



CHARIS-MATTERS

STUDIES IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

Text

First Corinthians 2:1-13

Topic

The apostle Paul encouraged the believers at Corinth to reject the wisdom of this age in favor of discovering the “deep things of God”

Title

“Living Water Runs Deep”

Introduction

Don McClure was teaching from Genesis twenty-two regarding Abraham’s near-sacrifice of Isaac. It was an amazing study about personal sacrifice in walking with the Lord.

Just when I thought he must be done Don began to explain another, deeper layer of meaning to the story. He explained how Abraham and Isaac were a type of God the Father and Jesus and how the near-sacrifice of Isaac took place *on the exact spot* where, centuries later, Jesus Christ would be sacrificed for our sins.

Then Don expounded on the verse in Genesis twenty-two that reads, “God will provide Himself a lamb...” (v8). There it was, for anyone to discover, centuries before Jesus came into the world as our Savior.

We were young believers and that study gave us a taste that there was always something deeper to know about the Lord on every page of Scripture. Bible reading became a treasure hunt.

The believers at Corinth were interested in going deeper but not into the things of God. They were instead seeking what the apostle Paul called “the wisdom of the world” and “the wisdom of men.”

Paul wrote and reminded them that in the simple message of the Cross are profound mysteries that are waiting to be revealed to us by God the Holy Spirit.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 When You Heard The Message Of The Cross The Holy Spirit Demonstrated God's Power, and #2 When You Hear The Mysteries Of Christ The Holy Spirit Divulges God's Wisdom.

#1 When You Heard The Message Of The Cross
The Holy Spirit Demonstrated God's Power
(v1-5)

Writing to the church at Corinth Paul took them back to their hearing of the message of the Cross to remind them of its power to save.

1 Corinthians 2:1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.

After you heard Paul speak you didn't talk about his command of languages or his way of putting thoughts together. You didn't talk about him at all. You talked about Jesus.

This doesn't give us an excuse to be unprepared. It doesn't mean we can merely drone on in an uninteresting manner. It's a reminder that we give “testimony of God” as witnesses. It's never about us; it's about the Lord.

1 Corinthians 2:2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

When Paul said, “for I determined,” I get the sense that he discovered through prayer God’s leading for his ministry in Corinth. God knew how best to reach the hearts of the lost in that wicked city.

“Jesus Christ and Him crucified” would include quite a lot:

- It would include His pre-incarnate existence as God from all eternity.
- It would include being sent into the world as Savior as fully human and fully God to resolve the problem of sin.
- It would include His being the promised Messiah of Israel and all the prophecies to that effect in the Old Testament.
- It would include all the events surrounding the crucifixion, especially the resurrection and His ascension into Heaven.

It’s not so much that Paul only talked about Jesus on the Cross day-after-day. It’s that he only talked about Jesus day-after-day with the Cross being central.

1 Corinthians 2:3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.

It’s possible to interpret this as a praise of his human insufficiency, his “fear” of God, and the “trembling” he felt for lost souls who rejected the message.

It’s just as possible that Paul was having a transparent moment and admitting he was at a low point. If so, he remained faithful to his task. The answer for discouragement in ministry is to serve the Lord.

1 Corinthians 2:4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

“Persuasive words of human wisdom” describes what we would call a sales pitch. They are methods of manipulation, however subtle, to get you to believe or to do something. Even if the ‘something’ is good, like getting saved, we must be careful we are relying on God rather than our methods.

When the message of the Cross is presented it gives opportunity for the Holy Spirit to “demonstrate” God’s “power.” He takes the message of the

Cross and divides between the soul and the spirit within your heart to show you your need for a Savior in Jesus Christ.

It's alright to make an appeal. In another passage Paul describes his desire to "persuade" men. This has to do with methods and motives. Our methods must be godly, not worldly. Our motives must be selfless, not selfish.

1 Corinthians 2:5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

I think the best way to comment on this verse, and on the first five as a whole, is to give you a short testimony.

Before I was a Christian, I graduated from the University of California at Riverside with bachelors degrees in both psychology and philosophy. As a psych major I studied the theories and therapies of Freud, Jung, Rogers, Skinner and Maslow. In philosophy I studied Nietzsche, Sartre and Camus. I sought to apply the best of their best wisdom to my own life. With their theories and therapies to guide me, I was a pot-smoking drunk who hated his wife and could only control his temper and profanity for brief periods of time.

My goal in life was to go on and get a masters degree in psychology – *so I could help others through man's wisdom in psychology and philosophy the way it had helped me!*

I knew all the current persuasive words of man's wisdom. **Then I got saved by the power of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ.** Why would I return to the bankruptcy of man's wisdom when I know the blessings of God's wisdom? This is the point Paul is making.

We must guard against the very real temptation to borrow from the world because their methods 'work' on some level. The level they work on is worldly, fleshly, and can only produce worldliness and carnality.

