

# 1 CORINTHIANS 2:1 - 16

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Second Sunday after Epiphany, January 14, 2023

Smith

## The Wisdom of God

**1 And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. 2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. 4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power. 6 We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"— the things God has prepared for those who love him— 10 these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.**

**The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. 14 The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. 15 The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, 16 for, "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.**

Well, Paul, this is a pickle. Twenty years ago you were the most dangerous enemy of the Christian church. Then Jesus himself converted you in a vision on the road to Damascus. It was only five or six years ago that the Jerusalem Council sent you and Barnabas on your first mission trip. You've written a couple of excellent letters to the Galatians and to the Thessalonians. But now, what is happening in Corinth?

They have broken into factions, they don't respect you or your message, and they've... quite honestly, they have stopped behaving like Christians. Well, Paul, you have done what I'm not sure I could do. You have written with patience, and with the souls of the Corinthians at heart, and you have used their mistakes to give you the chance to write about (1) the difference between God's wisdom and human wisdom, and (2) the secret wisdom of the Gospel, and (3) the crucifixion of Jesus, and (4) that in the gospel of the cross, we have the mind of Christ.

What was their problem with Paul? Was it that his fellow pastor in Corinth, a preacher named Apollos, was better at public speaking, or they could follow his sermons more easily than Paul's?

They were choosing sides among their preachers without understanding that it can be a great blessing to a church to have more than one pastor, or even a series and a succession of different pastors over the course of your lifetime.

But Paul didn't rely on human wisdom or eloquence, not that he was ever offended by another preacher's eloquent style, but in Corinth especially, Paul says that he resolved to know nothing and speak nothing except for Christ, and most of all Christ crucified. In fact, in just his chapter he mentioned the crucifixion twice to emphasize his point. And to do this, he refuses to rely on human wisdom.

This was to show us that our faith doesn't stand on human wisdom. Wisdom is to be a tool that we use, but not blindly, and always, always, subordinate to the word of God. In a way, human wisdom is a little like a calendar or a schedule. It helps us to structure our lives, and to put things into perspective, but sometimes the weather overrides the calendar, and even though the schedule says there's school, the storm outside says, "Not today."

And so it is with human wisdom. Human wisdom, based on just our few years of experience, says that people don't rise from the dead. But the Word of God tells us, "Mm, mm, the human body was not designed with death in mind. It is made to be a perpetual motion machine, it takes in what it needs and move, exists, lives, and the will of God is that it will live forever. So even though the devil introduced death into the world, God has promised the resurrection and he has demonstrated the resurrection by raising Jesus from the dead.

And here might be a place where flowery words and fancy ways of speaking might get in the way of the truth. Do we want someone who constantly talks about symbolism to preach the resurrection to us? Isn't it possible that the truth of the resurrection and of the crucifixion might get washed away by talk about symbolism, when all we really want or need is the plain truth?

In fact, no human mind could ever have imagined what God had in mind for mankind in his wisdom. Even ancient believers like Abraham and Moses were hopelessly lost about faith until God's word was revealed to them and handed to them. Without the power of the Holy Spirit working through the gospel, we are ignorant, lost, and hopeless.

Think of our sinful state. And we don't need to go comparing ourselves with the Corinthians and their sins of factions and rejecting their Apostle and questioning his wisdom or his intelligence. Think of when we become selfish and when we don't think about the spiritual needs of the people around us. Think of when we fall into sins of coveting or mistrust or failing to honor our parents or leaders, or our sins as parents and leaders of abusing the trust given to us.

The human heart wants to answer these sins by ignoring them, or by saying "At least I'm not as bad as this or that person." But God doesn't tell me to be better than the worst person in history that I can think of. What good does it do to my soul to be not quite as bad a sinner as the devil? Or Cain? Or Judas?

At this time of year, I spend some time kicking the ice and the frozen junk out of the wheel wells around my tires. And the Lord does this with his word, knocking out our frozen opinions and the other useless junk that gets in the way of what really works: Jesus Christ, the one Paul always preached as Christ Crucified, was put to death as the sacrifice for all of our sins, and raised again to who that God accepted his sacrifice as truly correct, and completely sufficient, as payment for the sins of the whole world.

And Paul says, "They crucified the Lord of glory." Think about the difference, the contrast, between saying "crucified" and saying "the Lord of glory." To treat the Creator of the Universe, the Almighty God who will be the Judge of each and every man, woman and child on Judgment Day, and to execute him with cruel torture like the lowest criminal? No one who ever comprehended the wisdom of God, the message of the Gospel, could have done such a thing. But neither should we commit the sins that we do, and we *know the difference!* *We know the Lord of glory! We have the mind of Christ!*

Our chronic, incurable sin, is taken from us by Jesus, who having removed our sin has examined it. It should be more than enough to condemn us to death, but Jesus has pronounced it to be "benign," removed, and of no concern to him at all.

The mind of man cannot grasp what God has done, but this is the gospel of the forgiveness of our sins. This is the simple gospel that we trust, and this is the simple gospel that we preach. And therefore this must be the gospel that we share with one another. So that if you have been selfish or inconsiderate of me, I will say, "I forgive you as Christ forgives, and I will do everything in my power to be able to say tomorrow, that I will have forgotten all about whatever needed to be forgiven today."

And then I will say, those things God has forgiven in me, I will pray that he helps me to avoid them tomorrow and for the rest of my life. For God, in his wisdom, has done what would never have occurred to me. He forgave the guilt of all of my sin. Amen.

Romans 12:6-8 "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully."