

# 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 PM

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[ 0 : 00 ] Hello everyone, hello. It's nice to see you this Thanksgiving weekend. If you're brand new, my name is Aaron. Come and say I afterwards.

If you are brand new, I really encourage you to head downstairs afterwards. We have delicious soup and I'd love to meet you. We're in 1 Corinthians 2, 6-16.

So we're going through this book of 1 Corinthians. So this is a letter Paul wrote to a church in a place called Corinth, a church he started, but it had gone a bit theologically wobbly since he left. So some folks at the church wrote to Paul and said, here's what's going on. And Paul's response is this letter. And I want to remind you of what that wobbliness in the church looked like.

And we've talked about it, hinted at it over the last couple of weeks. But what did that wobbliness in the church look like? Well, here's one of the things. Let me give you an example. So if you go to someone's house and you go to the bathroom and you open up the medicine cabinet, right?

[ 1 : 05 ] Which you shouldn't do. That's rude. You don't do this. But if you did do that and you started looking at the bottles of medicine in the cabinet, which again, obviously don't do this.

But if you did do that and you knew something about medicine, you'd probably be able to work out what's going on with the person's house you're in, right? You'd probably have to work that out.

The principle is this. If you see the medicine, you can work out the problem. And this is a bit of a picture here. This is helpful for us working out what Paul is up to in this chapter. So let me explain that a bit.

So in these first few chapters of 1 Corinthians, the medicine, the thing that Paul keeps bringing up is the cross. The cross, the cross, the cross. He keeps coming back to the cross and the importance of the cross.

So if this is what he keeps hammering in this letter to the church in Corinth, if that's the medicine, what's the problem? What's the condition? What's the issue? Well, the problem we've discovered so far is that they had been sidelining the work of the cross.

[ 2 : 10 ] They'd been sidelining the cross. They'd been not talking about the cross. They'd signed it, sidelined it, and replaced it by talking about something else. So what was that? Well, in those days, in this particular place, the big celebrities of the day weren't like athletes and stuff.

They were the orators. They were the speakers. So Corinth was an academic hub, lots of big brains, lots of famous people coming through town, and they were great communicators, and they'd go to these public spaces, and they'd give these lectures, and they would philosophize about whatever, and people loved it.

They became famous and got money for it. The folks in the church in Corinth loved, loved, loved these folks as well. My son Ollie, who is eight, the other day asked me a very tricky philosophical question, which I'll throw out to you.

He said, Dad, if you were invisible, if you were, so you've got to really pay close attention to that. He said, Dad, if you were invisible, and you closed your eyes, could you see through your eyelids?

It's a good question, right? Thank you. If you're invisible, and you closed your eyes, could you, you really have to think about this, don't you? Could you see through your eyelids? It's a great question.

[ 3 : 28 ] The philosophers in Corinth would have loved that question. See, the philosophers were known for, one of the synonyms for the philosophers here was sophists, which we get the modern phrase sophistry, which we look that up, it's not a compliment.

So the philosophers were known to argue about things, which they didn't even believe themselves. Things, they didn't even have to be substantive things.

It was all about how well you could publicly make a case for something. Back to Corinth there. The churches had sign-lined the cross, and were trying to build the church on the foundation of really

flashy, motivational talks, which were mostly just worldly wisdom.

And why would they do that? Possibly, best guess is they thought that that would sort of sell, so to speak, to their culture. And it's a big problem, of course, isn't it, when a church believes there's a more powerful type of evangelism than preaching the cross.

Okay, so that's really, really big picture stuff. That's some context. Let's jump into the passage. So, given that big picture, given that context, it's understandable that Paul wants to spend a little bit of time here talking about this wisdom that these flashy orators were supposed to have had.

[ 4 : 45 ] And he basically says, look, he says this, there's that kind of wisdom over there that the philosophers have. Okay, it's flashy, right there. It's that, but there's this whole other wisdom.

There's a whole other type of wisdom. And this is the good stuff. This is God's wisdom. Now, I'm going to say that again with a lot more detail. And here's, because this is what Paul says.

And here's the basic structure of Paul's kind of argument that he makes. He says, first, there are different types of wisdom. Second, how do you get that wisdom? And third, why do you want it?

