

## **I CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 2 SOURCES OF WISDOM**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 2 describes Paul's source and motivation in all he shares with the Corinthians, both in answering their questions (chapters 7-16) and in challenging their problems (chapters 1-6), and also describes how he expects them to receive what he shares.

Structure :

- 1-5 Paul's dealings with the Corinthian church
- 6-13 The nature of wisdom
- 14-16 Natural vs Spiritual

EXERCISE (was HOMEWORK) : Three groups. One each consider the following :

1. How do we communicate the good news to others?
2. What do we share with them?
3. Why do we do it?

10 minutes to discuss and summarise the group's views

15 minutes feedback (5 mins per group) - flipchart

Now let's look at how Paul did it (verses 1-5), and compare ourselves with him.

### **VERSES 1-5 : PAUL'S DEALINGS WITH THE CHURCH AT CORINTH**

Corinthians valued wisdom, human argument, reason

Paul was countering the early development of gnosticism (secret knowledge only for initiates via divine revelation)

So how did he approach them when he first arrived (recorded in Acts 18)?

#### **PAUL'S METHOD**

Not :

- Lofty words (1) - *huperochon logon* = argument delivered from a position of superiority, holding oneself above others
- Man's wisdom (4, 5) = human-based rationality
- Enticing words (4) = persuasive, what you want to hear

But :

- Weakness (3) - see II Corinthians 10:10 ("he writes strong stuff but his presence is weak and his words are irrelevant") - compare "The Acts of Paul" written late second century : "He was a man of little stature, thin-haired upon the head, crooked in the legs, of good state of body, with eyebrows joining, and nose somewhat hooked" (sounds like Ron?!!)

- Fear & trembling (3) - see Acts 18:9-10 (needed a vision from God to calm his fear)
- Plain speech (4) - not oratory
- Message (4) - real content
- Demonstration of the Spirit & power (4) = *apodeixis* = rigorous evidence or proof

#### PAUL'S MESSAGE

What did he tell them?

- V1 : God's testimony (*marturion* = evidence-based record) - or secret (*musterion*)? - not his own story
- V2 : nothing besides - many shrines in Corinth, alternatives - Paul had only one message :
  - Jesus = the person - not factions, leaders, doctrines, experiences, church...
  - Christ = messiah, king - to be worshipped and obeyed
  - and him = emphatic in Greek (*touton* = this one)
  - crucified = the central fact of the faith - not his teaching or example

#### PAUL'S MOTIVE

Why did he share this with people in this way?

- V5 : so that = *hina* = the reason for what precedes
- Creating a firm foundation for faith - not based on man's wisdom (natural), but God's power (supernatural)

#### HOW ABOUT US?

- How do we communicate to others? (our method)
  - Plain talk?
  - Weakness?
  - Demonstration of the Spirit and power?
- What do we communicate to others? (our message)
  - Anything other than Jesus?
- Why do we communicate with others? (our motive)
  - To impress them, make them look at us?
  - Or to point to God's power and build relationship with him?

#### **VERSES 6-13 : THE NATURE OF WISDOM**

V6 "Yet" - there is an alternative.

Paul says he is able to use wisdom if his hearers are mature enough to receive it.

- Mature ones = *teleioi* = those who know their purpose (*telos* = purpose), i.e. people of destiny
- The Corinthian church was not mature - see I Cor 3:1-3, compare Hebrews 5:11-6:2
- Are we mature???

V 6-7 : But the wisdom Paul shares is not human (of this age) or demonic (of the rulers of this age) - both of these are temporary and transient - he shares the wisdom of God

## SOURCES OF WISDOM

See flowchart - where does human wisdom come from? A process of gradual growth, based on structuring, analysis, consideration, experience ...

There are three sources for wisdom:

- From human experience, via *reasoning*
- From the enemy, via *deception*
- From God, via *revelation*

We need to know the difference!! What is the source of our thinking?

## THE WISDOM OF GOD

Characteristics (v7) :

- Secret - *mysterion* = only known to those who God reveals it to
- Hidden - not found by reasoning, only by revelation
- Eternal - not temporary or transient
- For us - to bring us to glory

What is the secret???

See Ephesians 1:9-10 (to unite all things in Christ), 3:1-6 (Gentiles are fellow-heirs), 3:8-10 (God's multi-faceted wisdom to be displayed through the church)

Why is this a "secret"? Is this gnosticism?

No - v7 : "we impart" = *laloumen* = speak, i.e. we chat about it!!!

But it can only be understood through revelation - see verses 8-13, also Matthew 13:11

God doesn't want to be hidden!

He wants to reveal his heart to us (verses 9-10) - quoting Isaiah 64:4 - God's creativity is at work on our behalf

And he wants us to know about it! V10 - the work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal (*apokolepson* = take the lid off) - see also John 14:26, 15:26, 16:13, I John 2:20

So - if you lack wisdom, what should you do? Ask and believe : James 1:5-8

EXERCISE (10 minutes) :

In groups of 4-5, discuss verses 9-10 : What has God prepared for us? (Let the Holy Spirit reveal something to you - not just your good ideas!!)

## **VERSES 14-16 : NATURAL OR SPIRITUAL??**

Paul says there are two types of people :

- Natural = *psuchikos* = animal-level, i.e. no spiritual consciousness or awareness
  - Do not receive gifts of the Holy Spirit
  - Do not understand them
  - Because these gifts are spiritually discerned - *anakrinetai* = prior legal examination of evidence before the main hearing, i.e. deciding on your position, deciding how to plead, before coming in front of the judge who has the final judgement!
- Spiritual = *pneumatikos* = directed from the spirit
  - Discerns all things - *anakrinetai*
  - Not discerned (judged) by any other man
  - Our fate will be determined by the judge - being led by the Spirit means we can make the right plea, he helps us understand the evidence and take the right position (guilty!!)

V16 : The only judgement that counts for anything is God's, and no-one can tell him what to do - quoting Isaiah 40:13 (also quoted in Romans 11:33-34) - see also Job chapters 38-41 and Isaiah 55:8-9

Is this worrying? How can we know what judgement God will make in our case?

V16b - BUT!!!

An amazing assertion - "we have the mind of Christ"  
"have" = echo = directly hold or possess

Johan Kepler (German astronomer 1571-1630, three laws of planetary motion) :  
"O God I am thinking thy thoughts after thee"

WWJD?

We should base our lives on the thoughts, attitudes, opinions, decisions, judgements of Jesus.

FINAL EXERCISE/MEDITATION (music??) :

Spend 5 minutes silently meditating : What is Jesus thinking now about you, your situation, your family, job, problems, opportunities ...

## **HOMEWORK**

Read James 3:13-18 and Proverbs chapter 2. List the characteristics and fruit of God's wisdom.

Every day, ask yourself "WWJD?"

Read chapter 3 + Ron's homework