

# “The Wisest People on Earth”

## 1 Corinthians 2

Every culture has its unique forms of entertainment. If you were asked what kinds of entertainment people enjoyed in 1st-century Greek culture, the two biggest forms of entertainment that would have been televised would have been theatre (the Greeks were heavily into drama) and speech-making. People flocked to hear speeches, usually judging them based on oratory skill, presentation, the ability to hold an audience, humour, tell a good story – all of those elements. One of the highest forms of praise one could receive was to be able to wax eloquently about a subject that kept people’s attention.

This was the culture Paul found himself in when he came to 1st-century Corinth, the hub of Greek culture filled with philosophers and speechmakers. These were the wise people of the day. Who wouldn’t want to be labeled as wise!

This was part of the problem causing division among the believers in Corinth. Some liked the style and knowledge of Apollos, others Paul, others Peter, etc. And when Paul came there he knew all this. This is why he says in 2:1-5,

*2:1 When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. <sup>2</sup>For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. <sup>3</sup>I came to you in weakness and fear, & with much trembling. <sup>4</sup>My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, <sup>5</sup>so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.*

Paul stated in 1:21 that God’s wisdom is different from the world’s. Paul was nervous speaking in front of these people who were waiting for Paul to wow them with style and knowledge. If Paul wanted to win the crowd over, he would have said something funny, witty, or focused on a level of knowledge they were less familiar with. Instead of trying to gain a response from an audience, Paul was more concerned about getting results that glorify God.

So, according to God who are the wisest people on earth?

## **Are Those Who Stake Their Life on a Crucified Saviour (2:1-5)**

Paul’s focus was not on style but on the message. Paul wanted to see God glorified and people respond to the message, not respond to him, the messenger. As a pastor I would love to have the rich deep voice of Adrian Rogers with a slight foreign accent. And tell a story like Chuck Swindoll or have the clarity of John Neufeld and the passion of John Piper. Sadly, some tremendously gifted communicators of God’s word have trusted in their giftedness and not the Spirit of God and as a result have thrown away their ministries because of poor selfish choices. And some churches have chosen an attractional model of ministry so they get responses (people in their doors) and not spiritual results of God’s Spirit working through God’s Word. We’re all uniquely gifted and equipped by the Spirit to do God’s work in the context of where He’s put us. Let Christ crucified always be our focus. Because that’s what people need to hear. Paul wanted that to be the focus of his ministry, so with fear and human weakness he spoke God’s truth about Jesus and some responded.

Those of us who stake our life on Jesus crucified and risen, show that we

### ***Trust God's words more than man's words (vv.1-2)***

'The testimony of God'. Interesting phrase isn't it? You have a testimony; I have a testimony. What's God's testimony? He sent His only Son out of love for us, to die a horrible death in order to pay the price of our sin which deserves God's wrath. And believing God's testimony by faith, gives us forgiveness of sins, the indwelling Spirit of God, and a life with God that starts immediately and never ends.

Man's testimony varies. Be all you want to be. Try your best. Enjoy life because there's nothing after this. Get to the top no matter what. Reinvent yourself with drugs. Which one is it? Perhaps we should call these the testimony of Satan. Because they are all lies that deceive us into thinking we can do whatever we want with our life. We can, but there's a price to pay in the end.

Paul was burdened for people so he shared the testimony of God, the crucifixion of Jesus. And when we do

### ***We see the power of God to change lives (vv.3-5)***

Paul said his message was not fancy, clever or witty, but God used it. God saved some people and we've seen the difference the Spirit of God is making in them. That's more exciting and more rewarding than accolades of a good speech. Why did Paul do it this way? "*So that your faith might not rest on human wisdom but on God's power.*"

From a human level, it doesn't make sense. You speak some words from the Bible in as clear a way as you can. Some people say 'Wow, I need to change!' And they do. So much so that their family, friends and colleagues say, 'What happened to you?' And they say God changed me through the gospel and now I live for Him. If that doesn't give you goose bumps as a believer, then I don't know what will. That's exciting!!

And now they join the wise people, that stake their life on a crucified Saviour who rose from the dead. What else do wise people know? Wise people

## **Believe God Has Already Planned a Great Future For Us Who See by Faith (2:6-10)**

Paul compares the 'mature' (saved people) with the wisdom/rulers of this age. There are always far more powerful people than us and over us in the world. But that doesn't make them wise. They are unwise because

### ***They refuse to believe in the incarnation (vv.6-8)***

Most people have heard about Jesus but fail to believe that He can make a difference in their life, let alone that He's the rightful ruler of this world. That He is the Son of God and that we must all bend the knee to Him. None of them understood this or if they had, Paul said, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. This is the only place in the Bible this phrase is used for Jesus. The Lord of glory refers clearly to deity. So why didn't these people believe who Jesus was? Same reason people don't believe now – it's hidden from them. The 'secret wisdom that is hidden' is the truth that God sent His Son in the flesh to die for our sins. 'secret' or 'mystery' does not mean eerie or beyond us. It

simply means that which was previously unknown but now is revealed. We don't understand the gospel because we are wise. God reveals the gospel to us so that we become wise.

