

## THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT TO GOD'S WISDOM

Text: 1 Corinthians 2

Readings: 1 Cor 1:17-31; John 14:15-27

Belgic Confession Art 5

Theme: God reveals to us the truth about Christ (his wisdom) through the Holy Spirit.

Purpose: To show that we can only understand and believe the truth about Jesus and the Bible through the work and witness of the Holy Spirit.

Most of us have had conversations with non-Christians about the Bible; we have heard them raise all sorts of objections in which they question the truth of the Bible. They will say;

The Bible is full of contradictions.

The Bible has been disproved by science.

The history recorded in the Bible is wrong.

The Bible is an ancient book that is outdated and irrelevant!

You may have tried to answer these objections and questions; you may have brought forward evidence to show that the Bible is true and reliable.

Article 5 of the Belgic Confession brings forward some reasons why we believe the Bible and all that is contained in it.

We do so because “the church receives and approves” these books as being the Word of God.

We also accept the Bible as true because of its internal evidence, that is, “that the things foretold in them are being fulfilled.”

This evidence is expanded in the Westminster Confession of Faith. It adds that the Bible deals with heavenly matters, it has majesty of style, there is agreement between all the books, it gives a full explanation of our salvation, and everything is focused on God's glory.

But none of these evidences are going to convince non-Christians; you can't talk people into believing the Bible. No, if they are going to believe it as the Word of God they need a change of heart. The primary reason Christians believe the Scriptures is “because the Holy Spirit witnesses in our hearts that they are from God.” This is true of our understanding of all God's truth including our belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the clear teaching of the Bible and this is Paul's subject in 1 Corinthians 2. He tells us that God reveals the truth about Christ to us through his Spirit.

First, a bit of **background**: Corinth is located in Greece and is near Athens. Paul had visited the city in AD 51 on his 2nd missionary journey and had established a church there.

The Greeks prided themselves on their wisdom, learning and philosophy. The highest calling in Greece was to be a philosopher. In Acts Luke tells us that the men of Athens “spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas” (Acts 17:21).

The same was true in Corinth. They discussed the writings of famous Greek philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Socrates as well as new ideas that came along.

But Paul wrote to the church in Corinth that “the world through its wisdom did not know [God]” (1:21). The Greeks did not believe in the God of the Scriptures; they were content with their own wisdom so they did not know the true God.

But the Christians in Corinth knew the wisdom from God that was revealed in Jesus Christ; they knew God's wisdom. This is Paul's point in the first part of this chapter:

### 1. GOD'S WISDOM IS REVEALED IN CHRIST

a. Paul wrote that when he came to them he resolved to know nothing while he was with them except Jesus Christ and him crucified (v 2). He did not come to them with *human* wisdom from the philosophers but rather with *God's* wisdom which focused on Jesus Christ.

He preached to them about the death and resurrection of Jesus through which we can be saved. He knew that this *method* of preaching and the *message* he preached seemed foolish to the unbelievers in Corinth, but he knew that "God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe" (1:21).

b. This message of God's wisdom about Jesus Christ had been hidden in the past; it had been a mystery. In verse 7 the NIV translates the Greek word *mysterion* as "secret"; this message had been hidden in the Old Covenant and God had not made it fully known until the coming of Jesus.

God had planned this "before time began" (v 7); even before the creation of the world he had planned to send his Son to be the Saviour of the world. Then at the right time, Jesus had been born and once he had grown up he began his ministry of preaching, teaching and healing.

c. This secret wisdom God had "destined for our glory" (v 7); that is, God sent his son for our complete salvation. One day, when Jesus comes again, we will share in the glory of the Lord Jesus in heaven! (Rom 8:17)

God's wisdom has been revealed in Christ. Next Paul tells us that

## **2. GOD'S WISDOM IS TAUGHT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT**

a. The Spirit can teach us because **he knows God's wisdom.**

i. By ourselves we cannot understand the wisdom of God and we cannot know about Jesus Christ "but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit" (v 10).

ii. Paul illustrates this with an example we can relate to. Sometimes you notice a family member or a friend thinking but you don't know *what* they are thinking. There is that expression; "A penny for your thoughts."

You might ask him, "What are you thinking about?" or "What's on your mind?" You might have a guess at what he is pondering but you don't know for sure unless he tells you.

