

I Corinthians 1:18-2:16 – Concerning Wisdom; Chapter 2 Consolidate Notes

- A. 1:18-2:16, Titles: “Concerning Wisdom”; “On the Matter of Wisdom” ^{AB}
1. NOTE: the notes have been consolidated on our website for I Corinthians 1.
 2. 1:18-25, Titles: “God’s Foolishness / Wisdom and Ours”; “The Wisdom of the Cross is Only Perceived by Believers”
 3. 1:26-31, Titles: “To the Praise of God”; “God in All His Fullness”; “God Always with Us”
 4. 2:1-5, Titles: “The Crucified Christ”; “Paul’s Humility”; “Superiority of Christ”; “God’s Eloquence, Man’s Stupidity”; “Reliance on the Spirit”; “We Preach Christ Crucified” – ¹ And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴ And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.
 - a. v 1 – Not my words but God’s; There is no need for wisdom to declare the testimony of God; No superiority (but) the superiority of the gospel; Simplicity of the Gospel.
 - i. What kind of wisdom does Paul have in view in this verse? – worldly wisdom; that of natural man; intellectual; philosophy & the like
 - ii. What does the word “testimony” imply? – this is a forensic word, for use in the legal system and court room; it implies that the words are backed up by evidence, and by the oath of the one giving it, in this case by God.
 - b. v 2 – Crucified Christ; No knowledge (but) superiority of crucified Christ; Jesus Christ alone; We only need to know Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
 - i. Prior to coming to Corinth, Paul had been in Athens (Acts 17); what was one factor in his making this resolution? – he there found that Greek wisdom loved speculating on novelties, but had little interest in spiritual realities such as sin, righteousness and judgement.
 - ii. How would you further qualify the words, “to know nothing”? – obviously Paul knew much more than this – the Scriptures & prophecy, the resurrection – but the knowledge he shared with them was centred upon Christ, His death and its reason: namely, to save man from his sin and guilt

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^B Footnotes: Aqua; Outline, reference numbers, and questions on the verses, etc., shown in black. Scripture quotations are shown in blue. Class suggestions on chief idea of verses shown in purple. Quotations & summary of class answers to questions shown in green. Class section titles & additions by the leader shown in red – any other colours are accidental!

- c. v 3 – Human weakness; I was with you through your trials; No strength – Paul’s limitations; We feel with Paul.
 - i. What was Paul’s practice in preaching the gospel in a new city? – First he would go to a synagogue or other place where Jews assembled, since these people had the OT background, to show that Jesus is the Messiah (Christ). This was also where Gentiles open to the gospel would come.
 - ii. How would this have weakened him emotionally and in other ways (see Acts 18:5-6, Romans 9:1-3)? – Even though Jews would at first accept this message, in many cases once the proselyte and other Gentiles began to show interest they would become jealous and persecute Paul. It seems they thought that people should first become Jews before God would bless them. That only a few Jews persevered in faith was discouraging as well as saddening.
 - iii. What was another aspect of Paul’s weakness (2 Corinthians 10:10, Galatians 4:13-15)? – God used Paul’s illness (possibly bad eyesight, Galatians 6:11) to cause him to stay to preach the Gospel to the Galatians. As well he did not seem to have an imposing presence (‘charisma’) as a preacher.

- d. v 4 – Godly power; No wise words but superiority of Spirit and power; Not human *charisma*, but God’s Spirit. No place for enticing words of man’s wisdom. NB: this is in a spiritual context: “enticing, persuasive, plausible, enticing, attractive words”
 - i. Is there a place for wise persuasion in evangelism? ... what kind? – yes, those from the leading of the Holy Spirit; considering the understanding and background of the audience (Paul on Mars’ Hill); to the Jews from Scripture; apologetics, showing fulfilment of prophecy (Peter at Pentecost)
 - ii. What demonstrates the power of the gospel? – conversion; the testimony of newness of life in a believer; a faith not lessened by bad exoeruebcas
- e. v 5 – Faith based solely on God; Our faith should be the God’s power; Not human, (but) superiority of God’s power.
 - i. What is the key word in describing wisdom to be avoided? – man, human

5. 2:6-16, Titles: – God’s Wise Plan Revealed

⁶ Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; ⁷ but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; ⁸ the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; ⁹ but just as it is written, “**things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him.**” ¹⁰ For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, ¹³ which things we also speak, not in words taught by

human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.¹⁴ But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised*.¹⁵ But he who is spiritual appraises* all things, yet he himself is appraised* by no man.¹⁶ For **“who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct him?”** But we have the mind of Christ.

* Another word for ‘appraise’ is ‘discern’.

a. v 6 – The real wisdom. Paul speaks (eternal, real, spiritual) wisdom to the mature. Mature (godly) wisdom.

i. What marks Christian maturity (perfection)?

