



First Corinthians 2: 6-16

Verse 5 – [From Session 6]

How are we eternally saved and able to stand before God? By our **faith**. The Greek word for faith is *pistis* and is translated belief, assurance; and carries the sense of putting your trust in something, in this case someone. It is not faith in the wisdom of men. This we can be sure of since, while man's wisdom is helpful, it does not provide any power for us to stand before the Lord. We can only stand in the power of God. It is faith in the power of God, i.e, the cross of Christ that saves us.

Paul now reminds the church that Christian revelation does not come from human wisdom [to read about Paul's first visit to Corinth and starting the church there, read Acts 18:1-17]

Verse 6 –

"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect (mature): yet not the wisdom of the world, or the princes of this world, that come to nought."

[**Howbeit** is an adverb most English speakers do not use anymore. Notice I am using the King James Version. You might ask why not use another translation since we don't use that word anymore? I do use other translations, but by using the KJV for study it compels me to look up words I might simply pass over when reading a 21st century translation.

The word **howbeit** in our contemporary vocabulary just means *nevertheless*, or *however*. Knowing the contemporary meaning of this particular word doesn't change the interpretation of the passage. Instead of just knowing the meaning of nevertheless, and however, we know what **howbeit** means; our vocabulary has increased and we have just become a little smarter!]

We don't speak the wisdom of men, *however* we do **speak wisdom** of God **among them that are perfect**, that is, those who are mature (as in the NKJV)...The Greek word Paul uses here is *teleios*. It means *to the farthest reaches*. We get our word telescope from this—as a telescope reaches out to the farthest stars, so God's wisdom reaches out to those who are spiritual mature, or among the saved, those who have heard the gospel and responded to the gospel.

Paul is not disrespecting those with education or wisdom of the world, rather he is driving home the truth that our wisdom in the church is not to worldly wisdom (stuff we learn in philosophy class at the university).

Nor is it wisdom of **princes of this world**: Rulers, leaders, judges, and others who seem so wise; we might be intimidated by them. They are here today and gone tomorrow and their wisdom goes to the grave with them, it comes to **nought** (which means inactivated or useless).

When it comes to the church, we cannot depend on the world's wisdom to try and reach people for Christ. The world's business practices, church growth strategies, how to get more people in your church...they will all come to nought. That is not the way to win the world for Christ.

Verses 7,8 –

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

The Gospel of the cross of Christ is for everyone, both Jews and Greeks (non-Jews), and indeed, this is the dispensation of grace that was a **mystery**. It is the **wisdom of God...hidden wisdom** (Ephesians 3:2ff). So what is this dispensation of grace, or this mystery Paul speaks of?

It is not just salvation by grace through faith. The mystery is that God would offer salvation to all people, not just Israel, before His kingdom. A time when there is no Jew or Gentile, whether or not you are a son of Abraham or not.

Before the kingdom comes, God has **ordained** this period of grace we are now living in. It was hidden from the Old Testament saints and prophets. Paul made this grace known and declared that salvation is not only for the Jews, but now non-Jews can become heirs of the kingdom. Before Christ there was no hope for Gentiles (Ephesians 2:11,12).

A mystery, yet it was God's **wisdom...before the world** to our glory by offering all men everlasting life.

Although ordained by God, salvation is an individual choice. Had the **princes (rulers)** of this world, or **age** (Greek: *aion* not *cosmos*), known about this dispensation of grace, they would never have **crucified the Lord of glory**. Why didn't they know it? Because it was only revealed spiritually. Those rulers (Jewish leaders, Roman leaders) were depending on their own wisdom.

Had the rulers known the truth they would not have crucified Jesus.

This is Paul's continuing point to the church--by dividing Christ (not depending on God's wisdom) and depending on human wisdom, we miss the blessings of God.

Verses 9,10 –

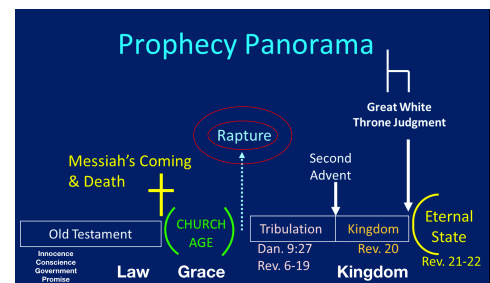
"But as it is written, Eye hath no seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

We cannot discover spiritual truth by human wisdom.

[Paul is answering a question, *Why didn't the rulers of this world know the mystery of salvation to all men?* The mystery is the offer of salvation to all the people of the world in the Age of Grace (Dispensation of grace). This mystery was not made known in other *ages* but is now revealed (Ephesians 3:5). In other words, what we see today, as far as God's grace to all, both Jew and Greek, was completely unknown to mankind in previous ages (dispensations).]