#2 When You Hear The Mysteries Of Christ
The Holy Spirit Divulges God's Wisdom
(v6-13)

I want to make something clear. When we use the phrases “the wisdom of this age” or “the wisdom of man,” we are not talking about the facts and figures. History, science, psychology, philosophy, sociology, political science and other human pursuits start with observable, discoverable facts. **We don't deny or dispute the facts.**

The “wisdom of this age” and “the wisdom of man” is what the nonbeliever does with those same facts. It is his interpretation and application that we are talking about when we use the term “wisdom.”

When a believer, for example, looks at the facts of science he can see how they best support creation as the way the universe came into being. The nonbeliever looks at those same facts and postulates a theory of evolution that has no proof. Advances in biology and especially microbiology have proven evolution impossible. Yet “the wisdom of this age” remains that we went from amoeba to amazing, from monkey to man.

Every “age,” every time period, has its own supposed wisdom. There are always new theories in all the major disciplines of thought. The very fact that man's theories are constantly changing ought to give you a clue not to embrace them as true - especially when they contradict the Bible.

1 Corinthians 2:6 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.

“Mature” means maturing, growing. The simple message of the Cross has a depth to it you will never totally fathom in this lifetime. But to enjoy it's wisdom you must avoid being distracted by “the wisdom of this age.”

Paul gave them an example of why it was foolish to look to the wisdom of the world. The example has to do with history and with “the rulers of this age” and is at the end of verse six and in verse eight, which reads,

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

The supposedly 'wise' rulers of the world cooperated with God's eternal plan without even knowing it! While they were rejecting God's plan of salvation, they were participating in it's fulfillment! Think of Herod... Pilate... and the Jewish leaders. What fools the "wise" rulers of their age turned out to be based on their human interpretation of history.

Back to verse seven.

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

As we always point out, a "mystery" in the Bible is something unknown and unknowable to mankind which is now being revealed to you by God.

If you are saved you have a new appreciation and understanding of every subject: history, science, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and political science. You see them from the vantage point of God's unfolding plan of redemption. You see how God works in and through everything to save lost mankind and restore fallen creation and to make all things new.

Why get sidetracked with some crazy, ever-changing theories of men who suppose they are wise but have no understanding of what is really going on in the universe?

1 Corinthians 2:9 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."

This verse is often quoted at funerals to describe the glories of heaven but it is a promise to **you** as a believer **right now**. It is God's promise to you that you are a part of His eternal plan. He has, before history ever began, prepared great things for **you** to discover as you walk with Him from earth into eternity.

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

The Holy Spirit was prominent in your salvation. He is prominent in your sanctification - in your daily maturing and growing.

Because He is God He “searches all things.” The word doesn’t mean He searches as if to discover something new. It means He is able to *penetrate* into all things. He can reveal to you, in every area of life and living, “the deep things of God.”

We hear this word “deep” and immediately think it describes super-special revelations reserved for only a few. But the whole context of these verses are that God **wants** to reveal to **you** and to **every believer** the “deep things.”

The “deep things of God” means having God’s mind and heart about people and circumstances. It means you have a deeper understanding of life and its meaning and purpose.

1 Corinthians 2:11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

You cannot be known to others by outside observation. You must tell others about yourself for them to know you.

In a greater sense, **no human being can discover anything about God on his or her own.** God must be revealed to you.

This cancels-out the possibility that someone can discover a ‘truth’ that is lacking in God’s revelation of Himself or that in any way contradicts God’s revelation of Himself. I don’t care how logical or scientific or profound something sounds. If it adds to or takes away from God as He has revealed Himself in the Bible then it must be rejected.

1 Corinthians 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

You “received” the Holy Spirit when you were born-again. He came to indwell you. From within your heart He illuminates the Word of God to you as you read it or hear it read. He reveals its treasures to you – “the things that have been freely given to [you] by God.”

1 Corinthians 2:13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

The “we” is probably a reference to the apostles, like Paul, who were revealing God’s Word. The Holy Spirit enabled them to proclaim the message of the Cross and the mysteries of Christ.

Now that we have the inspired Word of God, the Bible, we have the things “the Holy Spirit teaches.” It is our measure to compare “spiritual things with spiritual.” In other words, whatever we hear we can take back to God’s Word for evaluation. It is “spiritual” and can be received and acted upon if it is in keeping with what the Holy Spirit has revealed in God’s Word as “spiritual.”

We’re not just talking about what we hear in church or a Bible study. Whatever we hear in history or science or psychology or philosophy or sociology or political science is to be measured by God’s revelation of Himself. We are to have His perspective, His mind, His heart, what some call a ‘Christian world view.’

You should resist the urge to embrace man’s wisdom. You should be determined not to know anything except the simple, straightforward, life-changing message of the Gospel. Standing on the foundation of the Cross you can plumb the depths of the mysteries of Jesus Christ.

There are too many programs, too many formulas. If you want a program, a formula, it is this: Preach “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” without gimmicks or glitter. Then pray, read the Word, get into fellowship with other believers, and share your faith with nonbelievers.

It’s been working fine for two thousand years! Let’s not tinker with it.