

Discerning Gods Secret Wisdom

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[0 : 00] Just right now. Marked by power, which was the wind, by purging, which was the fire, and by communication, which was the tongue. So, in a sense, the new thing was the community of the Holy Spirit with a power source that couldn't be identified easily in the same way that you can't tell where the wind comes from or where it goes to.

With the purifying and purging effect of fire and with the ability to speak in a way that people understand or hear you.

You know, we live in this cacophony of sound, but it very often doesn't communicate very much. So, that was the first one. The second one was the story of the unnamed servant and how he, in obedience to Abraham, his master went and bought a wife for his son and the lovely story of how he was led by God in all the circumstances.

There was no sort of public miracle, which anybody from the outside could see, but his experience of how God led him, how God found, how he found the woman who was to be Isaac's wife, how she was, how he came to her home, and all the, in a sense, the circumstances of that event, which he knew was the guiding of God because he had prayed all the way through it and it happened, and then he prayed his way out of it, worshiping God for the way that he had been led.

So, that was a good kind of personal example of how God the Holy Spirit worked in an individual instance in the Old Testament. And last week I talked about Genesis chapter 1, and you remember the picture of the chaos and the Spirit of God hovering over the emptiness, the darkness, the chaos, and speaking into that the Word of God.

[2 : 15] Remember that, and God said, let there be and there was. So, you get this. This is, and the thing that I, I think that what I sort of said yesterday was, this is rather a good illustration of our lives.

Dark, empty, chaotic, and out of control, and God, by his Holy Spirit, speaks to us through his Word and brings order into our lives.

That's how we are to relate to God the Holy Spirit. That's how, as a community, we are to relate to God the Holy Spirit. That's what happens. The same word by which God said, let there be light, like his Holy Spirit, he speaks into the darkness of our lives.

The kind of darkness that Paul talks about when he says, remember, I know what it is, what, I know what it means to do good, but I don't do it. And, God speaks his Word into the darkness of our, our lives and brings light.

So, so that, that was, last week, and this week, we want to, I want to go on to, the, the epistle to the Corinthians, and, and, and, to, talk about a passage, which is in, 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verses 5 to 16, I think that's it, or 6 to 15, I guess it is, of, 1 Corinthians chapter 2, which is on page, 1, 5, 7, okay, I'll read it from this, and I think this is an NIV translation I have in front of me, so you can follow in yours.

[4 : 12] Paul is writing to the Corinthians, and he says, we do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age, or the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden, and that God destined for our glory, before time began.

None of the rulers of this age understood it, or if they had, they would not have crucified, the Lord of glory. However, as it is written, no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him, but God has revealed it to us, by his spirit.

Spirit, searches all things, even, the deep things of God. For who among, men, knows the thoughts of a man, except the man's spirit within him.

In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God, except the spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God.

[5 : 39] We may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom, but in words taught by the spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

A man without the spirit does not accept things that come from the spirit of God, but they are foolishness to him.

He cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. Spiritual man makes judgment about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment.

So that's the passage we're going on. But do let me ask you for any questions that may have occurred to you or do occur to you as we read this, because it's very important to find out where you are.

I mean, it's important to me. Thank you.

[7 : 11] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Yes, sir.

This is the passage, and before we go, it would be entirely appropriate to ask that God the Holy Spirit would lead us in understanding it.

Since it's talking about God the Holy Spirit leading us in understanding, then it's, as you can see, not inappropriate that we should recognize that reality here, because we're not to bring the wisdom of the world to the understanding of this, or to be led by the spirit for the understanding of this.

So let me just pray to that end as we begin. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Our God and Father, thank you that this passage tells us that into the world came the Lord of glory, and tells us that we crucified him.

We didn't crucify him arbitrarily. We crucified him because that was our wisdom, because the accumulated wisdom of the generations and civilizations of man.

[8 : 44] They would crucify the Lord of glory. And, thank you that that did not in any way stop your purpose.

And that the reality that you wanted to reveal through Jesus Christ was revealed through his suffering.

And we recognize the Prince who suffered on the cross as the Prince of Glory. and we only recognize that as you give us that wisdom which comes from your Holy Spirit.