Again, different types of wisdom. Second, how do we get that good wisdom? And third, why do we want it? So let's go. Let's get into it. That's the structure of the sermon here. First, different types of wisdom.

Verses six and seven. Yet among the mature, we do impart wisdom. Although it is not a wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age who are doomed to pass away, but we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages of glory.

[ 5 : 46 ] Very simply, there's the wisdom of God, and there's a worldly wisdom. Let's look how God's wisdom is described here. It's secret. It's hidden. It's ancient. It's not of this age. Verse nine continues on.

He says, Paul says, no one's seen it. No one's heard it. No one's imagined. In other words, God has a wisdom which can't be discovered or conceived of just naturally.

We wouldn't arrive there by just kind of grinding the gears in our brain. And Paul gives us a very sort of blunt example in verse eight. He says, none of the rulers of the age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

See, you remember, it was the politicians and the priests that killed Jesus. The smartest people, the most religious, the most powerful people of the day, missed who Jesus was. God's wisdom and worldly wisdom.

There is a chasm between these two things that is so large and so deep and so great that no matter how educated you are, no matter how spiritual you think you are, no matter how many podcasts you listen to, no matter how old you get, no matter how many degrees you have, God has a wisdom which we don't have access to by our own efforts.

[ 6 : 59 ] Let me just round out this point with this caveat. The passage is not rubbishing academic pursuits. It's not saying we shouldn't use our minds. Paul is simply saying there are these different types of wisdom. And the Corinthian church was in love, in love with this flashy, showy philosophers who were so engaging.

They loved them. They were in a love affair with them. And Paul says, do you need to break up? Because you could do a lot better. Let's pause for a moment. Let's think of application now. Are there philosophies, ideas that you have become enamored with?

I'm not even saying these are necessarily bad ideas, but have you become so enamored with them? Are they becoming more important to you than the wisdom of God? Than the wisdom displayed in the cross?

It could be a podcaster. Again, it could be actually really good stuff. It could be a political ideology that has captured you, and you're just like, man, if we could just all get behind this one thing. It could be a cultural ideology. It could be a form of spirituality that's kind of, you know, Christian-ish, ish, ish, you know? If this is an issue for you, hear these words of Paul, because you need to cut that off.

[ 8 : 13 ] And I'll leave that between you and the Holy Spirit to continue praying about that. Let's keep going. Point one. We've had point one. Here it is. God has this awesome wisdom.

But the problem is, we can't, like, we can't, we don't have access to it just on our own. So point two, how do we get it? Can we get it? Or does it just remain secret or hidden?

Well, you heard in the passage, wonderfully, verse 10, and verse 12 says the same thing, basically. It's great news. Verse 10, these things God has revealed to us through his Spirit, for the Spirit

searches everything, even the depths of God.

So despite the chasm between our thoughts and God's thoughts, we have access to that wisdom through the Holy Spirit. Halbutt's great axiom was, God is known through God alone.

So if you know Jesus, if you're here and you're a Christian, you believe he died and rose again, you believe in, that Christ will return, that we have this great hope for the new creation, if you embrace all that stuff, it's because God revealed it to you by the Holy Spirit.

[ 9 : 25 ] But because you were super clever, and you kind of worked it out yourself. So, you know, you have like a PhD sitting in her office in Oxford, and you have a subsistence farmer, seeding the land in Honduras.

If they are both Christians, it's only because God revealed himself to them. Neither of them had any spiritual advantage in that. It was all grace.

You remember the story in Matthew 16, when Jesus asks Peter, who do you say I am? And Peter wonderfully says, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. What is the very first thing Jesus says to that?

He doesn't say, well, let's unpack that. Let's talk it through. Let's unpack that. The very first thing Jesus says, when Peter says that, is this. He says, blessed that are you, Simon, by Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

Only God can tell us about God. And Paul gives us this very simple analogy in verse 11. He says, for who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him.

[ 10 : 38 ] So also, no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the spirit of God. It's a very simple picture, isn't it? We all know our own minds. I know what's in my mind.

