

Wisdom

Roxborough Bible Chapel

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Outline

- Definition
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Definition of Wisdom

- Sophia - This particular word in the Greek used in I Corinthians is with reference to God
 - Insight into the true nature of things, theoretical
- Phronesis - Another closely related word in the Greek
 - a right use of the mind, ability to discern modes of action with a view to their results, practical, application of sophia
- We many times define wisdom as the application of knowledge.
 - Not just knowing something theoretically but also being able to apply that knowledge to the situation at hand.
 - Examples – skills such as building houses, painting, riding a bike, etc.

Proverbs 1:1-7 – The beginning of wisdom

- 1 The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel:
 - 2 To know wisdom and instruction, To perceive the words of understanding,
 - 3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, Justice, judgment, and equity;
 - 4 To give prudence to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion—
 - 5 A wise *man* will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,
 - 6 To understand a proverb and an enigma, The words of the wise and their riddles.
 - 7 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge, *But* fools despise wisdom and instruction.
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- Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.

Background of I Corinthians 1:18-2:8

- vv 1-3 Introduction (Salutation to the Corinthian church)
- vv 4-9 Thanksgiving to God for the Corinthians and for the wonderful work of God in their lives
- vv 10-16 Divisions in the church (I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas, I am of Christ)
- v. 17 “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.”
 - Paul’s purpose in life (why Christ sent him) was to preach the gospel (not to baptize)
 - True, he did baptize a few people (v. 16) but that was not his main focus.
 - God did not send Paul to start a private cult or faction of people personally baptized by him.
 - He did not use the wisdom of words
 - He was most likely not an eloquent speaker
 - If men were impressed by his oratory or rhetoric then to that extent he would have defeated himself in his efforts to set forth the true meaning of the cross of Christ.
 - His eloquent speech (if he was eloquent) would have distracted the hearers from the message.

I Corinthians 1:18-2:8

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

- vv. 18-25 Paul's first point is that the message of the cross is the opposite of all that men consider to be true wisdom (1:18-25).
- To the unsaved (perishing) the message of the cross was foolishness
 - The death on the cross was associated with the idea of all that is shameful and dishonorable
 - To speak of salvation only by the sufferings and death of a crucified man was opposite to what would appeal to the philosophers of that day (and today).
- To those who are being saved, the gospel is the power of God.
 - They hear the message, they accept it by faith, and the miracle of regeneration takes place in their lives.
 - Note: There are only two classes of people, those who perish and those who are saved. There is no in-between class. Men may love their human wisdom but only the gospel leads to salvation.

I Corinthians 1:18-2:8

19 For it is written: "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND BRING TO NOTHING THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PRUDENT."

- 1:19 The fact that the gospel would be offensive to human wisdom was prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 29:14):
 - “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”
- Examples
 - Isaiah, in this passage, was most likely referring to a secret plan of the leaders to join with Egypt to combat the Assyrians. But God had other plans.
 - Jehoshaphat won the battle against Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir when they began to sing and praise the Lord since it was prophesied by Jahazial that “the battle is not yours, but God’s”. (II Chronicles 20)
 - Gideon’s 300 men
 - David and Goliath
 - God uses the small things
 - God used Moses (not eloquent of speech)

I Corinthians 1:18-2:8

20 Where *is* the wise? Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

- 1:20 Paul next hurls out a defiant challenge:
**“Where is the wise? Where is the scribe?
Where is the disputer of this age?”**
 - Did God consult them when He devised His plan of salvation?
 - Could they ever have worked out such a plan of redemption if left to their own wisdom?
 - Can they rise to disprove anything that God ever said?
 - The answer is an emphatic **“No!”** **God has made foolish the wisdom of this world.**

I Corinthians 1:18-2:8

21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

22 For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;

23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,

24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

- Verse 21
 - God’s wisdom
 - The “foolishness” of the message of the cross.
 - This pleased God that those who believe in the cross would be saved.
 - Man’s Wisdom
 - The world could not know God through man’s wisdom.
 - For centuries men tried to know God using their own “wisdom”.
 - This is the philosophy of history.
- Verse 22
 - The Greeks searched for wisdom (human reasonings, arguments, logic, etc.) whereas the Jews looked for signs (miracles).
- Verse 23
 - But we preach Christ crucified
- Verse 24 But strangely enough, the very things that the Jews and the Gentiles sought are found in a wonderful way in the Lord Jesus. To those who hear His call and trust in Him, both Jews and Greeks, Christ becomes the power of God and the wisdom of God.

I Corinthians 1:22-24

	<u>Unsaved (Non-believers, perishing)</u>		<u>Christians</u>
Message of the cross (v. 18)	Foolishness		Power of God
Christ crucified =	<u>Greeks</u> foolishness	<u>Jews</u> stumbling block	Power and wisdom of God
Looking for?	Always looking for and trying to find wisdom. They could not understand how One who died in such seeming weakness and failure could ever solve their problems.	They looked for a mighty military leader to deliver them from the oppression of Rome. Instead of that, the gospel offered them a Savior nailed to a cross of shame	Found Wisdom in Christ

Paul was not a wisdom loving Greek, nor a sign-loving Jew, but a Savior-loving Christian.

"We preach Christ crucified" (v. 23)

Christ = God's Wisdom (v. 24)

I Corinthians 1:18-2:8

25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

– Verse 25

- Foolishness of God is wiser than men
- Weakness of God is stronger than men
 - Actually there is neither foolishness nor weakness with God. (It is only as seen by men.)
 - What seems to be **foolishness** on God's part, in the eyes of men, is actually **wiser than men** at their very best.
 - What seems to be **weakness** on God's part, in the eyes of men, turns out to be **stronger than** anything that **men** can produce.