So, by your Holy Spirit, help us indeed to discern spiritually by the inner working of your Holy Spirit. Who is the Prince of Glory? We may acknowledge him and submit to him. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Okay, now, look at the text, and I'll try and explain it as we go along so that this is a kind of an expanded reading of this passage as we go.

[10 : 26] It says, We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature. Now, Paul was addressing the Corinthians.

The Corinthian community was very much influenced by Gnosticism, by what you might call elite spirituality.

And it's the kind of thing that happens even, you know, that it was that certain people by the accumulation of education, certain people by human wisdom, certain people by long experience, certain people by philosophical inquiry had come to the place where they knew and they understood and if you wanted to know and you wanted to understand, you would have to go to them because they were the source and fount of wisdom.

You were the ignorant barbarians that didn't understand and they were what is called in this passage the rulers of this world.

The Greek word is some, there's an English word which talks about the archon. you know, we use that for architects and archdeacons and archbishops and what else do we do with arch?

[11 : 54] Anything? Archmasons. Archmasons. These are the people that have all the answers. These are the people we look up to and say they have the answers.

They are the archons. Paul says we we too have a wisdom and it too belongs to the mature the full grown.

It's a different kind of wisdom but it belongs to the mature because they of course said that this word mature can be translated initiated. You know how lots of secret societies initiate you into the secrets when you have passed this test and passed that test and they initiate you into the knowledge which is hidden from the ordinary people in the world and Paul is being very cynical

about this process and he says we too we have a wisdom and it belongs to the initiator but it's a very different kind of wisdom and he says the rulers the archons of this age you see at the end of verse 6 the rulers of this age the masters of this age their wisdom the end result of it is nothing. Now that's already wonderfully expounded for us in the Old Testament in the book of Ecclesiastes where the wise man the ultimately wise man of all the ages searched and inquired diligently to find out where wisdom was whenever he got there he said vanity of vanities all is vanity it's empty there is nothing there and so that's what Paul picks up on and he says the rulers of this age their wisdom ultimately comes to nothing and he says but we speak look at verse 7 we speak of God's sacred wisdom if you only had your own

Bible or something you should put a circle around that God's sacred wisdom because that's what this passage is all about is God's secret wisdom it's discerning God's secret wisdom now to illustrate it I and I don't know whether I can or not but I'll try the the over here you have that and over here you have that now the wisdom which belongs to the rulers of this age was a wisdom which was a wisdom of accumulation you know over the ages you accumulate a certain amount of wisdom most of you who are over 25 you know how you have accumulated a certain amount of wisdom and so the wisdom of this world is the wisdom of accumulation you happen to know things because you've been there you've seen it you understand there is a wisdom which which belongs to political leaders there's a wisdom which belongs to bankers there's lots of different brands of wisdom and they're always the wisdom of accumulation and and it's you know there's nothing wrong with it it's entirely valid but it's only when you think that you can know

[16:15] God by the wisdom of accumulation that you run into trouble you come out with silly statements like well why don't all the churches join together and why don't all religions and everything lead to one God and all this kind of nonsense because it's accumulated wisdom of the human species and they come to certain conclusions but Paul says and you look at it right there and you'll see what he's talking about is God's secret wisdom that has been hidden and this is not now the wisdom of accumulation this is the wisdom of revelation it's been hidden and now you can see it you see this is the difference that he's making that this wisdom of accumulation belongs to people and then the wisdom of revelation and what people do in church all the time is try and say that all we know we know because of this and Paul says the whole basis of our life is not that we have that but what's happened is God's secret wisdom has been revealed it's categorically a different kind of wisdom so if you go back to the text

God destined this for our glory before time began so Paul is saying this is the ancient wisdom of the world you know how you read in those little ads in the back of funny magazines about the ancient wisdom of the far east that goes back 8,000 years and things like that that accumulated wisdom the wisdom that comes from the himalayas the wisdom that comes from the deep caves of China the wisdom that comes from you know it's all pictures of the tremendous antiquity of the accumulated wisdom of humankind Paul says the wisdom that I'm talking about was before the world began see how he says it there he says a wisdom that has been hidden before time began so this this is an utterly different kind of wisdom and somehow it's a wisdom which is about

