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Sermon Notes

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Wisdom Through the Spirit

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

We live in an age relentlessly hungry for INFORMATION... some call it the INFORMATION AGE... it was born by digital technology which has resulted in remarkable devices like the smartphone and stunningly powerful supercomputers behind the instantaneous searches we all do on Google... 0.7 seconds to call forth the full text of a medieval poem, or Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, or the population of Mumbai

Google's supercomputers handle 40,000 search queries per second on average, over 3.5 billion searches per day, and 1.2 trillion searches per year

This relentless thirst for knowledge extends to instantaneous awareness of events... an earthquake in Haiti, a popular uprising in Venezuela, the death of a celebrity... all of it in real-time, as it's happening... this is the power of these smartphones; data shows that by next year, there will be 2.5 billion smartphone users worldwide

Yet, for all this amazing access to KNOWLEDGE, there is an appalling lack of WISDOM. The world continues to go on in its foolishness, acting like there is no God, no Ten Commandments, no death, and no Judgment Day

The gospel of Jesus Christ is being heard every day by more people than ever before in history, and yet it is being also rejected every day by more people than ever before in history

The text we are going to study today explains why:

1 Corinthians 2:14 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.

Today, we are going to continue to follow the argument of the Apostle Paul as he wrote to the Corinthian church, trying to teach them the WISDOM OF GOD in the Cross of Christ

I. The Deep Mystery of God is Infinitely Wise

A. Paul is Tracing Out the Apparent Foolishness of God in the Gospel

1. Paul is retraining the minds of the Corinthian Christians
2. Like all Greeks, they were enamored with human wisdom
3. Greek philosophy was their glory, their contribution to the world
4. Paul is seeking to expose their pride and the utter foolishness of human wisdom
5. So Paul has been revealing the competing systems of wisdom and foolishness between God and the World
6. Three steps
 - a. First: the Cross of Christ seems foolish; how a dead Jewish man could be the Savior of the world
 - b. Second: the Corinthian church seems foolish, made up of people who were not the “best and the brightest” in human society
 - c. Third: the preaching of the gospel by a weak, unpolished speaker like Paul seems foolish
7. But there is amazing wisdom in all of this; it is not as foolish as it appears
8. Paul turns this whole question around
9. He’s been calling Christ crucified “the foolishness of God and the weakness of God”... but actually it is infinite wisdom
10. There is a COMPETITION between God and humanity here... and God is determined to humble all the exalted pride of man

Isaiah 2:11 The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.

B. So, Here, Paul Says Actually... We DO Preach a Very Wise Message!!

1 Corinthians 2:6-7 We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

1. "We" = Paul and the messengers of the gospel, of the message of Christ crucified and resurrected for the salvation of sinners
2. In fact, you will see on Judgment Day just how wise this message is!!

Epitaph on George Whitefield's tomb in the basement of a congregational church in Newburyport, MA: "Here lies George Whitefield. What kind of man he was Judgment Day will reveal."

That's even more true of the gospel... "Here is the gospel of Christ. How wise it really is Judgment Day will reveal."

3. It is eternally wise to accept God's offer of full forgiveness for all your sins, before the end of this world and eternity come upon you!
4. To the "mature" this message IS wise...
 - a. The "mature" are Christians who are thinking with the "mind of Christ" or the perspective that the Spirit of Christ gives

C. The DEEP MYSTERY of God is infinitely wise

1. The deep mystery of the gospel of Christ is infinitely wise because it lines up with the CENTRAL REALITY of the universe... namely that God is King, and all the universe exists from him and for him

Romans 11:36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

- a. The essential foolishness of the world is that it IGNORES GOD
- 2. The deep mystery of God in Christ is INFINITELY WISE also because there are so many dimensions to it... his plan is deep and intricate and complex and multifaceted

