



THE SPIRIT GIVES WISDOM

The Corinthians were confusing the gospel by creating artificial standards of faith. They were using wisdom as the gauge. The more wisdom someone claimed, the more spiritual that person became. Standards were determined by teachers. They were arguing and dividing over which teacher had the deepest spirituality. For Paul, the gospel -- God's wisdom -- was a pool of clear water. Believers were urged to go deeper, but they would find living water no matter how deep they dove.

“¹ 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.” 1 Corinthians 2:1-2 (NKJV)

The words ***“when I came to you”*** refer to Paul's first visit to Corinth during his second missionary journey (A.D. 51), when he founded the church (Acts 18:1-18). As Paul had explained in chapter 1, the gospel message, by its very simplicity, appears foolish to those who think themselves wise by human standards.

Paul was a brilliant scholar (Philippians 3:4-7) and could have overwhelmed his audience in Corinth with intellectual arguments, proclaiming the mystery of God . . . in lofty words or wisdom. While this may have led to a measure of intellectual assent, it may not have led them to saving faith.

Faith that depends on clever arguments and bright oratory ... can be undermined if another logical argument or better orator comes along. Faith grounded in the power of the Holy Spirit, however, cannot be undermined.

So Paul decided instead to “know nothing among [them] except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” Paul shared the simple message of Jesus Christ, who had been crucified for the world's sins, and let that simple message move into the Corinthians' hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit (2:4).

In sharing the gospel with others, believers should follow Paul's example and keep the message simple and basic. The power of the gospel message is not found in a preacher's eloquent use of words, or ability to logically argue every detail. **The power lies in the message itself: “Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” for our sins.**

POWERFUL MESSAGE, POWERLESS MESSENGER

While believers cannot rival Paul's training or match his experiences, they must still communicate the gospel in a hostile world. When they try, they quickly learn about feeling insignificant. The resistance is real. But Paul's example offers two valuable lessons as we share the gospel.

(1) Feelings of confidence or insecurity should not be the motivation to communicate. Personal gratitude and obedience to Christ as well as compassion for others must drive our witnessing.

(2) The power of the gospel does not depend on the skill or charisma of the speaker; it flows from God's Spirit, convincing persons of the truth. Share what you know about Christ with others ... and let the feelings take care of themselves.

Paul challenged the Corinthians to consider the true source of their knowledge and experience of God. They were arguing over personalities and forgetting that God reveals himself to people by the Spirit. They needed a renewed perspective.

The greatest teachers never tell more about God than they have received ... nor do they stop being human themselves. They are part of God's training program, but they cannot replace the Spirit of God. The daily personal disciplines of the Christian life -- prayer, study of the Scriptures, obedient actions -- all require time and attention. But their effectiveness depends on our reliance on God's Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit to keep reminding you of His presence.

SPIRITUAL WISDOM

1. There is a place for deeper wisdom; it should be taught to believers (v.6)
2. Now the wisdom of God, which was a mystery before, was revealed (v.7-10)
 - a. This wisdom was not understood (v.8)
 - b. The wisdom of God is unknowable without God's special revelation (v.9)
 - c. God revealed this wisdom to us through His Spirit (v.10)
3. The Spirit of God knows everything about Him (v.11)
4. The Spirit of God has come to us so that we can also know God (v.12)
5. Once we know the things of God we must speak the things of God, but with spiritual, not human, wisdom (v.13)
6. A person who doesn't know God considers the things of God to be foolishness (v.14)
7. The spiritual person can discern truth, but the natural person cannot understand the truth about spiritual people (v.15)
8. We can know the thoughts of Christ (v.16)