

Was Paul an illiterate who condemned knowledge and taught nonsense? This is what he was accused of when he insisted on the preaching of the cross of Christ. Instead, he divides the human race into two classes of people: those who receive the wisdom of the world, and those whom he called “perfect” in verse 6. Although the word can mean mature, it does not mean that in this context, as if the Gospel of the Cross of Christ was only for mature Christians. Instead, it is another adjective that is used to describe Christians: Throughout the passage in I Cor. 1 and 2 the difference is made between the called and the uncalled. Those called to Christ are counted complete in Him, and the perfection spoken of here is that which is obtained through the cross of Christ and nowhere else.

There is no higher or deeper knowledge than that which is found in the Cross of Christ—and by Cross we mean all of His work as our Mediator, culminating in His sufferings on the cross. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is strong meat for the Christian who has attained years of experience in the walk of faith, and it is milk for the newly come to Christ. Both are to be taught and nurtured in the things of Christ. It is the gospel that prepares children for confirmation and communion; it is the gospel that prepares men for life and for enduring the trials and warfare of life; it is the gospel that prepares men for death and judgment.

Instead of dividing mankind into the immature and the mature, Paul is here dividing mankind into those who have the capacity to receive the wisdom of God and those who do not have the capacity to receive it. There is a wisdom that is hidden from the men of the world, both Jews and Gentiles, no matter how wise they are in the things of the world. The wisdom of the world does not prepare men for the wisdom of God, as if you could climb from one to the other. Instead, Paul described a wisdom that is of a different order, as wisdom, however, which shows light on all of creation and illumines a man to the core of his being. This, Paul calls the wisdom of God.

Calvin says that “Perfect” means without blemish, as a lamb that is to be offered must be perfect. Paul is saying that if men did not understand his preaching it was because of some defect in them, not in his preaching. Paul is going to make a claim in the passage that his preaching is from God, so this is not an arrogant statement. It is not arrogant to claim that men’s thinking is defective if they do not understand what God says to them. Paul is here referring to the bias that everyman has against the truth of God, unless they are renewed by the Holy Spirit.

I. The wisdom of God, which Paul does preach.

A. Negatively: not of the world, nor of the princes of the world.

B. Positively:

- a. It is from God
- b. It is a mystery: that is something that must be taught to men—not something which they have innately. It is not to be discovered by human wisdom. It must be revealed.
- c. It is a revelation of the will of God from eternity—a revelation of the plan and counsels of God from eternity. It does not have its origin in time.
- d. It was ordained for our glory. There is no reason why a person should be discouraged into thinking that the Gospel is above him—too difficult to understand. No, It is God himself who teaches it, and it is therefore understandable to all the elect. It is described in Isaiah 35:5-8 “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be

there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.”

- C. The rulers of this world: Those described in Psalm 2, quoted in Acts—men such as the rulers of the Jews, Herod, Pilate—great men of the earth, who crucified the Lord of Glory.
- a. How could the Lord of Glory be crucified?
 - b. Hypostatic Union. What can be said only of a human being, can be applied to the divine Person of Christ, because the union takes place in His Person, not in his natures. Of course, God cannot be born; God cannot die; God cannot have blood; God cannot rise from the dead; but Jesus was born, Jesus died, Jesus shed his blood, Jesus rose from the dead. Does this mean that Jesus is not God; no, for He is called here “The Lord of Glory,” because these things are said of His human nature which He took to Himself.
 - c. Nestorius denied this important union, and simply said that the divine Person joined himself to a human person; hence, Jesus was two persons, both a divine one and a human one. This heresy was denounced at the Third Ecumenical Council of the Church at Ephesus in 431 a.d.
 - d. Against Nestorius and those who follow him, and there are Nestorian churches today, the Bible teaches in passages such as this that it was the Lord of Glory, the Son of God, who died on the cross. It is true that God does not have blood, nor can He die, for He has a pure Spirit who has life in Himself; but Jesus had blood and he did die. The issue arose over the practice, common in the church at that time, of referring to Mary as the Mother of God. Nestorius objected to the phrase, saying that God does not have a mother. It was very subtle, and what Nestorius, who was then Patriarch of Constantinople, said was true to a point. But Nestorius was not willing to yield to the nuances of the doctrine of Christ. It is true that God does not have a mother, but Jesus had a mother, and Jesus is God.

