

1 Corinthians 2:6-16 AM

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 October 2023

Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everybody. It's really nice to see you all. If you're visiting with us, my name is Aaron. I'm one of the ministers on staff here. So we are working our way through 1 Corinthians. So we're in 1 Corinthians 2, 6 to 16. So this is a letter on its most simplest level. This is a letter Paul wrote to a church in Corinth, a church that he started but had gone a bit theologically wobbly since he left. So some folks at the church wrote to Paul, said this is happening, and Paul's response is this letter. So there, I've caught you up.

Let me remind you of the wobbliness in the church, which Paul has been talking about for these last couple of chapters, by way of analogy. So if you go to someone's house and you go to the washroom there and you accidentally look in their medicine cabinet and you let your eyes pause at the medicine bottles for a moment, you'd be able to surmise the condition it's treating, right?

Now obviously don't do this. That's terrible. Like, don't look at people's medicine they're taking. But if you did, right, in principle, you'd be able to work out the problem that the medicine is treating, right? This idea is helpful in working out what Paul is up to in these chapters. Let me explain. Paul's medicine in these chapters, the thing he keeps talking about is the cross. It's the cross, the cross, the cross. He keeps coming back to the cross in these early chapters. If that's what he's hammering in this letter to this church in Corinth, if that's the medicine to a problem, that tells us the problem he's trying to address, doesn't it? So what is the condition? What's the problem? The problem is that they had sidelined the cross in their ministry. They had sidelined it and they'd replaced it with something else. So what is that? What is the thing they had replaced it with?

What did they find so compelling that it supplanted the preaching of the cross? Well, you remember, again, we've talked about in these last few chapters, in those days, the big celebrities were these orators. So Corinth was an academic hub, lots of big brains, lots of famous sort of speakers coming through, and they were fantastic communicators. And they'd get up in these public spaces and in schools, and they'd give these lectures, and they would philosophize about just whatever, and people loved it. And the folks in this church in Corinth loved, loved, loved these folks.

My son, Ollie, who is eight, the other day asked me a very tricky philosophical question. I'm going to throw it out to you. He said, Dad, if you were invisible and you closed your eyes, would you be able to see through your eyelids?

[3 : 2 3] This is a great question, right? If you're invisible and you closed your eyes, could you see through your eyelids?

It's a great question. The philosophers would have loved that question. See, they were known to argue things they didn't even really believe.

As long as they argued it well. They were happy to argue things that had no substance, as long as they argued it well. Back to Corinth.

The church there had sidelined the cross. And they were trying to build the church on a foundation of just sort of flashy talks and worldly wisdom.

Now, why would they do that? Because it's not uncommon in church land to go this direction, right? Why would they do that? Well, perhaps they just thought that that would sell, so to speak, you know?

[4 : 26] That that would sell in their culture. That's a big problem, isn't it? It's a big problem when the church believes that there's a more powerful type of evangelism than preaching the cross.

So, that's the really big picture stuff. That's the context of our passage. This is what Paul is writing into. So, let's jump into the passage now. So, given that picture, it's understandable that Paul has this little section here where he talks about wisdom.

And he basically says this. There's a type of wisdom over here referring to the wisdom of the flashy orators and philosophers and sophists.

There's that. But there's this whole other type of wisdom over here. And this is the good stuff. This is God's wisdom. Now, I'm going to say that again, but with a lot more detail from the passage.

But here's the simple structure of Paul's argument. He says there are different types of wisdom. Two. How do we get that wisdom? And three. Why do we want it?

[5 : 34] There are different types of wisdom. Point one. Two. How do we get that good wisdom? And why do we want it? So, let's go. Let's go. First, different types of wisdom. Verses six and seven.

Yet among the mature, we do impart wisdom. Although it's not a wisdom of this age or 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 for our glory.

So, very simply, there is a wisdom of God and there's a worldly wisdom. But have a look at how God's wisdom is described here. It's secret. It's hidden. It's ancient. It's not of this age.

Verse nine goes on to say no one has seen it. No one's heard it. No one's imagined it. In other words, God has a wisdom that cannot be discovered, that can't be conceived of naturally.

And then Paul gives us a very blunt example in verse eight. He says, none of the rulers of this age understood this. For if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Remember, it was the politicians and the priests who killed Jesus.

[6 : 39] The smartest people, the most religious, the most powerful people of the day missed who Jesus was. So, God's wisdom and our wisdom, there is such a chasm between these two things.

That chasm is so deep and so large and so wide that no matter how educated you are, no matter how spiritual you consider yourself to be, no matter how many great podcasts you listen to, no matter how old you get, God has a wisdom that we do not have access to by our own efforts.

That's his first point. Let me round that out with a caveat. This passage is not rubbishing academic pursuits.

It is not saying don't use your minds. He's simply trying to tell the church in Corinth there's two different types of wisdom, and you guys have a love affair with these flashy, showy philosophers who are so engaging.

You have a love affair with them, and you need to break up because you could do a lot better. Let's pause for a moment and think about an application here.

[7 : 54] Are there philosophies or ideas in your world that you have become enamored with, that are becoming more important to you than the wisdom of God, that they're your go-to for how to live?

Maybe it's a podcaster you really like. It could be a political ideology that's just gripped your heart. Like it's like this, if we could just get this sorted, everything will work out.

Maybe it's a cultural ideology, a form of spirituality that's kind of Christian-ish, that's a bit more friendly to the world. If this is an issue for you, friends, you need to cut that off.

