today: The Spirit and God's wisdom (2.6-16)

(A bit of a digression)

Section 1: Contrasting those who receive God's wisdom and those who do not (6-10a)

Who are those who do not receive God's wisdom? **The rulers of this age**

Who are those who do receive God's wisdom? **"Us" – verse 10a**

Notice the progress of Paul's argument here:

Paul's message was in the words of the Spirit (4-5), not in the wisdom of men.

Yet, he *does speak wisdom* (6): God's wisdom, not the world's wisdom; wisdom men didn't understand, and did not comprehend.

The "rulers of the world" are full of the "wisdom of the world." Who are these rulers? **Think "thought" rulers, not just political rulers — those who influence public wisdom with their teaching and writing. Constable mentions Charles Darwin, Stephen Hawking, Carl Sagan here. Men like this**

rule the thoughts of our world.

Since Paul *is* speaking wisdom (God's wisdom), among whom is he speaking it? (6, see also 10, 12) **Among the mature**

Is there anything about this term that surprises you when used of the Corinthians (compare 3.1-3)? **Paul calls the Corinthians immature, unspiritual, though here he calls them mature**

What is unique about God's wisdom? (7) **It is hidden, unknown, unimagined, and must be revealed**

If the rulers of this age had understood God's wisdom, what would they NOT have done? (8) **Crucified Christ**

Verse 9 combines Isa 64.4 and 65.17. What does this teach us about God's wisdom? **Man has never seen God's wisdom, or imagined it, he must be told of it.**

Section 2: Contrasting the Spirit of God and the spirit of the world (10b-13)

The "mystery" religions in the Greek culture claimed to know deep and hidden truth, only available to those who "paid the fee" and joined up (to get the secret decoder rings?). Paul says the Spirit knows the deep things of God (10b).

What illustration does Paul use to show how the Spirit knows all these things? (11) **Just as a man knows his own secrets in his spirit, so too the Spirit of God knows everything about God**

Since the Spirit knows the secret things of God, what can believers know of God? (12) **Everything about God, it is freely given**

What does this mean for Paul's preaching and teaching? (13) **He is able to speak truth from the Spirit, not the imaginations of men.**

Section 3: Contrasting the 'natural' person and the 'spiritual' person (14-16)

In verse 14, Paul introduces another term, a "natural" man. What term did he use earlier in the passage to describe those who don't understand God's wisdom? **The rulers of this age**

The natural man cannot understand God's wisdom. Does that mean he cannot understand the *meaning* of the Bible? [Careful! There are unbelievers who understand clearly the teaching of the Bible and its gospel,

including substitutionary atonement and forgiveness of sin.] What does Paul mean by “understand” here? **Various answers: accept, grasp, believe**

Where is the problem when an unbeliever doesn't understand the gospel? Is it in his intellect? Emotions? Will? **Unbelief at least involves the will, but probably also the emotions.**

Who is the one who is “spiritual” in v. 15? **Any believer**

What does the quotation of Isa 40.13 in v. 16 suggest? **That God's mind is hidden from the lost, they cannot understand him.**

What does Paul's closing phrase in v. 16 suggest? **That believers can understand the things of God (potential, not exhaustive detail)**

Conclusion:

Recall how the Corinthians divided themselves by their “favorite preachers” (1.10-12). Paul taught that they were following preachers as if each one had a special insight that others missed. They were following them like favorite philosophers or mystery religion leaders.

Paul shows how God's message is foolishness to the world, but it is true wisdom, something the wise ones of this world miss. Paul says all believers have access to God's wisdom.

What is the main point of this teaching? **All believers have God's truth freely available, it isn't hidden, or the special property of one preacher over another.**

Tom Constable illustrated the difference between worldly wisdom and spiritual wisdom this way:

“When I was in Edinburgh, Scotland, I visited the tomb of John Knox, the great Protestant reformer who made Scotland Presbyterian. His burial place is marked by a small plaque that is now on the pavement of the parking lot behind his church, St. Giles Cathedral. A car was parked over it, and I had difficulty finding it. It is ironic that Knox's grave is in a parking lot covered by automobiles that occasionally drip oil on it, whereas John Lennon's grave is beautifully preserved in Westminster Abbey. This reflects the world's distorted values.”¹

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 1 Cor 2.14.