*Eph. 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.*

God predestined this before creation. When you accept Christ, the reason why you are now wise is because you have just been given the knowledge of the plan of the world. You understood how it began. You understand why it's so bad. And now you understand how God intends to save it and you know that it's going to end okay for us who believe Jesus is the Lord of Glory. We know the future plan of God

### ***That the Spirit reveals to us by faith (vv.9-10)***

We believe the revealed Word of God tells us how Jesus will come back to this world and set up His rule on earth showing the world He is the Lord of glory. And then when He finally puts away all who rejected Him, He will bring down a new Jerusalem from space and just land it on a renewed earth. How do we know our future is true and secure? Because of the past promises of God. Paul now paraphrases two passages from Isaiah. Maybe you've quoted and I know I've quoted this verse to talk about the future promises of God. But I never really looked at where Paul got this from. Let's go to Is. 64. Cha. 64 begins,

- 64:1 *Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you!*  
2 *As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you!*  
3 *For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.*  
4 *Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.*  
5 *You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved?*  
6 *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*  
7 *No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins.*

Isaiah prays that God would come down to earth and make His presence known as He did (v.3) when He revealed the Law to Moses and the people of Israel. Isaiah knows God will do right for His people who still sin and fall short of the glory of God. So God did come down again, when Jesus came. And He did signs and wonders. And the earth shook at His death and resurrection. So He did come down to help us. If he did it before He'll do it again because He has promised He will come again. Paul also combines 64:4 here with Is. 52:15, a familiar passage about Jesus' death and resurrection.

- 13 *See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.*  
14 *Just as there were many who were appalled at him— his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness—*  
15 *so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.*

Since God has already come down and made Himself known to give us what we need through Jesus, so does He also have our future perfectly planned for us when Jesus comes down once more. Isn't this amazing? Now that we've accepted Jesus as our Saviour who was crucified for our sins but rose from the dead, we understand these things because we

## **Are Given Insight into the Mind of God** **(2:11-15)**

How?

### ***By the indwelling Spirit of God (vv.11-14)***

*The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. <sup>11</sup> For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. <sup>13</sup> This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. <sup>14</sup> The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. <sup>15</sup> The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:*

*<sup>16</sup>“For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?”*

*But we have the mind of Christ.*

Only people with the Spirit can understand the things God has written in His Word. People who don't believe in Jesus, don't have the Spirit, therefore they cannot understand these truths. The 'natural man/person' is the one who doesn't have the Spirit and can't understand these things. And when Paul says in v.15 that the spiritual man is not subject to man's judgment, he means that an unsaved person cannot make a judgment on a saved person because he doesn't understand all this.

Unfortunately, Christians have sometimes misapplied this verse to themselves saying no one (even Christians) can make any discerning judgment on them, which is not true. Jesus told us to cast out the plank in our own eyes first before we pull out the speck in our brother's eyes. Most of Paul's letters are messages based on his spiritual discernment of other believers and he sometimes passes judgment on them (like here in Corinth). So let's not be arrogant and quote this verse for ourself because we're unwilling to deal with sin in our lives. That's not wise. We are wise people now. Paul says we even have the mind of Christ.

The Spirit is the Spirit of God and Christ. They are triune. To have the Spirit's insight is to have an insight into the mind of Jesus and God. If we are given insight into the mind of God

### ***Are we growing into thinking more like Jesus (v.16)***

We are the wise people. Therefore, we should be acting wisely – like Jesus – because we are thinking wisely – like Jesus. The Spirit and Jesus are 100% sinless and pure. When impure thoughts and critical words form in our minds, do we remember God declares us wise and therefore correct our thoughts before we speak words because we've quickly checked our thoughts with the truth of His Word?

*Eph. 4:17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. <sup>18</sup> They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. <sup>19</sup> Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. <sup>20</sup> You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. <sup>21</sup> Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. <sup>22</sup> You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

*<sup>25</sup> Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truth-fully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. <sup>26</sup> "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup> and do not give the devil a foothold. <sup>28</sup> He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.*

*<sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

This is what having the mind of Christ looks like and sounds like. Does this describe us? If we are wise shouldn't we look like it and sound like it? How else can the unwise/lost of the world see the difference Jesus makes if we act and react like them? Let's show them we are thinking like Christ by the gracious way we act and react.

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