

The Source of Wisdom in the Church (2)

2.* The Members are Chosen

1 Cor 1:26-31

* #2 Continued from previous lesson.

1 Cor 1:26-31

²⁶ For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. ²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence. ³⁰ But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption – ³¹ that, as it is written, "*He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.*"

Isa 55:8-9

⁸ "For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts,
Nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD.
⁹ "For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.

The ways of God are the opposite of what natural man would think and Paul gives us two examples:

- 1) The members of the church at Corinth, and,
- 2) The message and method Paul used to preach to them.

²⁶ For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*.

We know very little about the members of the church at Corinth except that Paul describes them here as being from the lower strata of society. "Not many wise...."

It is still the case in our day that the "intellectual" considers the Gospel foolishness, as we saw in the previous lesson [1:18].

God is jealous and will not allow any other gods or anyone to compete with His glory especially in the matter of who is saved and how one is saved.

Ex 20:3-6

³"You shall have no other gods before Me.

⁴"You shall not make for yourself a carved image – any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; ⁵ you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

Eph 2:8-10

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Paul calls on Jeremiah in 1:31:

... that, as it is written, "*He who glories, let him glory in the LORD .*"

Jer 9:23-24

²³ Thus says the LORD:

"Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom,
Let not the mighty *man* glory in his might,
Nor let the rich *man* glory in his riches;

²⁴ But let him who glories glory in this,
That he understands and knows Me,
That I *am* the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.

²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

The contrast is between those who think themselves to be wise and who considers the Gospel to be foolish and those who are truly wise. The “mighty” are put to shame, to confound them.

A lost person cannot see their condemnation and their need for the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ, thus they are confounded [confused and bewildered].

²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ...

Paul goes even further to say that God has chosen not only the weak but the base and the despised as the world views them. The “base” are on the bottom of society [not many noble] and they are despised because of their ignorance. [And such were some of you... 6:11]

to bring to nothing the things that are, ...

When God began His work of redemption there was no church at Corinth and now there is one.

Cf. Romans 4:17

God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;

²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence.

It seems that here Paul is warning those who gloried in one preacher or another, e.g., Paul, Apollos, or Cephas, that there was nothing in them to glory in but rather to glory in the Lord.

³⁰ But of Him you are in Christ Jesus,

Stop boasting and know that your calling is all of God in Christ
Such a free and gratuitous salvation leaves you with nothing to boast in but Christ.

who became for us wisdom from God –

Wisdom from God.

In Proverbs 8 wisdom is personified [spoken of as a person].

Prov 8

Does not wisdom cry out,

And understanding lift up her voice?

² She takes her stand on the top of the high hill,
Beside the way, where the paths meet.

³ She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city,
At the entrance of the doors:

⁴ "To you, O men, I call,
And my voice *is* to the sons of men.

⁵ O you simple ones, understand prudence,
And you fools, be of an understanding heart.

⁶ Listen, for I will speak of excellent things,
And from the opening of my lips *will come* right things;

⁷ For my mouth will speak truth;
Wickedness *is* an abomination to my lips.

⁸ All the words of my mouth *are* with righteousness;
Nothing crooked or perverse *is* in them.

⁹ They *are* all plain to him who understands,
And right to those who find knowledge.

¹⁰ Receive my instruction, and not silver,
And knowledge rather than choice gold;

¹¹ For wisdom *is* better than rubies,
And all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her.

¹² "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence,
And find out knowledge *and* discretion.

¹³ The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil;
Pride and arrogance and the evil way
And the perverse mouth I hate.

¹⁴ Counsel *is* mine, and sound wisdom;
I *am* understanding, I have strength.

¹⁵ By me kings reign,
And rulers decree justice.

16 By me princes rule, and nobles,
All the judges of the earth.
17 I love those who love me,
And those who seek me diligently will find me.
18 Riches and honor *are* with me,
Enduring riches and righteousness.
19 My fruit *is* better than gold, yes, than fine gold,
And my revenue than choice silver.
20 I traverse the way of righteousness,
In the midst of the paths of justice,
21 That I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth,
That I may fill their treasuries.
22 "The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way,
Before His works of old.
23 I have been established from everlasting,
From the beginning, before there was ever an earth.
24 When *there were* no depths I was brought forth,
When *there were* no fountains abounding with water.
25 Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills, I was brought forth;
26 While as yet He had not made the earth or the fields,
Or the primal dust of the world.
27 When He prepared the heavens, I *was* there,
When He drew a circle on the face of the deep,
28 When He established the clouds above,
When He strengthened the fountains of the deep,
29 When He assigned to the sea its limit,
So that the waters would not transgress His command,
When He marked out the foundations of the earth,
30 Then I was beside Him *as* a master craftsman;
And I was daily *His* delight,
Rejoicing always before Him,
31 Rejoicing in His inhabited world,
And my delight *was* with the sons of men.
32 "Now therefore, listen to me, *my* children,
For blessed *are those who* keep my ways.
33 Hear instruction and be wise,
And do not disdain *it*.
34 Blessed is the man who listens to me,
Watching daily at my gates,
Waiting at the posts of my doors.
35 For whoever finds me finds life,
And obtains favor from the LORD;
36 But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul;
All those who hate me love death."

Jesus became wisdom for us when He took on a human body and became our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

and righteousness and sanctification and redemption —

Jesus, by His obedience to the Law as the Substitute for sinners has a righteousness that can be imputed to those who trust in Him alone.

2 Cor 5:21

For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

By an act of God, those who are justified are considered righteous by God because they have the righteousness of Christ given to them.

and righteousness and sanctification and redemption —

And those who are justified have a perfect sanctification in Christ.

This is not our personal sanctification, which is ever progressive, but a complete sanctification in Christ.

and righteousness and sanctification and redemption —

Calvin writes, “Redemption is the first gift of Christ to be begun in us, and the last to be brought to completion.”

³¹ that, as it is written, *“He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.”*

The church at Corinth was divided into factions over those who were glorying in their favorite preacher.

And here is another place where the deity of Christ is stated. Cf. 1 Cor 2:8

3. The Method Paul Used

1 Cor 2:1-5

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³ I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴ And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

And I, brethren,

In accordance with the principle just stated [1:31] Paul does not present his message in a way that would commend itself to human wisdom.

... when I came to you,

The Gospel did not spring up of itself; it was of God through Paul.

... did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom

Paul did not attempt to display his superiority in fancy language nor in philosophy.

... declaring to you the testimony of God.

Paul's method is to show that the Gospel is not God's "Plan B" but is based on the Scriptures [OT].

² For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

The Gospel is Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Who is Jesus Christ?

What did He do?

Why did He do it?

³ I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.

Every true preacher of God's word has a sense of inadequacy.

When you understand what lostness is you realize that God must give the message power. We are preaching to dead men and only God the Holy Spirit can give them life.

“Each word is an advance upon the other. The sense of weakness produced fear. The fear betrayed itself in much trembling... The expression denotes the Apostle's nervous apprehension that he might not fulfill his ministry aright: i.e. fear and trembling in the sight of God rather than of man.” (Lightfoot)

⁴ And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom,

Look back at 1:18, “the message of the cross...”

“In neither the substance of his message nor in the manner of its presentation did Paul resort to ‘persuasive words of wisdom’ to make it more palatable to the natural man.” (Edwards)

... but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

Paul relied entirely on the Spirit of God to authenticate his ministry.

⁵ that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

In Corinth where philosophy and man's wisdom would be highly regarded Paul trusts the power of God.

In our day you can see some preachers using methods to manipulate their hearers and to persuade people to do something. They may get a response but it will not be a living faith in the Gospel that only comes in the power of God.

4. The Mature are Instructed

1 Cor 2:6-9

⁶ However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory, ⁸ which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

⁹ But as it is written:

*"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

Wisdom and the Gospel are not opposed to each other, but the wisdom of God is a mystery. Those who are mature [no longer 'babes in Christ'] are able to receive the message that was hidden from the unsaved world. The 'rulers of this age' were ignorant of Christ and the meaning of the crucifixion.

⁶ However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature,

The distinction that Paul makes here is between those in the church who valued the wisdom of this world and who despised the preaching of the Gospel and those who recognized the Gospel as true wisdom. (Grosheide)

... yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age,

Paul refers to the 'rulers of this age,' the 'great men' of this age according to the world's estimation of greatness.

... who are coming to nothing.

There will be a day in which the wisdom of the world will be exposed for what it is, viz. nothing.

⁷ But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory,

⁷ But we speak the wisdom of God

Only the wisdom of God in the Gospel will benefit the Corinthians.

Paul doesn't know anything greater or higher than the Gospel.

Gal 6:14

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,

... in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom*

The mystery is what was hidden in the Scriptures and revealed in the Gospel.

... which God ordained before the ages

Before there was anything but God, God's wisdom was fixed and determined.

for our glory,

The wisdom of this world will perish but the Christian will share glory as joint-heirs of Christ.

Ps 73:23-26

²³ Nevertheless I *am* continually with You;

You hold *me* by my right hand.

²⁴ You will guide me with Your counsel,

And afterward receive me *to* glory.

²⁵ Whom have I in heaven *but* You?

And *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire besides You.

²⁶ My flesh and my heart fail;

But God *is* the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

⁸ which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

The ‘rulers of this age’ were the Jewish and Roman leaders who took part in crucifying Christ. They displayed their ignorance by their action.

Acts 4:27-28

²⁷ "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together
²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

... crucified the Lord of glory.

“The person of Christ may be designated from his divine nature, when what is affirmed of him is only true of his human nature... The person who died was truly God, although the divine nature no more died than the soul of man does when the breath leaves his body.” (Hodge)

⁹ But as it is written:

*"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

Not only was God’s wisdom hidden from the ‘rulers’ but from all natural [lost] men. Paul quotes Isaiah:

Isa 64:4

For since the beginning of the world
Men have not heard nor perceived by the ear,
Nor has the eye seen any God besides You,
Who acts for the one who waits for Him.

¹⁰ But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God 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 that have been freely given to us by God.

¹³ These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴ But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is *rightly* judged by no one. ¹⁶ For "*who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?*" But we have the mind of Christ.

¹⁰ But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit.

What could never be discovered by human reason has been revealed to Christians by the Holy Spirit.

... For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

Only God can understand the infinite mind of God. And the Spirit here is an intelligent being that is personal and omniscient and thus proves the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

¹¹ For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

As only man knows man [lower animals cannot comprehend humans] so only God knows the things of God.

"... in every other place where the Holy Spirit is spoken of – there is observed a *distinction of conscious personality* between 'God' on one hand and the 'Spirit of God' on the other. And not only so, but while the Personal Divinity of the Spirit is here so clearly taught, that on any other supposition the statement in the latter part of this verse would be inept." (Brown)

¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

The human mind cannot of itself have saving knowledge of God. But what we know about God is freely given in regeneration. We will not know God completely but what we know we know truly, having received the things we know from God.

¹³ These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

A spiritual message cannot come from natural human wisdom.

This is the method necessary to understand what the Holy Spirit teaches; compare Scripture with Scripture and allow the Bible to interpret itself.

On any topic search out all the Scriptures and compare them, allowing clearer passages to illuminate other verses that may not be as clear.

“Both the spiritual things and the spiritual words that convey them emanate equally from the Spirit, and the apostle combines the two accordingly. This is Paul’s definition of Verbal Inspiration.” (Lenski)

¹⁴ But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

A man may be of the highest intellect and having attained all the education the world offers still cannot understand the things of God until he is regenerated or born again. Nicodemus is the Bible’s example [John 3:3-8].

The reason the natural [unregenerate] man does not receive the things of God is because they are foolishness to him. And this is because he has no spiritual discernment.

¹⁵ But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is *rightly* judged by no one.

A spiritual man is a man whose life has been transformed by the Spirit.

Because the spiritual man is led by the Spirit [Romans 8:16] he is judged by no one. That does not mean the regenerate man is not judged by the Word of God.

As we saw in Romans 14 we are not to judge or despise one another in matters of conscience.

¹⁶ For "*who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?*"

But we have the mind of Christ.

Paul again quotes Isaiah.

Isa 40:13

Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD,
Or *as* His counselor has taught Him?

"To the Corinthians, Paul brought the mind of Christ and made them share in the divine gospel wisdom. Will they now fall back into their former state and with worldly wisdom tell the Lord how to improve his mind and to make the gospel wisdom what they think it ought to be?" (Lenski)

We still have preachers who want to "improve" the Gospel message, be it prosperity, or health and wealth, or refusing to preach man the sinner.

... But we have the mind of Christ.

Since Christ knows the mind of God, it is only by revelation given to him by Christ that Paul is made to share in this knowledge of the Divine purpose.