



Proclaiming Christ Crucified 2:1-16

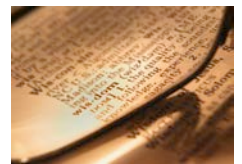
In the previous lesson we learned that the message of the cross is foolishness to the world, but the power of God to the Christian. We also were reminded that the power of the cross is not in the messenger, but in the message. In chapter two, Paul will expand on these thoughts.

First, let's look at how Paul describes his own ministry and his method of preaching. (1 Cor. 2:1-5)

I. Paul's Preaching is not Based on the Wisdom of Men

1. How does 2 Cor. 10:10 describe Paul's appearance and speaking ability?

In 1 Cor. 2:1, Paul says that he did not come with “lofty speech” or “wisdom.” One who spoke with “lofty speech” would have strong oratory skills. The Greeks were impressed with fancy speech and their own philosophers could wax eloquently, but Paul's speech was different. His speech is common and understandable and he did not try to “dress up” his preaching in a way that would impress his listeners. The word “wisdom” indicates speech that would be philosophically enticing to the Greeks. As in the previous chapter, the power of the cross is in the message and not the messenger.



What Paul did proclaim was the “testimony of God” which would have included all that God had done to make salvation possible to the Corinthians (and all others).

In verse 2, we read that Paul had made the decision “to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” Paul deliberately, intently, and rationally made the decision about how he would preach to the Corinthians. “To know nothing” indicates that Paul was not interested in the orators, philosophers, or poets of the Corinthians. He was not interested in their architecture or statues and he had no interest in their laws and customs. Paul's only interest was to preach “Jesus Christ and him crucified” which included the good news of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus along with how he brings salvation to all who obey and follow him.¹

2. Why does Paul say he came in “weakness, fear, and much trembling?” (See also Acts 18:1-12 (especially 18:9-10); Gal. 4:13,14; 2 Cor. 10:10; 12:7)

3. Describe Paul's preaching (2:4)

4. Why did Paul employ the methods he used in his preaching? (2:5)

¹Reese, Gareth L. New Testament Epistles: 1 Corinthians. Scripture Exposition Books: Moberly, MO, 2004, p. 64-65.

II. The Wisdom of this World Comes to Nothing

Since the creation of man wisdom has been sought. Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil because they wanted to gain wisdom. They wanted to know what God knew. Solomon asked God in 1 Kings 3 for wisdom to rule Israel and God granted his request. Even today Solomon is best known for his great wisdom. People still want to gain wisdom today. They want to know how to make judgments. They want the ability to make wise decisions. The most accessed sites on the internet are search engines; especially Google. This is because people are constantly and relentlessly in search of information.

There are wide differences of opinion on how a person can best gain wisdom. Yoga, mysticism, and secular humanism teach that they can lead to wisdom. Universities promise to shape your mind into something greater than it is. Hinduism, and even American Indian shamanism are popularly studied today as ways to gain wisdom.

People may desire wisdom, but we see they have failed as crime continues to increase, people are unhappy, and the world is confused. Wisdom has escaped their grasp. Christians think differently about wisdom than non-Christians. In fact, we cannot think the same way. 1 Cor. 2:6-16 teaches us about true wisdom and it explains why we cannot think the same as people in the world.

5. Who received the wisdom that Paul taught? (2:6)

6. What will become of the wisdom and the rulers of this age? (2:6)

The apostle Paul wrote nearly 2000 years ago, but it sounds like he has been reading one of our newspapers or watching the ABC. The wisdom of this age and the rulers of this age are coming to nothing.

Experts abound in our world today. Monthly magazines feature articles on how to lose weight, yet statistics show that Australians are heavier than ever before. Experts tell us how to build better relationships while marriages are dissolving all around us at an alarming rate. Experts tell us how to find love, but our world is a lonely place. Communication has never been easier with a telephone in every home, a mobile phone in almost everyone's possession, email and Facebook at everyone's fingertips, but with all these communication tools people are more disconnected from others than ever before; with families failing to talk, and people so busy that there is no time to develop deep relationships. Sometimes the wisdom of this world does not seem so very wise.



7. Why don't people in this world readily accept the wisdom of God? (2:14)

Non Christian people are incapable of understanding spiritual matters as we do because they do not have the Spirit of God dwelling within them. We should not be surprised when our non-Christian friends and neighbours do not understand us. We should not be surprised when our school teachers try to lead us to inaccurate conclusions about the creation and morality. We should not be surprised by the way in which people around us live.

III. The Wisdom of God is Revealed to us by His Spirit

8. How is God's wisdom described in 2:7?

The word “impart” in verses 7 and 13 (sometimes translated as revealed) tells us that the wisdom we receive as Christians comes supernaturally. The “we” of verse 7 refers to the apostles as the Spirit guided and inspired their writings. So, God's supernatural revelation comes to Christians through the prophets and apostles by the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. To say that the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God tells us that nothing is hidden from the Holy Spirit.

9. What is the meaning of 2:11?

Why does Paul call God's wisdom “secret?” Before God created the world He knew that man would sin and that man would need to be redeemed. God knew Jesus would have to die even before he created the world, but people did not understand God's plan.

The prophets spoke of the coming of the Messiah throughout the Old Testament, but no one knew the exact details of His coming. They prophesied many things that are easy for us to understand now that they have come to pass, but they proved to be impossible to understand previously. For these people this wisdom was hidden or secret.

The rulers in New Testament times did not understand this “mystery” or the “secret wisdom.” They went so far as to “crucify the Lord of glory” according to verse 8. Verse 9 goes on to teach, “But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.’”

10. What has God prepared for those who love him?

The point Paul is making is that man cannot discover God through his senses. We cannot discover God's wisdom through our eyesight or hearing or smelling or feeling or tasting. Try as we might we cannot discover God in any way except through his revelation of himself to us. Thanks be to God that He has revealed Himself to us.

11. How has God revealed his wisdom to Christians? (2:10)

12. How has God spoken to us by his Spirit? (2 Peter 1:20-21)

We cannot discover God's wisdom through our senses or our feelings, but we can discover it through his Word. Too many times people want to base spiritual decisions on feeling, but our feelings deceive us.

13. What do 1 Cor. 2:12-13 and Acts 2:38 teach about the Holy Spirit?

The one who is spiritual (1:15) is able to make wise decisions based on truth while the natural man cannot understand him. The non-Christians in Corinth thought themselves wise, but they were in no position to instruct God; on the contrary it is the Christian who knows the mind of Christ as they are led by his Spirit and are taught through his revealed Word.