I Corinthians 1:18-2:8

26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*.

- It has often been pointed out that the text does not say “not any” but **not many**.
 - Because of this slight difference, one English lady of noble blood used to testify that she was saved by the letter “m.”
- If men were to build a church, the people men esteem so highly, God passes by.
 - The ones He calls are not generally the ones the world considers great.

I Corinthians 1:18-2:8

27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

- God used trumpets to bring down the walls of Jericho.
- He reduced Gideon's army from 32,000 to 300 to rout the armies of Midian.
- He used an oxgoad in the hand of Shamgar to defeat the Philistines.
- With the jawbone of a donkey He enabled Samson to defeat a whole army.
- Our Lord fed over 5,000 with nothing more than a few loaves and fishes.

I Corinthians 1:18-2:8

28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,
29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

- He loves to take up people who are of no importance in the eyes of the world and use them to glorify Himself.
- This is a rebuke to Christians who favor prominent and well-known people and yet shows little or no regard for the more humble saints of God.
- Since salvation is entirely of Him, He alone is worthy to be praised.

I Corinthians 1:26-29 Summary

What has God Chosen?	Why did He choose them?
Not many wise (by this world's standards)	The free gift of salvation is to ALL Shows that God can humble even the proud. (My thoughts - not found in this passage)
Not many mighty (by this world's standards)	
Not many noble (by this world's standards)	
Foolish things of this world	To put to shame the wise
Weak things of this world	To put to shame the things which are mighty
Base things of this world	To bring to nothing the things that are So that no flesh should glory in His presence.
Things which are despised	
Things which are not	

I Corinthians 1:18-2:8

30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—

31 that, as it is written, "HE WHO GLORIES, LET HIM GLORY IN THE LORD."

- All we are and have comes from Him—not from philosophy or anything else (no room for human glory)
- Christ became for us wisdom.
 - He is the wisdom of God (v. 24), the One whom God's wisdom chose as the way of salvation.
 - He is our righteousness. Through faith in Him we are reckoned righteous by a holy God.
 - He is our sanctification. In Him we are positionally sanctified
 - He is our redemption, Redemption in the sense that the Lord will come and take us home to be with Himself when we shall be redeemed—spirit, soul, and body.
- All glory goes to the Lord
 - Why glory in men? They can't do any one of these things for us.

I Corinthians 2:1-2

1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.

2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

- **2:1** Paul sought to glorify God and not himself.
 - He proclaimed **the testimony of God**
 - not **with excellence of speech or of wisdom**.
 - He was not at all interested in showing himself off as an orator or philosopher.
 - He did not amuse, entertain, or generally appeal to man's emotions.
 - He presented the truth of God's word in such a way as to glorify Christ and to reach the heart and conscience of the hearers.
- **2:2** The content of Paul's message was **Jesus Christ and Him crucified**.
 - **Jesus Christ** refers to His Person
 - **Him crucified** refers to His work.

I Corinthians 2:3-5

3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.

4 And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

- **2:3** Weakness, fear, and trembling – Paul himself was an example of how God uses weak things to put to shame the mighty.
- **2:4** According to the standards of this world, the apostle might never have won an oratorical contest.
 - In spite of this, **the Spirit** of God used the message to produce conviction of sin and conversion to God.
- **2:5** Paul determined that he would lead men to trust in **God** alone rather than **in the wisdom of men**.
 - All who proclaim the gospel message or teach the word of God should make this their constant aim.

I Corinthians 2:6-8

6 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory,

8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

- 2:6 The wisdom shown in the gospel is from God (divine) before time began.
 - We speak wisdom among those who are mature or full-grown. Yet it is not the wisdom of this age, nor would it be wisdom in the eyes of the rulers of this age. Their wisdom is a perishable thing which, like themselves, is born for one brief day.
- 2:7 We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery.
 - This mystery is the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory. Examples of the mystery of the gospel includes
 - The fact that *now* Jews and Gentiles are made one in Christ.
 - The fact that the Lord Jesus will come and take His waiting people home to be with Himself
 - The fact that not all believers will die but all will be changed.
- 2:8 The rulers of this age did not understand the hidden wisdom of God (Christ on a cross)
 - If they had known the ways of God, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

I Corinthians 3:18-20 – Don't be deceived by man's wisdom

18 Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "HE CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR OWN CRAFTINESS";

20 and again, "THE LORD KNOWS THE THOUGHTS OF THE WISE, THAT THEY ARE FUTILE."

- Any who has an exalted view of their own worldly wisdom must learn that they must become fools in the eyes of the world in order to become wise in God's estimation.
- The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.
 - Man by searching could never find out God
 - Neither would human wisdom ever have devised a plan of salvation by which God would become Man in order to die for guilty, evil, rebellious sinners.
 - Job 5:13 is quoted in verse 19 to show that God triumphs over the supposed wisdom of men to work out His own purposes.
 - Man with all his learning cannot stop or change the plans of the Lord. Instead, God often shows them that in spite of their worldly wisdom, they are utterly poor and powerless.
- 3:20 Psa 94:11 is quoted here to emphasize that the Lord knows all the reasonings of the wise men of this world, and He further knows that they are futile, empty, and fruitless.

Other Scriptures

- James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
- James 3:13 Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom.
- James 3:17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.
- Proverbs 8 – Wisdom personified

Closing Thoughts

- Know God
 - Do you know true wisdom (Christ)
 - Read, study, meditate on His word
 - “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10)
- Fear (Respect) the Lord (Proverbs 1)
- Appreciate the wisdom of God (Christ and the power of the cross)
 - Remember that the message of the cross is the opposite of all that men consider to be true wisdom
- Be encouraged – God can use us as we humble ourselves and realize that God can use “little us”.