Romans 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

- 3. This deep mystery of God is INFINITELY WISE also because it so completely humbles humanity before his majestic glory... it shuts our mouths and makes us all quiet before his throne
- 4. This deep mystery of God is INFINITELY WISE also because it displays all of God's perfections in saving us... his love, power, patience, justice, goodness, grace, and knowledge
- 5. Finally, this deep mystery of God is INFINITELY WISE because it overcomes all of Satan's complex strategies and powerful assaults to save a multitude from every tribe, language, people and nation from dozens of false religions and from the overwhelming power of the demons and the evil world system

D. The Ultimate End of this Wisdom: God's Glory and Ours

1 Corinthians 2:7 we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

- 1. The Ultimate End of ALL God's Plans is His Own Glory

Revelation 5:13 "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

- 2. BUT God Will Be Most Glorified in Us When We Ourselves are Glorified IN HIM

Revelation 21:10-11 An angel showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

II. The Deep Wisdom of God is Hidden from the People of this Age

A. The Wisdom of God is a SECRET Wisdom

1 Corinthians 2:7 No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

1. Paul calls the wisdom of God something that is secret, hidden in the mind of God... the DEEP THINGS OF GOD
2. Something that the world by its wisdom and all its scientific inquiry could never have discovered or thought about
3. The focus of this wisdom is Christ, who was HIDDEN in the mind of God before he revealed him
4. The timing of this wisdom is staggering

1 Corinthians 2:7 ... a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

5. Before God said “Let there be light!”

Revelation 13:8 the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

6. God also chose his elect people, before the foundation of the world

Ephesians 1:4 he chose us in Christ before the creation of the world

B. God's Wisdom IS NOT THE WISDOM OF THIS AGE

1 Corinthians 2:6 ... not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

1. Here he makes it plain that the secret wisdom of God is NOT the wisdom Satan is selling in this age... the “rulers of this age” would reject it—military conquerors like Alexander the Great; or philosophical heroes like Plato and Aristotle and Socrates—or Stephen Hawking and Stephen Jay Gould and Einstein who rejected the truth of God
2. Paul says these RULERS OF THIS AGE are coming to nothing... in the end, they will be destroyed by the justice of God

C. The Crucifixion of Christ Proves their BLINDNESS

1 Corinthians 2:8-9 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

1. The “rulers of this age” proved that they did not understand the wisdom of God in Christ because by CRUCIFYING HIM
 - a. Some think the “rulers of this age” = Satan/demons
 - b. BUT in context, it must refer to HUMAN RULERS whose spiritual blindness made it impossible to see the glory of Christ
 - i) Annas and Caiaphas and all the Jewish leaders; also the Romans, especially Pontius Pilate, could not see God’s glory in Jesus, or he would never have ordered Jesus’ crucifixion
2. Paul says they crucified the “Lord of glory”... Christ’s glory was on display in a HIDDEN WAY to those who saw him by faith

Isaiah 53:3 He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

D. The Supporting Verse:

1 Corinthians 2:9 However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"-

1. People use this verse to talk about our own future... that we cannot figure out ahead of time how wonderful **heaven** will be
2. But the context here is talking about CHRIST and his glory...
 - a. No human mind could ever have conceived of the person of Jesus Christ and his amazing life
 - b. This is not a story that could ever have been concocted by even the most imaginative human author or poet or playwright

One anonymous author: “More than nineteen hundred years ago there was a Man born contrary to the laws of life. This Man lived in poverty and was reared in obscurity. He did not travel

extensively. Only once did He cross the boundary of the country in which He lived; that was during His exile in childhood."

"He possessed neither wealth nor influence. His relatives were inconspicuous, and had neither training nor formal education. In infancy He startled a king; in childhood He puzzled doctors; in manhood He ruled the course of nature, walked upon the billows as if pavements, and hushed the sea to sleep. He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His service."

"He never wrote a book, and yet all the libraries of the country could not hold the books that have been written about Him. He never wrote a song, and yet He has furnished the theme for more songs than all the song writers combined."