God himself man by wisdom cannot know God Paul the accumulated wisdom can never give you a picture of God only the revealed wisdom can and that's what he's talking about here so he goes on and he says that this wisdom which has been hidden God has destined for our glory before time began so the reason I put this up with you know a kind of sun that's spark is because the wisdom has to do with the revelation of the glory of God God is no longer a dark deep secret God has manifested himself in all his glory and how did he do it well look and see how he did it he did it in the Lord of glory you see that at the end of verse verse eight that they would and you see he said what happened when God revealed his hidden wisdom the secret wisdom from before time the accumulated wisdom of the archons of this civilization of ours what they did is that they crucified they crucified the Lord of glory they made fundamental mistake and you know that they they didn't understand and and he then goes on and he quotes from Isaiah he says no eye has seen no ear has heard no mind has conceived what

God has prepared for those who love him you know what Paul is saying it was impossible to think that accumulated wisdom could ever have imagined or discovered God's secret hidden wisdom they could never have broken through to the mystery of God you know that lovely verse in Peter it talks about the prophet who longed to see what God was going to do they knew he was going to do something but they didn't know what it was and they longed to see it well Paul says it's now

happened and the glory of God has been revealed in the incarnation of the Lord of glory who has come to this earth in the person of Jesus Christ and has been crucified and he said that's not really remarkable because no eye could ever have seen no ear could ever have heard no mind could ever have conceived what it was that God was going to do but God has revealed it to us by his spirit so that see the fundamental function of the work of the

[22 : 22] Holy Spirit is to allow you to see the Lord of glory to see who Jesus Christ is now for these people to whom Paul is writing they they they they they were wrong about about Jesus and and they thought that they could they knew what what what wisdom was but this wisdom is entirely from a different source it's not from the accumulated wisdom of the ages from the revelation of God in Christ now that's why the preaching of the gospel in this culture in this society in this civilization is all an offense to these people over here to the accumulated wisdom of the world you know that's why people who are deeply imbued with this kind of wisdom can say why don't the churches do this why don't

Christians do this why this why that because from their point of view the church could serve a very useful function if it did what their wisdom taught that it would be necessary to do but Paul is dealing with that problem with the Corinthians and telling them it doesn't work that way the way it works is that God has revealed to us by his spirit now what is it that God has revealed well what it is that God has revealed is that let me just quote from here that the wisdom of this age which comes to nothing in verse six you know that the wisdom of this age counsels despair the wisdom of this age counsels the ultimate hopelessness frustration and meaninglessness of human life and human suffering that's what that's what it does that's what the wisdom of this age does it counsels that and what this thing that

God has revealed to us by his spirit is God's saving grace revealed in the suffering servant Jesus Christ on the cross that through suffering God's purpose is our salvation human wisdom has in the past and still does conclude that man ultimately deserves damnation that man ultimately is the victim of the wrath of a righteous God what Paul says is not that in the suffering of Jesus Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit we discover something quite opposite and that is that the reality of the love of

God is the ultimate reality the glory of God is the ultimate purpose that he has in history and anticipation of the full in a sense breaking out of that glory he has sent into history and into our world the Lord of glory that's and so that we're and that we recognize him by the work of the Holy Spirit well then he goes on look in verse down out of verse the last part verse the Spirit searches all things even the deep things of God and I think that that is a rather cynical remark of St.

Paul you know how the sort of mystery religion say if you pay your initiation fees we'll introduce you into the deep things of God if you will come away with us and spend it and I think he's saying that you know so many happily inspired people think that they have discovered the deep things of God and they're close to idiocy but and Paul I think is saying that here when he says the spirit searches all things even the deep things of God you know because you know God's purpose is not to be hidden in this way God's ultimate purpose is that it should be revealed the people should know it that the man on the street should know the God who is the creator of the universe not a hidden thing and then he goes and he uses the illustration who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him and that that's basically the predicament the predicament that I find myself in at this moment