I don't know what's in your mind. You don't know what I'm thinking unless I tell you, unless I speak it out. So, let me tell you something about myself. Let me tell you something about myself, Mark. I have never drunk a cup of coffee in my life.

Like, not a single cup. I've had like three sips of coffee in my entire life. I don't like the taste of it. Don't feel sorry for me. I have no regrets.

Saved thousands of dollars. Obviously, lots of time. So there you go. There is no way that you could have known that unless I spoke it to you. Right?

I'm not trying to be simplistic, but this is what Paul is saying here. It's the same with God. We can't know God's thoughts, but the Spirit knows God's thoughts because the Spirit is God. It knows the deepest thoughts of God.

[ 11 : 37 ] So the Spirit reveals God to us so we can understand, so we can know His wisdom. It doesn't mean we will know everything, but God will reveal to us what we need to know.

Now, if you have a look at verse 14, it reveals a bit of a, what could possibly be a complication for us. The natural person does not accept the things of God, the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him or her, and he or she is not able to understand them because they're spiritually discerned.

Okay. So that sort of says what I just said, but sort of like the flip side, like in via negativa, like the negative side of it, right? Now, here's a problem with this. Our problem could be this, is we go, oh, God has, you know, revealed Himself to us and so everything's good now and I actually feel pretty good about this.

I'm pretty puffed up. You know, you can feel pretty puffed up about this. Yes, we're very spiritual. We go to St. John's. St. John's. Very spiritual. If you leave here today feeling, feeling like you are better than the natural person described here, you've kind of missed the point.

Because I want you to think about who Paul is talking to here. He's not actually talking to people who aren't believers here. He's talking to his church. He's talking to followers of Jesus. Paul is not slamming the non-Christians here.

[ 12 : 48 ] He's rebuking the Christians who the Spirit has spoken to but are listening to the world's values who are being sucked into Corinthian views on sexuality and power, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

They have the Holy Spirit but they're ignoring it. So, what's our takeaway here? What does this make you want to pray or think one more?

For me, it makes me want to pray, firstly, just thankfulness, which is, yeah, I mean, thank you God for being so kind to me that you decided to take some, some guy who had no Christians in his family and you decided, speak to me through somebody, the Spirit just ignited that in my heart.

And verse 12 is wonderful. Listen to this. Now we have received not the Spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God that we might understand the things freely given to us by God. But that's my first prayer. That's my first response. It's just gratefulness, thankfulness that God revealed himself to me through his Spirit. Secondly, the second thing that wants me to want to pray is, God, be kind to my friends and be kind to my family and be kind to my neighbors who do not know you.

[ 14 : 19 ] Be kind to them as you have been kind to me. So we have this week of evangelism coming up in November. It's going to be absolutely brilliant. You'll hear about it more and more over the next few weeks. But let's pray.

Let's be praying. As you are kind to me, be kind to others who don't know you. Okay, let's move to our last point very quickly here. So point one, remember?

Point one. Different types of wisdom. There's this huge chasm between the wisdom of God and worldly wisdom. It's a chasm that is so huge that it actually God's wisdom can sometimes look like foolishness to others.

That's point one. Point two, we can know God and His wisdom only through the Spirit, only when the Spirit reveals it to us. My final point, very quickly, what's the result of knowing that wisdom? It's not just salvation. It's in verse 16. We would have the mind of Christ. This is where this little section lands. We would have the mind of Christ.

[ 15 : 20 ] What does that mean? It means we have access to the mind of God individually and as a community. We can know what God is like. We can know what is right and wrong. We can know what our attitudes should be.

The Spirit speaks to us about what is valuable and what is not valuable in this world. We have a great hope that goes beyond just kind of, you know, financially kind of making it, you know. This is how we become a community of contrast. It's a transformed mind. That's what it means to have the mind of Christ. We can think like Christ in this world. I mean, the magnitude of what God freely gives us is astonishing.

The mind of Christ. And the magnitude of the Corinthian betrayal is stunning. Becoming fixated on the, sort of, the intellectual shiny objects of the day.

Fixated on that when they have the mind of Christ. Friends, I hope your hearts are grateful today and I hope they are calibrated to the voice of the Spirit. Amen. .

[ 16 : 30 ] . . . . .

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