

Iglesia de Carne

Studies in First Corinthians

Text

First Corinthians 2:6-16

Topic

The apostle Paul tells us that the wisdom of God is only knowable to those who have the Spirit of God

Title

***“We’ve Got the Spirit, Yes We Do;
We’ve Got the Spirit, How About You?”***

Gandalf had a plan. Keep the Dark Lord, Sauron, distracted while a Hobbit marched the one ring of power into the heart of Mordor and destroyed it in the fires from which it was forged. It was the one thing that the forces of evil would never expect.

At the Council of Elrond, in the film adaptation, Boromir emphasized just how incredibly foolish a plan it was:

“One does not simply walk into Mordor. Its black gates are guarded by more than just orcs. There is evil there that does not sleep.” And then, making a circle with his hand, he says, “The great eye is ever watchful.”

Against all odds, and incredible evil, the plan worked. Sauron was defeated on his own turf.

J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, is considered to be a believer in Christ. I wonder if he might have been inspired, by the foolishness of the Cross when he came up with the idea of destroying the ring?

The Cross of Jesus Christ - His death on the Cross - seemed incredibly foolish to the world and to its rulers. They could not conceive of what it would result in - their defeat on their own turf.

Our text this morning says as much when, in verse eight, the apostle Paul proclaims that the Cross was a “mystery” that “none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

What the world sees as foolishness is really the wisdom of God. Why can't they see it? They can't see it because it is known only to those who have received the Spirit of God. That's where we who have received the Spirit come in.

I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 Realize That You Are In The World That Renounces The Wisdom Of God, and #2 Remember That You Are In The World To Reveal The Wisdom Of God.

#1 Realize That You Are In The World
That Renounces The Wisdom Of God
(v6-9)

The Lion King is still in theaters. Director Jon Favreau did a great job, but you just can't improve on the voice actors in the original animated version. Especially Jeremy Irons as Scar.

Once Scar is king of the Pride Lands, everything goes wrong, and all is ruined.

We could call earth the Pride Lands. The devil fell on account of his pride. He encouraged our original parents to disobey God, bringing ruin upon the earth. He is now known as the god of this world. His reign is marked with malevolence. The world is teeming with evil.

We are in that world. What should we be doing to affect it?

1Co 2:6 ... 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 *perfect*. I don't think Paul was referring to those we sometimes call “mature” believers, but rather to *all* believers of *any* maturity. From the moment you are saved, you are positionally perfect in God's sight and you are being perfected - matured - by grace. It's called sanctification.

“We speak wisdom among those who are mature” means that believers should stick to sharing God's wisdom regardless of how foolish it seems.

Two times - in verse six and in verse eight - Paul mentions “the rulers of this age.” Bible scholars and commentators are split as to exactly who Paul was referring to:

- Some argue it is the earthly “rulers” who signed-off on Jesus' death, e.g., Pontus Pilate and the Jewish High Priest.

- Others think that the “rulers of this age” are supernatural beings - Satan and the angels who followed him in his fall.

It's obvious to me that the rulers are human authorities being instigated by supernatural forces:

- Elsewhere Paul calls Satan “the god of this world” (Second Corinthians 4:4).
- The Gospel of John records two separate occasions when Jesus referred to Satan as the “*prince of this world*” (12:27-31 & 14:30).
- Ephesians 2:2 says Satan is the “ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.”
- Later in Ephesians we are made aware of beings called “principalities... powers... the rulers of the darkness of this age, spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*” (6:12).

In the Old Testament Book of Daniel we see a character called the Prince of Persia. We know it is a supernatural being who is antagonistic to God because he fights the angels Gabriel and Michael.

The satanic forces at work in the world instigated the crucifixion of Jesus. *What a bunch of losers.* They did not realize that by crucifying Jesus they were “coming to nothing.”

Here is another way Paul puts it: Jesus “disarmed principalities and powers, [and] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in [His crucifixion]” (Colossians 2:15).

They thought the Cross was their victory when it was their total defeat.

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

In the New Testament usage of the word, a “mystery” is something that was previously concealed but has now been revealed.

Since Paul earlier in First Corinthians said he preached the Cross, that is what he means by “we speak the wisdom of God.” We reveal the victory of the Cross that defeated Satan and sin and death.