[28 : 25] I had no idea what's going on in your mind that's why I try and drag questions out of you if I can only just get some idea of what's going on in your mind but I can't and the only way I could is if somehow your spirit could communicate to me what's going on in you I know that you're different and I know that you're obstinate and I know that you're proud and I know all sorts of things about you but I don't know who you are and of course you don't know who I am and so because we can't communicate at that level you know this has always been a tremendous encouragement to me because what I think I mean you can test this in your own circumstances what I think you often hear people say well if God would only be here so I could touch him or so I could sit down and talk to him or

I could do something like that we think well now that would be fine but you know that in our relationship to one another as human beings it almost looks like the absolute demand is deception we use language that deceives we wear clothes that deceives we drive cars that deceives we don't want anybody to know who we are and ultimately even if we did we can't and you know the typical

picture of the man who goes to the bar and talks to the bartender and says my wife doesn't understand me the one person in the world who should understand me doesn't understand me and you know most of us I think it's our experience that we don't have any really close personal breaks you know we have a tremendous sense of isolation and alone so there's nobody really close to over a whole of life

I think that's pretty universal experience now I hope you can contradict me in some term but that happens that we at the basic level feel very lonely and the reason we feel lonely is because you know that we I can't I can't give you my spirit to tell you who I am but you see God can and therefore I would like to argue that it's possible for you and me to know God better than we can know each other because he has given us his spirit so that you know that's and that's what our life is all about you may never get to know another person completely but God desires that you should come to know him completely that you can do that and that's and that's what this passage

I think that's what Paul is saying here when he says that who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him in the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the spirit of God then he says in the very next verse we have received the spirit who is from God that we may understand what God has freely given so you see that's why you know the focus of our life is to know God and God has made himself known to us in that human being the son of man who is Jesus Christ and he has given us his spirit so that we will recognize in the man

Christ Jesus the prince of glory the lord of glory the one who revealed the glory of God and that's and that's what that's what Paul said and goes on to say he goes he goes on from there in verse 18 this is what we speak not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the spirit expressing spiritual truth in spiritual words see it's not we can't we can't this we can't know that how does he think we can't know what God has freely given us from this source of wisdom the only way we can know what God has given us is from this source of wisdom that he his secret wisdom he has made known by his spirit and so the word the language of this kind of wisdom will not serve to describe the gift of this kind of it requires a different kind of language and that language has to be animated by the work of the

[34 : 12] Holy Spirit the man without the spirit does not accept the things that come from the spirit of God you know this is foolishness to this man it doesn't make sense something's got to happen of a fairly serious nature that the man who is totally involved in this kind of wisdom should come to this somebody like professor Joe who was the great agnostic or atheistic professor of philosophy at the university of something around London or something who in his later life confessed faith in Christ he was a man who was world renowned because he had mastered this kind of religion and then the secret wisdom God broke in on him in the person of Jesus Christ it's an amazing sort of picture it's a very powerful sort of analysis that

Paul says here the man without the spirit does not accept the things that come from the spirit of God they're foolishness to him they're moronic to be literal about the Greek they they're foolishness to him he cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned the spiritual man makes judgments about all things but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment in other words this man is in no way inferior in his understanding of the world to this man here but he is not subject to the judgment which this person may come on this person judges him to be foolish to be a moron that's how I think the Greek word describes him that's where we get moron from anyway and so that's that's what happens he says this man who who by

God having revealed his secret and hidden wisdom to this man and revealed it in the person of the Lord of glory by the work of the Holy Spirit this man understands this but he's not under judgment of this because he belongs to the new thing that God is doing and the new thing that God is doing is to bring us ultimately up into his glory we are being promoted into glory that's what basically it means that's what God God intends to do the chapter ends with we have the mind of Christ and it's in that context that you understand are you any closer to discerning

God we thank you that this wisdom is insulting to our intellectual pride that we set ourselves up as archons and masters and rulers and sometimes use our great age to make others aware that we know far more than they do and yet secret and hidden wisdom of God we're told this more easily revealed with children than it is sometimes to sophisticated wise and honest so our God gives us the child likeness to receive your spirit we ask in Jesus name Amen Amen