(1) Ephesians 4:11-13 – as applied to Christian community (church): oneness in faith, in knowing God; building up of the body of Christ

(2) Hebrews 5:13-14 – trained to (vs spiritual gift of) discernment through practice; accustomed to word of righteousness (which goes beyond the first principles (v 12)). Principle is “little kids learn from older kids.”

ii. What characterises worldly wisdom? – it is constantly changing, “faddish” – like political correctness, there is a new flavour each month.

iii. Which is this real wisdom: simple or difficult? – although the gospel is simple (in that a child can understand it), Paul is about to make the point that in the mind of God it is deeply profound, only revealed by the Holy Spirit to man.

b. v 7 – The once hidden wisdom is now spoken according to plan. Wisdom made known by the Holy Spirit. Wisdom – hidden & mysterious.

i. What does mystery mean in the NT (Romans 16:25-26) – The members of the so-called mystery religions (e.g., Masons) claimed a secret key to knowledge. But the NT meaning is different: something once hidden from mankind, but now revealed (see the reference given).

ii. What is its principle subject (1 Timothy 3:16, Colossians 1:26-28)? – It is ;Jesus Christ; firstly in His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, exaltation; and secondly, in His indwelling the believer, confirming their eternal life.

c. v 8 – That wisdom was in Jesus Christ (cf., 1:30). Unknown to natural man, even those considered worldly wise. Failure to understand wisdom seen by their crucifying Jesus Christ.

i. What rulers are specifically included? – Pilate, representing Rome & the Gentiles; Jewish high priest, faulty representative of the one, true God: together representing material & spiritual rulers of the world.

Note my underlining of key words for the next questions.

How does the word ‘wisdom’ (vv 6-8) tie 2:6-16 back to 2:1-5?

What differentiates this wisdom from that in verses 1 & 5

– as seen in verse 7? this wisdom, God’s, is a mystery, hidden from before time (“predestined before the ages”)

– as seen in verse 8? – none can understand it, except by the Spirit’s entrance into a person (rulers, religious & secular, failed to understand it)

d. v 9 – God’s wonderful, secret plan (for us); God’s provision for those who love Him is beyond our experience and our imagination; Godly wisdom incomprehensible to natural man; We cannot understand what God has prepared for those who love Him; God gives wisdom to those who love Him (to those who accepted Him as Lord & Saviour). – Which preparation of God is mainly in view? – the entrance of the Son of God into the world in order to bring salvation.

e. v 10 – God’s wisdom / God’s wise plan / God revealed by/through the Spirit; God’s Spirit has revealed the deep things of God; God has revealed to the reborn through the indwelling Spirit – What is the key fact about this preparation? – it has now been revealed through the Holy Spirit, who searches the deep things of God.

f. v 11 – The example of man’s spirit illustrates God’s Spirit; “The spirit of man [is] the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.” (Proverbs 20:27 AV); spiritually possessed wisdom; thoughts of God known only by the Spirit of God.

i. What quality makes the Holy Spirit our Instructor? – He knows the thoughts of the triune God, revealing truth to those whom He indwells.

g. v 12 – Our receiving God’s Spirit; When we receive the Spirit we are taught by the Spirit; We receive the Spirit of God so we can know the things God has freely given; – What are some “given things” the received Spirit made known to YOU? – that Christ died for MY sin; the opportunity to serve; the specific ministry gifts; truth of the gospel & Scriptures, and own weaknesses.

h. v 13 – Spirit’s teachings; Paul speaks what he has received from the Spirit; By spiritual utterances we learn the Spirit’s wisdom; How the Holy Ghost has taught us comparing spiritual with spiritual; We speak what the Holy Spirit has revealed to us.

i. What are the instruments used by to Holy Spirit to teach US? – the word, gospel, Bible; God-given teachers; other Christian & their examples

i. v 14 – Not understood without spiritual birth; All gibberish to natural man; Natural man is blind; Natural man rejects what is taught by the Spirit because he cannot understand. – Every baby is a “natural man”; what hope is there for it? – Prayer; The grace of God; Exposure to the gospel; “God/Jesus loves yo”; Parental experience shared (Deuteronomy 6:1-9).

j. v 15 – Natural man cannot assess the spiritual man; Spiritual man judges without being judged; The spiritual one judges spiritually & perfectly; Spiritual judges all this but is not judged; – Whence this discernment? – By the indwelling Holy Spirit (received at salvation, through regeneration – the new birth from above)

k. v 16 – Mind of Christ is God’s; There is none above the mind and will of God as manifested in Christ; No one can instruct the Lord, we have the mind of Christ. Jews & Gentiles declare the gospel foolish or false: how does this verse refute them? – The mind of the Lord is infinite (read verse 16, again), and no created being is able to add one whit to His omniscience; therefore man’s judgement and evaluation of God’s plan of salvation – the gospel – is inherently faulty, wrong.