"He never founded a college, but all the schools put together cannot boast of having as many students. "He never marshaled an army, nor drafted a soldier, nor fired a gun; and yet no leader ever had more volunteers who have, under His orders, made more rebels stack arms and surrender without a shot fired."

"He never practiced psychiatry, and yet He healed more broken hearts than all the doctors far and near. Once each week the wheels of commerce cease their turning and multitudes wend their way to worshipping assemblies to pay homage and respect to Him."

"The names of the past proud statesmen of Greece and Rome have come and gone. The names of the past scientists, philosophers, and theologians have come and gone; but the name of this Man abounds more and more. Though time has spread nineteen hundred years between the people of this generation and the scene of His crucifixion, yet He still lives. Herod could not destroy Him, and the grave could not hold Him.

"He stands forth upon the highest pinnacle of heavenly glory, proclaimed of God, acknowledged by angels, adored by saints, and feared by devils, as the living, personal Christ, our Lord and Savior." — *The Incomparable Christ*

3. No human mind would have had the LORD OF GLORY live and die this way!!

E. The Rulers of this Age CANNOT UNDERSTAND IT

1 Corinthians 2:14 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.

1. Every unbeliever around the world is inherently hostile BOTH to the Law of God and the gospel of Christ
2. When he hears of the Law of God, his mind is bent against it and hates it and fights it

Romans 8:7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

3. So also, the unregenerate mind DOES NOT ACCEPT the Good News of the gospel... like a blind eye cannot RECEIVE light

F. No Unbeliever Can Ever Be TALKED or THREATENED or BRIBED or COERCED into faith in Christ, just like those things can't make a blind eye see light

III. The Spirit Searches Out and Reveals to Us the Deep Wisdom of God

A. HOWEVER... though NO EYE HAS SEEN, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man... yet:

1 Corinthians 2:10 but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

B. The Powerful Work of the Spirit of God

1 Corinthians 2:10-11 The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. ¹¹ 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.

1. The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity

2. His Unique Role is to Reveal Christ to the Minds of the Elect
3. First, He “searches all things, even the deep things of God”
 - a. This reminds us of Creation, the first two verses of the Bible

Genesis 1:1-2 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

- b. The image is of undulating chaos, turbulence and darkness
- c. The Spirit of God was HOVERING over the waters, ready to bring light and order out of the darkness and the chaos
- d. So also it is with human souls at the moment of conversion

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

4. The Spirit understand BOTH the mind of God AND the mind of human beings perfectly
 - a. He searches out the deep things of God and absolutely and perfectly understands all aspects of the wisdom of God in the gospel
 - b. He knows exactly what God the Father demands of human beings, and what God the Father intended in sending his only begotten Son into the world
 - c. He has not misunderstood the deep theology of election, predestination, substitutionary atonement, regeneration...
 - d. He has plumbed the depths of the mind of God on this... he perfectly understands what God thinks
 - e. AND he understands the depths of the human heart—all of its twists and turns and evasions and deceptions and treacheries

Jeremiah 17:9-10 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? ¹⁰ "I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind

- f. The Spirit of God searches human hearts and understands how deceitful we are, and how deserving of wrath
- g. BUT he also knows how to cure the human heart... the Spirit knows us perfectly well and knows how to HEAL US so that we will see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ

He is a master SAFE-CRACKER... able to PICK THE LOCKS of the most complex safe in the world – the human heart

- h. He can answer all of our objections, remove all of our roadblocks, answer all of our deepest questions
- i. The Spirit searches the deep things of God and delivers them to the deepest parts of the human heart
- j. AND THAT IS A MIRACLE... called “the New Birth”

John 3:3 Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." ... Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ born of the Spirit."

- C. Every Christian in the World Owes His Salvation As Much to the Spirit as to Christ
 - 1. Jesus died to provide the atoning blood
 - 2. But the Holy Spirit alone has the power to APPLY that blood to specific sinners
 - 3. Just like the Jews during the Passover had to BOTH kill the sacrificial lamb AND paint the blood on the doorposts and lintels
 - 4. So Christ had to die AND the Spirit had to apply the blood spiritually to us
 - 5. He does that by moving in our hearts and transforming them to believe in Christ

D. The Spirit of God Teaches Us the Words of the Gospel

1 Corinthians 2:12-13 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. ¹³ 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.