So Paul wrote in verse 11; "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him?" Only you know what you are thinking right now; only your spirit knows your thoughts.

iii. In a similar way only the Spirit of God knows the thoughts of God. Here we have the great truth about the trinity, that there is one God in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are three distinct persons but they are each fully God and they are united in their thoughts, in their love and in their purpose.

The Holy Spirit is God and he knows exactly what God the Father is thinking, what is on his mind and all his plans and purposes. And it is the task and ministry of the Holy Spirit to make all this known to God's people.

b. He did that first **to the apostles** (v 10-13)

Jesus had promised his disciples that he would send them the Spirit. During his last Passover meal with them before his death he reminded them of what he had taught them and assured them;

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26).

“...when he, the Spirit of Truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own, he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come” (John 16:13).

This was the ministry of the Spirit to the apostles; he reminded them of what Jesus had told them; he inspired them to write these things down in the gospels and letters of the New Testament; he carried them along so they wrote down exactly what he wanted written but in their own style and language. The Spirit taught the apostles and they preached that truth and wrote it down in the Bible.

### c. The Spirit teaches us as Christians today.

He does not do that by speaking *directly* to people but rather through the Bible. But not everyone believes the Bible. We are in the same situation as the people in that ancient city of Corinth; the Word of God is preached and taught and some people *reject it* and others *accept it*; some believe and some do not.

Why is this? The apostle Paul tells us that it all depends on the work of the Holy Spirit.

i. Verse 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.”

Every person on earth is sinful by nature. Our hearts are hard, our ears are blocked, our eyes are closed, our minds are darkened, our wills are stubborn. We cannot hear the truth of God’s word and we cannot understand it. Left to ourselves we will not accept the Bible as God’s word and we will refuse to recognize our own sin and we will not believe in Jesus as our Saviour or submit to him as our Lord.

The only way this will change is if we are *born again*. “No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again” and the only way that can happen is by the powerful and irresistible work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3ff).

Unless you are born again you will not grasp the truth about God. The things that come from God will seem foolish to you and you will not accept them. You will read the Bible but you won’t understand what you read. These spiritual truths about the triune God will be meaningless to you. So you need to be born again; you need a spiritual rebirth; you need a change of heart. This is a work of God’s Spirit.

If you are *not yet born again* there are things you can do and must do: Pray for this new birth. Read the Bible and ask God to help you understand it. Seek God with all your heart. Knock on the door of heaven and it will be opened to you.

Sadly, most in NZ today do not believe in the Bible or in the Lord Jesus and the reason for that is they have not been born again.

ii. ***But the Christian is born again***, he has had a spiritual rebirth, she has received a new heart; he is a spiritual man, she is a spiritual woman. All this is the powerful and transforming work of the Spirit of God.

If you have the Spirit of God you will *believe in the Lord Jesus*. You will believe that he is the Son of God and that he became a man. You will believe that he died on the cross for your sins and was raised from the dead for your justification to make you right with God. You will believe that he is in heaven and that one day he will come again to this earth to take you to heaven.

If you have the Spirit of God you will *accept the Bible as the word of God*. You will believe it as God’s truth because of the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit in our heart. The Holy Spirit will bear witness with your spirit that the Scriptures are from God and are true and reliable.

If you have the Spirit of God you will *make judgments about all things* (v 15). You will have discernment. You will be able to discern truth from error, right from wrong, sound doctrine from heresy. You will be able to figure out what is going on in the world and in our society and you will judge things rightly.

And if you have the Spirit of God you have "*the mind of Christ*" (v 16b). You will not only *live* like the Lord Jesus but you will also *think* like him. You will not only have his *character* but also his *mindset*.

You will not let the world shape and mould your thinking but you will let the Word of God direct and shape your mind and attitudes and thoughts.

You will think like a Christian when you watch the news on TV, when you read the newspaper, when you listen to your teacher at the public school or your lecturer at university or polytech, or when you participate in the conversation in the lunch room at work or when you sit down and have a coffee with a friend.

"We have the mind of Christ!"

We have his mind because we are filled with his Spirit.

We know his mind because we have the Word of God.

The Holy Spirit inspired this Word, these Scriptures, and he convinces us that these are indeed the Word of God, the Wisdom of God, revealing to us the Lord Jesus Christ in whom we can find salvation!

Amen