It was no mystery Jesus was going to die. He said as much Himself. The mystery was the far-reaching effect of His death on the Cross. It was “God ordained before the ages for our glory.” In other words, it was at the center of His eternal plan to redeem and regenerate us; and to restore the ruined creation.

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

Satan was in the Garden of Eden. After Adam and Eve fell into sin, God said to Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Genesis 2:15).

Looking back, having the full revelation of God in the Bible, we understand that statement as the first preaching of the Gospel. The "Seed of the woman" would be Jesus Christ, the God-man, born of a virgin.

But think about it apart from God's full revelation. To Satan, before the New Testament is written, it reads like a draw rather than his total downfall. God's wisdom in the Cross was too profound for even a super-intelligent angel like Satan to consider. If he had gotten it, he would never have incited Judas to betray Jesus.

He gets it now. He can read about it in the rest of the Bible that he wasn't privy to:

- He knows he will be bound in the Abyss for one thousand years.
- He knows he will for eternity suffer conscious torment in the Lake of Fire.
- He knows that he will not rule Hell, as Dante portrayed. Hardly.

A couple of thoughts before we move on:

First - Do you think it is merely liberal ideology that is responsible for some of the heinously immoral decisions and programs in the US, and in California? It isn't. It is being instigated by supernatural forces. That's why what some politicians are doing makes no logical sense.

Second, and more importantly - Realize that your real enemy is supernatural, and the way to defeat his last-ditch efforts in the Pride Lands is to speak the wisdom of God. It is to present the Cross to all those who are perishing.

If that seems foolish to you, it's the wisdom of God.

#2 Remember That You Are In The World To Reveal The Wisdom Of God (v9-16)

It's embarrassing to misapply a Bible verse. One Christmas, I chose the verse for our card. It was a really great verse - *about the birth of John the Baptist*. Idiot.

The key verse in our next section is one we've all probably misapplied:

1Co 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."

The quote is from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. It is almost always quoted to refer to the wonders and the glory that await us in Heaven.

You guessed it: Not about Heaven. I know it isn't looking toward Heaven because, in the very next verse we read, "God has revealed them to us through the Spirit." Verse nine is happening now - not later.

One version of the Bible paraphrases verse nine, saying, "No one's ever seen or heard anything like this, Never so much as imagined anything quite like it - What God has arranged for those who love him."

God "arranged" for lost, perishing sinners to be justified by His grace and declared righteous because Jesus died on the Cross. Then He sanctifies us - completing the work He has begun until we are glorified in the resurrection or by our rapture. It was an unimaginable plan - a mystery - until it was revealed.

Who are "those who love" God? *Any* and *all* who receive His free grace and are saved. Loving God is the response of someone He has saved.

One of the main points of verse nine is to again emphasize that God's wisdom, the Cross and the plan of salvation, *could* not and *cannot* be discovered through human efforts.

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

I didn't find God; He wasn't lost. I was lost; He found me. The Holy Spirit draws men and women and kids to the Cross, where they can be saved. The Spirit of God frees the will so a person can choose to *receive* or to *reject* Jesus.

Some folks don't like this idea of being freed to choose. They think it adds human effort to God's grace. They argue that it makes your choice the decisive factor in salvation.

Theologian Roger Olson suggests the following illustration:

Imagine a beggar who is homeless and hungry. A generous person gives him a money order of sufficient value to rent a nice little apartment, live in it comfortably, and to buy groceries for a month. All the beggar has to do is sign the money order and cash it. He does that and settles comfortably into his new digs and eats heartily. Now he is able to go out and find a job and the man who gave him the money has already set up several interviews for jobs the former beggar is qualified to have.

Now imagine that the former beggar begins telling people that his decision to accept the money order and cash it was the "decisive factor" in his having this new lifestyle.

First, would anyone really agree with him or would they frown and think “He’s an ingrate”? Second, would anyone think the gift was any less a gift because the man accepted it (even if some others rejected an identical gift offered)? I don’t think so.

It is biblical to believe that we must receive the indescribable gift; but receiving it is not a work we do.

Salvation is by grace through faith plus nothing.

Paul mentions “the deep things of God.” He doesn’t mean there are certain deep secrets that can only be known by a select, elite few. Not at all. He means that any believer, because of the indwelling Holy Spirit, can plumb the deepest things about God.

There was a commercial some years ago for high-speed internet in which a guy said he had just finished surfing the entire internet. I don’t think so. It isn’t infinite, but you can’t exhaust it.