1. The **spirit of the world** teaches the lost people the language of this world... the language of wealth, power, pleasure and selfishness
2. The Spirit from God teaches us the language of the spiritual riches, the treasures of grace that God is freely giving us
3. The discipline of **theology** is putting words to deep spiritual truths
4. The Holy Spirit teaches us those words... their truth, their meaning, their significance... **HOW RICH WE ARE IN CHRIST!!!**

IV. The Spirit of God Transforms Our Judgments

1 Corinthians 2:15-16 The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: ¹⁶ "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

- A. When We Believe in Christ, the Spirit Comes to Live Within Us
- B. The Spirit Continues to TEACH US the Truths of God's Wisdom
- C. The Spirit Enables Our New Minds to See Everything with New Eyes
- D. We Judge the Dying World and Separate Ourselves from It
- E. We Now See Money, and Power, and Pleasure, and all the Glitter of the World Properly and Pass the Death Sentence on it... the **"lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, the boastful pride of life"**
- F. The Spirit within us IS the MIND OF CHRIST... increasingly able to think like Christ and live like Christ

V. Applications

A. To the Unconverted:

1. The things of the gospel may have seemed foolish to you before now
2. But when the Spirit of God begins doing his amazing work in a soul, Christ starts appearing more and more wonderful
3. Do you feel this happening to you?
4. Do you also see yourself more and more clearly as a person who has violated God's Holy Laws... that you know yourself to be a sinner with no other hope?
5. This is also the work of the Spirit... he convicts people of their guilt; he shows them their secret lusts and selfishness and hostility to God and others
6. He begins to teach you the secrets of the cross... how Jesus Christ really was no helpless victim, but a mighty Savior who courageously stood under the fearsome wrath of God and absorbed it for you like a lightning rod
7. He shows you that you deserved to die, but Jesus took your place
8. The Spirit also show you that Christ rose from the dead and is now ruling all the world from heaven
9. The Spirit shows you that TODAY IS THE DAY of salvation
10. He moves you to cry out in your heart to God "SAVE ME, a sinner... save me by Christ!"

For You Who Are Christians

B. Stand in Awe of the Wisdom of God in the Gospel

1. Paul says that the gospel is a deep wisdom that God had in mind before the world began

2. Stand in awe that the purpose of this wisdom is YOUR GLORY... that God is going to make you, a sinner, GLORIOUS in heaven
- C. Give the Holy Spirit Proper Credit for Your Salvation
1. None of you would ever have believed this gospel of a dead Jewish man if the Spirit hadn't worked it in you
 2. Thank God daily for the powerful work of the Spirit in your soul
- D. Know that the Spirit is STILL AT WORK in your heart
1. He is searching out the DEEP THINGS of God and revealing them to you
 2. He is not content to leave you a spiritual baby in Christ... he wants to teach you spiritual things in spiritual words... the deep words of theology based on scripture
- E. Understand the True State of the Lost
- 1 Corinthians 2:14 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.***
1. This HUMBLER us as evangelists: The lost CANNOT accept the things of God, no matter what you do
 2. Only by the Spirit of God will it succeed
- F. However... Have Full Confidence in the Sovereign Spirit!!!
1. He perfectly understands BOTH the mind of God and the human mind!!
- G. You Have the Mind of Christ... USE IT!
1. Read the BIBLE: Allow the Spirit to teach you the things of God and apply them to every area of your life
 2. Philippians 2:5 "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus... and then describes the amazing humility of Christ

3. 1 Cor. 2:16 says we DO have the mind of Christ
4. So... sanctification is a matter of knowing that you ALREADY have the mind of Christ, but that you have to USE it in specific situations