I'll leave that with you to think about more. Let's keep going. So point one, God has an awesome wisdom, but there's a problem with it, is we can't discover it on our own.

Point two, how do we get that wisdom? Can we get that wisdom, or does it remain hidden, secret? Well, here's the great news of the passage. Very clear in verses 10 and 12.

[9 : 07] Let me read verses 10 to you. These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. See, despite the chasm between our thoughts and God's thoughts, we do have access to His wisdom through the Holy Spirit.

Karl Barth's great axiom was, God is only known through God alone. God is known through God alone. So if you know Jesus, if you believe He died and rose again, if you believe Jesus is your only hope, if you believe God has a great plan for a new creation, if you embrace that, it's because God revealed it to you through His Spirit.

It is not because you work that out yourself. If you have a PhD sitting in her office in Oxford, and you have a subsistence farmer seeding the land in Honduras, and they are both Christians, they're both following Christ, it is only because God revealed Himself to them.

Neither of them had any spiritual advantage. It was all grace. Remember the story in Matthew 16. Jesus asks Peter, Who do you say I am?

And He says, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And what is the first thing Jesus says to him? Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you.

[10 : 41] You didn't work this out, man. But my Father in heaven. God revealed that to you. Only God can tell us about God.

And Paul gives us a very simple analogy in verse 11. Who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person which is in him? And also, no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the spirit of God.

We all know our own minds, right? We don't know the minds of others. You don't know what I'm thinking unless I tell you, unless I speak it. So let me tell you something about myself. And don't freak out when I tell you this.

I have never had a cup of coffee in my life. Like not a one.

I've had maybe three sips of coffee in my life. I don't like what it tastes like. I have no regrets. Don't feel sorry for me.

[11 : 45] Think of the money I've saved. The time I've saved. So there you go. There is something that you didn't know about me that you couldn't know unless I spoke it, right?

It's really simple. It's just what Paul just says. It's the same with God. We can't know God's thoughts unless he tells us. And the spirit knows God, the depths of God.

Because the spirit is God. So the spirit reveals God to us. So we can understand and we can know God's wisdom. It doesn't mean we'll know everything. But God will reveal to us what we need to know.

Okay. Now look at verse 14. Because I want to point out a sort of an issue that might come out of this. Okay. Verse 14. The natural person does not accept the things of the spirit of God for they are folly to him or her.

And he or she is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. Okay. So that kind of says what I just said but sort of like in a negative version of it, right? Now the problem with this is this.

[12 : 44] Is that our problem could be this idea sort of puffs us up a little bit. You know because it's calling us spiritual. We're spiritual people. I'm very spiritual. I'm very, very spiritual. I go to St. John's. I'm very spiritual person.

If we leave today thinking we are better than what the passage describes as the natural person, that we are better than them, you've kind of missed the point.

I mean think about who Paul is writing to here. He's writing to a church. He's writing to followers of Jesus. He's not slamming the non-Christians here, is he, in this passage.

He's rebuking Christians. He's not saying, oh, you people who don't believe, you're terrible people. No, he's rebuking these Christians here who the Spirit actually has spoken to but are still listening to the world's values, who have been sucked into the Corinthian views on sexuality and power, etc.

They have the Holy Spirit but are ignoring the Spirit. So what's our takeaway here? What does this make us want to pray as we hear it?

[13 : 50] I think it's a good question. What does this make us want to pray as you hear it? First for me, I want to pray, thank you, God. Thank you, God. And what a wonderful, on this Thanksgiving weekend, thank you, God, for being so kind to me to reveal yourself to me.

Verse 12 says, This is something you gave to me freely. Now, we have not received the Spirit of this world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

God freely gave me His Spirit so I could understand His wisdom. So that's my first prayer, is just gratefulness.

It makes me want to pray, please, God, be kind to my friends as you are kind to me. Be kind to my family members, my neighbors who don't know you.

Would you be as kind to them as you were to me? We have a week of evangelism coming up in November. You're going to hear about it today. Chris is going to come up and talk to us about it in a few minutes.

[14 : 59] Amazing speakers coming. We pray a lot about this, but keep praying. Keep praying, folks. Heavenly Father, as you were kind to me, be kind to others who don't know you.

Let's keep moving to our last point very quickly. Point one, there's two types of wisdom. It's worldly wisdom, and there's God's wisdom. Wordly wisdom looks flashy, but there is a massive and a huge chasm between these two wisdoms.

So huge that actually God's wisdom looks like foolishness to many. 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.

And my final point, very quickly, the result of knowing that wisdom is not just salvation. It's in the end of verse 16. That we have the mind of Christ.

What does that mean? It means we have access to the mind of God individually and as a community. So we can know what God is like. We can know right from wrong.

[15 : 59] We can know what our attitudes should be. What is valuable. What is not valuable in this world. We can know a hope that is greater than just, you know, having a great sort of West Coast life.

I mean, this is how we be and become a community of contrast. It's when our minds are transformed by the Spirit. We can think like Christ in this world.

So this is sort of like, this is like the climax of Paul's argument here, the great promise of it. And the magnitude of what God freely gives us is astonishing, is it not?

It's the mind of Christ. And the magnitude of the Corinthian betrayal is stunning.

Becoming fixated on the intellectual shiny objects of the day. Fixated on that. Focused on that.

[16 : 58] When they have the mind of Christ. Friends, I hope your hearts are grateful today for the Spirit of God in your life.

And I hope they're calibrated to the voice of that Spirit. Amen. Amen.