



The unfolding of your words gives light.

The Temple of God

An Exposition of 1 Corinthians

⁶Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away^a; ⁷but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory^b; ⁸*the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory^c; ⁹but just as it is written,

“THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD,
AND *which* HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN,
ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM^d.” ¹⁰For to us God

^a 2:6 **Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away.** Paul switches from first person singular to first person plural. Some would suggest that he was including the other apostles among those who speak wisdom. Better, he is talking about those who are being saved. He includes you, believer.

The “mature” are not those who have achieved a state of perfection but those who are “the called” or who “are being saved.” Paul uses the same word in 1 Corinthians 14:20 to contrast spiritual babies from spiritual grown-ups. God’s people have ears to hear and eyes to see what the people of the world do not grasp. This has nothing to do with intellect.

Another way to describe the powerful people who “are perishing” (1:18) is to say that they are “passing away.”

^b 2:7 **but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory.** The focus of the glory determines the source of the wisdom. The Gnostics of the first century (and today) gloried in the “hidden” knowledge available to the few who achieved mystical enlightenment. This created an elite club. Paul is describing a club that is only open to the simple folks who glory in the violent sacrifice of Christ in their place.

So we should not seek joy in the goodness we discover in ourselves or in how good we look to people on earth. The wonder is that God would make His enemies into His friends. The Lord Jesus sent seventy disciples out to advertise His coming rule and they came back thrilled at the power they were able to exert over demons. He urged the disciples to have joy at their heavenly identity rather than in how good they looked on earth. He prayed aloud and used this same word translated “hidden” here:

At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, “I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.” Luke 10:21

^c 2:8 ***the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.** The word twice translated “understood” here is the common word for *knowledge*. Here it is something that mere men need but do not have. Paul is not saying that the Lord should not have been crucified. He is saying that the same blindness causes men of both generations to reject Him.

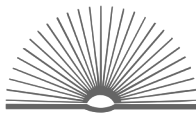
^d 2:9 **just as it is written, THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *which* HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.** This verse (a loose quotation from Isaiah 64:3-4) is improperly used as a description of heaven. While heaven will certainly be wonderful beyond imagination,

The Epistle of 1 Corinthians
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revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God^a. ¹¹For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God^b. ¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God^c, ¹³which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit^d, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*^e. ¹⁴But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised^f. ¹⁵But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one^g. ¹⁶For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ^h.^a

Paul is speaking of something else here. The blessing is the wisdom of God that has been so much the focus of this letter. This wisdom is prepared for a particular audience: lovers of God.

^a 2:10 **For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.** This revelation—or unveiling—happens when people see the living word of God for what it is. Rather than new revelation it is a fresh understanding of the original one.

^b 2:11 **For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.** This is a simple illustration. People cannot read your mind. Because the Holy Spirit is God and lives in His children, His children can read His mind. That does not give you power over God. It reveals to you that our God shares His thoughts with His people.

^c 2:12 **Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.** Some people want “these things” to be some extra-biblical sensation or experience with God, but Paul is describing something more powerful than that, as the next verse explains.

^d 2:13 **which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit.** This wisdom from God comes to us in the actual words of God. If you are looking for an apostolic message, you already have it if you have a Bible and the Holy Spirit.

^e 2:13 **combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.** This phrase has been translated in a number of ways:

comparing spiritual things with spiritual (KJV)

expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words (NIV)

interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual (ESV)

The best rendering, in my opinion, is the one given in the ESV. It emphasizes that God shares His spiritual thoughts to the people who have His Spirit.

^f 2:14 **But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.** The word “appraised” is used elsewhere of judicial examination. Paul speaks of things that the eye of the natural man cannot see. Just as some things can only be seen with the aid of a microscope, some things can only be seen with the eyes of the Holy Spirit.

^g 2:15 **But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.** So, using the same “judicial examination” word, Paul simply points out that the world often does not know what to do with the people of God.

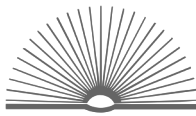
^h 2:16 **For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.** We have the mind of Christ because we have His Spirit.

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^a 2:6-16 Paul has been demonstrating the difference between those who are perishing and those who are being saved. Here he calls the one who is perishing a “natural man.” Earlier (1:26-27) he argued that God did not choose people because of their natural wisdom. Now he points out the difference in God’s people once He has saved them:

1. You see the powerful people in the world with new eyes. Rather than envying them you see how short and pitiful is their time of power.
2. You see Jesus with new eyes. When someone says, “Who is Jesus to you?” how do you answer? Is it just a mechanical response or is He really your rescuer and the object of your greatest delight?
3. You see the Bible with new eyes. This becomes more than a school textbook. God has prepared a feast of truth for His people and given them the appetite to consume it.

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