Hence, with respect to the humanity that the Son of God took to Himself, he had a mother, for he was not two persons, but One. We find the persons of the Holy Trinity speaking to each other, but we never find Jesus talking to himself, the Son of God talking to the Son of Man. Be assured that the Jesus you worship is both God and Man, and is truly able to suffer for you and to save you, for as man he can suffer the punishment that your sins deserve, and as God He has the power and integrity to keep all the promises that He made to you, something which no creature could ever do.

- e. One other thing needs to be said on verse 8, which says that the princes of the world did not know Christ, or they would not have crucified him.
 - i. These are sober words. Pilate, Herod, and the rulers of the Jews were not ignorant and unlearned men, who did something out of rash ignorance. They were not like the financiers in Atlanta some 150 years ago who turned down a half interest in Coca Cola for \$5000, because they thought it was too risky. The ignorance Paul speaks of is not this kind of ignorance. Caesar, far away in Rome, might have had this kind of ignorance, for he had not access to those who had seen the miracles and witnessed the marvels.
 - ii. In human law, we excuse an act that is done in pure ignorance. For instance, ignorance of the fact in law, is a defense. If you can prove that you did not know that you had committed the act of which you are excused, you will not be found guilty. For instance, if you did not know that the bank robbed buried the stolen money in your back yard, you will not be guilty of receiving stolen goods; but if you knew he did it, and did not report it, then you are guilty of receiving stolen goods, or at least of complicity in his crime. It is not a defense to claim ignorance on the

ground that you didn't know something, if as a reasonable man you should have known it. The CEO's at Enron or WorldCom might not have known of the funny accounting practices, but as reasonable men they should have known it. At least, prosecutors will be investigating that possibility.

iii. This is not innocent ignorance spoken of here. Herod, Pilate, and the rulers of the Jews should have known. There was a kind of madness in what they did. This was willful and hypocritical blindness, the kind of blindness that causes a father to avert his eyes from the misdeeds of his child, rather than have to deal with the disobedience. Peter speaks of this as willful ignorance. Herod, Pilate, and the rulers of the Jews should have known. It was a hypocritical, prideful, contemptuous ignorance that showed more their spiritual character than their mastery of information. So, although ignorant, they were certainly culpable.

iv. I have run across this same kind of ignorance. So have you. It is spoken of in James 1:17-21

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. 18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. 19 ¶ Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: 20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. 21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

1. layaside: cast off, put away.
2. filthiness: repentance—humble your self before God. Abhor your sinfulness.
3. superfluity: Used by the Greeks for excess wax in the ears—hinders the hearing.
4. naughtiness: wickedness and lawlessness—all kinds. Everything against God.
5. These things get in the way of hearing—we must receive with meekness.—with gentleness—opposite of the wrath of man: the pride and fire that resists the truth because it goes against our pet ideas and desires.

II. Eye has not seen nor has it entered into the heart of man. The wisdom displayed in the Gospel is not something that anyone could have dreamed up on his own. As I have so often said, and it is not original with me—if Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John made up Christ and his life, then we ought to worship them, for the magnitude of their work. But they were witnesses, not fiction writers. Even the genius of a Shakespeare or a Tolkien pales before the gospels. They are works of a different order, of a different kind of wisdom, that many have imitated, but none have risen even close to the same heights.

Let us therefore marvel before the wonders of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and humbly receive Christ and hear His blessed words. Let us worship in repentance and awe before Him and praise His wonderful name forever. Amen and Amen.