You can never exhaust learning about God. For example: In His Word, the same passages will yield new insight. You can never exhaust their depth.

1Co 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. No matter how well someone else knows you, only you know you best. The Holy Spirit knows God best; after all, He is God. God is One, in three Persons - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Only He can reveal God to you.

1Co 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.

If you are in Jesus Christ - a Christian - you have first-hand information about exactly what God has done in the past, is doing in the present, and will do in the future. For example: You already know the future history of our planet:

- Sometime after the resurrection and rapture of the church, there will be a seven year Great Tribulation on the whole earth.
- The Great Tribulation will end with the Second Coming of Jesus.
- He will rule a one-thousand year Kingdom of God on the earth. We will co-reign with Him.
- At the end of the thousand years, God will destroy this earth and make a new one.
- We will go on with Him for eternity living in the new heavens and the new earth in our gloried bodies. No tears.

In the mean time, **we’re know-it-alls**. We know how to live, and how to offer eternal life to others.

1Co 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.

One of the big issues in the church at Corinth was their wanting to integrate the wisdom of the world with God's wisdom. That's a problem because God's wisdom, the Cross, means we go forward by grace, empowered by the indwelling Spirit; whereas man's wisdom teaches we go forward by works, but offers no power to aid us.

Jesus said the religious leaders of His day added heavy burdens of human effort but wouldn't lift a finger to help. Jesus, on the other hand, said His yoke was easy, and His burden light. They are mutually exclusive.

We must compare "spiritual things with spiritual." It's like saying apples and oranges. We can't compare spiritual things to the wisdom of the world. Two different things altogether.

1Co 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

We started this series in First Corinthians here in verse fourteen by talking about the spiritual man, the natural man, and those who are carnal:

- The spiritual man is a believer in Christ.
- The natural man is a nonbeliever.
- Those who are carnal are Christians living more for the flesh; they are worldly.

Verse fourteen is saying that, without the indwelling Holy Spirit, the things of God are not understood by the unsaved, and, in fact, they seem foolish to them.

This is one reason why we cannot successfully counsel nonbelievers. They will not understand what Jesus is telling them to do; and, even if they try to apply our counsel, they have no power to do it.

Thus our objective with the unsaved is what? To preach the Cross by which the Holy Spirit may free their will so that they might see Jesus dying for them, and believe.

This doesn't mean we can't help people either emotionally or materially. It does mean that nothing is more consequential than they get saved.

1Co 2:15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is *rightly* judged by no one.

In other words: God's wisdom about the human condition and salvation is right, while man's wisdom about it is always wrong. It isn't up for debate as if the nonbeliever is judging between two valid alternatives.

If your counsel to a nonbeliever is to be saved, they often can't see the connection between that and their circumstances. You do see the connection. You're right; they're wrong. Stick to your compassionate guns.

1Co 2:16 For "WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD THAT HE MAY INSTRUCT HIM?" But we have the mind of Christ.

The natural man **does** try to "instruct" God. Every religion; every philosophy; every psychology; is some man's or women's attempt to ignore the clear revelation of God and in its place propose an alternate theory of how to deal with the problem of the heart. Every one of them suggests works - human effort - by which you improve or perfect yourself.

God says you can't work your way to Heaven; you can't get there by deeds.

"We" - any believer - "have the mind of Christ." We can both understand God's plan and live by it.

The "mind of Christ" has a lot of applications. One is overall worldview - that we see the world the way Jesus saw it, and sees it.

Another application is that we can focus on the Cross and its implications. Jesus was lacerated-in on the Cross. He spoke of it often. He understood it was His primary mission. He was born to die - in our place, for our sins. To accomplish it, He humbled Himself to live as a lowly servant, ultimately being obedient unto the death on the Cross.

The Cross of Jesus is a way of living as though you were dead to yourself and alive to God.

Are you dead to yourself? Or would Miracle-Max say that you were only "mostly dead?"

You've probably heard it said that the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible. The best commentary I can offer is to read a section from the Book of Colossians. It starts by reminding you to die to yourself, then encourages you how to live:

Col 3:5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Col 3:6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,

Col 3:7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

Col 3:8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

Col 3:9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

Col 3:10 and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

Col 3:11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ *is* all and in all.

Col 3:12 Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

Col 3:13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*.

Col 3:14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

Col 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Col 3:17 And *whatever* you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.