As it is written Paul quotes from Isaiah 64:4 in which, in its original context, a plea is going out to God for Him to come to the aid of Israel in the last days and show His strength and glory like never before. So Paul uses the Isaiah passage to show how, in the age of grace, the rulers of the world will not understand God's wisdom, but God's mystery is only revealed **by his Spirit**. Maybe a better way to think about the mystery is that it was only available to the Spirit, but was made manifest (or shown) to Paul and now revealed to us.

No one knows the **deep things of God** without the **Spirit**.

Verse 11 –

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

Knoweth the things of man. Have you ever had someone say to you "I know what you're thinking!" No they don't. No one knows the mind of any man except that man himself, **Save** (only) **the spirit which is in him.**

Likewise, no man knows anything about God; **knoweth no man**, except the **Spirit of God**. This is why churches need to get back to pure Bible study. Not man's idea of the Bible, not books about the Bible, not the latest and greatest popular book by a Christian celebrity. They might be interesting to read and even inspirational, but none of the ideas of man reveals God. We only know God through His **Spirit** and it is the Bible which reveals that to us.

Verses 12,13 –

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

How do we know we can be saved; that is, those of us who are not Jews and are not God's chosen People? It is because of the mystery that has been **received**. We did not learn it from the spirit of the world (cosmos). There is no universal wisdom which can save a man. Our revelation of the mystery (which is: there would come a period of grace for all men, Jew and Greek) is only by the **spirit which is of God**, that has been revealed.

When the spirit of God reveals his truth to us through his revealed word (and it was first announced by Paul) we understand that our salvation is by grace (it is no longer a mystery), though we are Gentiles, and is **freely given to us of God**. The Corinthians were depending on human wisdom: "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas..."

Which things we also speak... Now the things that were once a mystery or secret can be openly announced (we teach using words) by us. **Comparing spiritual things with spiritual.** The wisdom of the Christian faith is Bible based. This can only be accomplished through studying the Bible, which is why Paul admonished us to:

"Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15

Everything about our faith hinges on the Bible. Without it, the people are useless.

Verse 14 –

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned."

Who is the natural man? The Greek word is **ψυχικός** [*psuchikos* /psoo-khee-kos/]. It is translated four times as **natural** and two times as sensual. One of the uses of sensual is in James 3:15 where James puts it in line with "earthly, sensual, demonic." The natural man is one who gives in to his sensuous nature and appetite. In Jude, he equates the natural man as one who is "*worldly*, not having the Spirit." The natural man then is an unbeliever. The natural man is the one who thinks of the cross of Christ as foolish.

When spiritual things are presented to the natural man, he **does not receive** them. The natural man, when presented with the truth, slams the door in your face. He won't accept it, he won't acknowledge the truth of the gospel. An analogy would be of the natural man falling off a cliff and you extend your hand to save him--he does not take your hand, he thinks he can pull himself up.

He does not receive the *things* of the Spirit. As mentioned, they are **foolishness to him**. In fact, **neither can he know them**. The word **know** is the Greek word γινώσκω [*ginosko* /ghin-**oce**-ko/] meaning he cannot grasp the **things of the Spirit**. He cannot be intimate with spiritual things. Why? Because he needs the aid of the Holy Spirit, but he has only received the spirit of the world (2:12) rather than the spirit which is of God. It is only by the Spirit that we can **receive the things of the Spirit of God**.

Verse 15 –

"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man."

A **spiritual** man (as opposed to a natural man) **judgeth all things**. The word judgeth here doesn't mean judging someone in a negative sense. It means to evaluate or examine, like an investigator. It takes a spiritual man to understand. Solomon wrote:

Proverbs 28:5 (KJV 1900)

⁵ *Evil men understand not judgment: But they that seek the Lord understand all things.*

Yet he himself is judged of no man. The natural man will not understand the spiritual man. Again, looking back at verse 14, anything spiritual is foolishness to the natural man.

How can a natural man ever believe? By hearing the word of Christ preached. We pray for their eyes to be open to the Spirit.

Verse 16 –

"For who hath know the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

Who hath known the mind of the Lord...? There are two kinds of people, the natural man (natural = *psyche*), and the spiritual (spiritual = *pneuma*). The *psyche* of man (where we get our word, psychology) tends to always lean toward the natural world, or the base things of life. When we depend on our *psyche* we will never know God's will for our lives. An unbeliever searches for truth in his *psyche*, yet psychology will never lead anyone to the truth of the Spirit.

But what about believers in Jesus Christ? **We have the mind of Christ**. When we have the mind of Christ we can receive instruction, we can learn the word of God. We can grow in our faith and daily walk with Jesus Christ. We know from previous verses that having this Christlike mind will be a problem for Christians. When we have the mind of Christ we can expect persecution, mocking, slander.

In other words, the natural man will be opposed to and will not like the spiritual man. Expect opposition to your Christlikeness to increase in the latter days.

Next week: Why don't we grow in our Christian life?