

LifeWay Family Bible Series for Oct. 26: The Holy Spirit is the source of true wisdom_102003

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The Holy Spirit is the source of true wisdom

✠ *1 Corinthians 2:1-16*

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The church at Corinth existed in the midst of a culture focused on wealth and pleasure. It was a cosmopolitan city made up of people from a variety of backgrounds. Many of the Greek gods were worshipped. Immorality was rife, and the new believers in the Corinthian church struggled with the pagan influences of their past. Consequently, a variety of problems began to surface in the church after Paul left.

While Paul was in Ephesus, he received disturbing news concerning these upheavals in the church. His first letter to them dealt with problems in the church as a whole as well as among individuals. In a church fellowship fractured by divisions, Paul saw a need for spiritual wisdom that comes only as one yields to the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Paul's assessment of his ministry

Paul came to Corinth from Athens, where he had one of the most distressing experiences of his ministry. There he had encountered the worship of Greek gods and the seemingly endless presence of temples and shrines dedicated to them. He had met with the philosophers on Mars Hill and saw how they prided themselves on their knowledge and oratorical skills. Paul reminded the Corinthians that when he came to them he did not resort to human eloquence and wisdom but determined to preach the simple message of the cross. He emphasized that he came not only in simplicity, but also in fear. The kind of fear Paul had was that trembling anxiety to serve his master with unquestioning devotion and faithfulness, the same way in which a slave is to serve and obey his master (Ephesians 6:5).



Paul also reminded his readers that his ministry among them was with results and not with mere words. When Paul preached, things happened. The word Paul used for “demonstration” meant the kind of proof against which no one could argue effectively. That proof was the changed lives of those who received Christ as a result of Paul's preaching. All of this happened because of the power of God and not because of man's wisdom.

Paul's description of true wisdom

Paul also wanted his Corinthian readers to understand that his presentation of God's eternal plan of salvation came only through the Holy Spirit, who revealed to Paul and others a wisdom only God's people can understand. When Paul stated his wisdom was for the “mature,” he did not refer only to older saints who were advanced in their spiritual growth, but those who had been born again, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, in contrast to the unsaved.

Paul had said earlier it was the unsaved who considered the gospel foolish and could not receive divine truth (1:21-23). God's wisdom does not come from those in this age of time and space, nor from the exalted rulers of this world who crucified the Lord of glory (v. 8). Paul said plainly that such enemies of God “would come to nothing” (v. 6).

The “hidden” wisdom that Paul mentioned (v. 7) actually was the wisdom of God referred to in the Old Testament. God had plans he had promised and laid up for his people, for “those who love him.” The very thought of what God has prepared for his people could not be contained in the minds of those who are not a part of his family.

Paul acknowledges the source of true wisdom

All of these things so clouded in mystery to the unbeliever are revealed to God's people by the Holy Spirit. The word Paul used for “revealed” is a word normally used in the New Testament to suggest the divine revelation of certain supernatural secrets (Matthew 16:17; Luke 10:22). It also was used to indicate certain events yet to come to pass. Paul was saying only the Holy Spirit helps God's people understand and interpret Scripture. The “deep things of God” certainly would include the essence, the attributes, the purposes and the plans of God he would choose to reveal to his people by the Holy Spirit.

It was important to Paul that the Corinthians understand his preaching was not the result of human wisdom but through the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Because of that, those outside God's family could not understand the truth of the gospel because it is revealed only through the Holy Spirit.

Paul reiterated his contention, as in 1:21, that the unbeliever conceives the things of God “foolish” for the simple reason they can only be “spiritually discerned” (v. 14). The word “discerned” Paul used is the same word

translated “judgments” in v. 15, which means to make intelligent spiritual decisions. Then, to confirm his statement, Paul quoted Isaiah 40:13 (v. 16). Paul makes the reference even stronger when he suggested that, as New Testament believers, “we have the mind of Christ.” The enemies of the gospel cannot judge Paul's message because without the Spirit of God, they cannot comprehend spiritual truths.

Question for discussion

- ❑ How am I assured of my maturity as a member of the family of God?

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