

神的智慧（一、智慧与关系）——哥林多前书1:17-18

The Wisdom of God, Part 1, Wisdom & Relationship—1 Corinthians 1:17-18

Introduction and Outline

- Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10–31

1 Corinthians 1:17–31 (NASB1995)

10 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. 12 Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." 13 Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. 16 Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void. 18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who [n]are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside." 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no man may boast before God. 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 so that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."

- Question: Do you want to have good interpersonal relationships? Are you satisfied with your current relationships? Do you want to improve?
- The most harmful attitude to relationships is — self-boasting. Always trying to draw attention to yourself so people can see how great you are — this attitude is the biggest killer of all interpersonal relationships.
- All the teachings on wisdom in 1 Corinthians chapters 1–2 are meant to address the relationship problems among the Christians in the Corinthian church!
- Outline:
Title: The Wisdom of God, Part 1, Wisdom & Relationship (vv.17-18)
 1. Connection Between Wisdom and Relationship (background)
 2. Rival to Wisdom (v.17)
 3. Responses to Wisdom (v.18)
(The following points will be covered next time)
 4. Result of Wisdom (v.19)
 5. Rhetorical Questioning of Wisdom (v.20)
 6. Redemptive Power of Wisdom (v.21)

Connection Between Wisdom and Relationship (background)

- Christians have a **completely different starting point** when it comes to wisdom and relationship.
- **On Relationship:** 1. The most important relationship is, first of all, relationship with God—receiving God's forgiveness and salvation through the precious blood of Jesus. 2. In principle, those who have been reconciled with God have also entered into a relationship of peace, harmony, unity, and love with one another. 3. This relationship serves as **an important testimony**, reflecting **the beautiful image of the Trinity!** (John 17:20–23)
- **On Wisdom:** 1. True wisdom is extremely important to life (Proverbs 1:1–7; 4:5–9; 8–9); 2. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10); 3. **Being wise in one's own eyes is even more hopeless than being a fool!** (Proverbs 26:12)
- **【Connection】** The problem in the Corinthian church—some among them are wise in their own eyes! And, they **want to boast in their own wisdom!** Wisdom is no longer **a tool for serving others**, but has become **a means of self-glorification**. This is the **root cause of their division**. The reason their **relationship was badly broken** is not because of the truth, but that **they all wanted to boast in their own wisdom!**

Rival to Wisdom (v.17)

- “cleverness of speech”: Literally, “**wisdom of word**”. This is the false kind of wisdom—the kind that the Corinthians sought after in order to boast. Paul refused to use such wisdom to

preach the gospel, because it would make the cross of Christ void. This is false wisdom that makes the true wisdom void.

【Characteristics】 In different times and cultural contexts, the forms of wisdom people use to boast in themselves may vary. If you learn to speak a certain kind of wise talk, people will think highly of you. They will think you are knowledgeable, clever, and wise. Then, you can gather with like-minded individuals and praise each other's "wisdom."

【Content】 The content of this “wisdom of word” can be just about anything—scientific knowledge, financial savviness, management ability, life experience, social insight, morality, and so on. All of these can be valuable wisdom when used humbly to serve others, but they can also become boastful “wisdom of word” when used to elevate oneself. Even biblical knowledge, theological truth, ministry experience, and personal testimonies of God's grace—things we hold as having great spiritual value in the church—can become what Paul criticizes here as “wisdom of word”.

【Key Point】 The issue with “wisdom of word” is not its content, but the attitude and motive with which it is used.

【Background】 In the cultural context of the Corinthian church—ancient Greek culture—“wisdom of word” most directly refers to the various theories of life that originated from the strange and fanciful Greek mythologies. These theories sought to explain the origin, destiny, purpose, and meaning of life. They were called “philosophy”, which in Greek literally means “love of wisdom.” All the great philosophers in history—Socrates, Plato, Aristotle—came from Greece. They spent their days contemplating life, trying to figure out where we came from, where we're going, and how we're to live. This is the type of wisdom with which the Greeks were obsessed and in which they boasted.

【Characteristics】 Philosophy does not bring unity, but division. There are as many philosophies as there are philosophers. Everyone has his own opinion, and it must be different from everyone else. Philosophers spend their lives debating, trying to prove their own system is superior to others. People are busy choosing their favorite philosophers to follow, collecting wisdom from them so as to make themselves feel intellectually superior. (cf. Acts 17:21)

【Contrast】 To them, the message of the cross is far too simple, too crude. It cannot even compare to their collection of sophisticated philosophies of life. So they refuse to believe. That God Himself became a man who died on a cross, and that sinners can be forgiven and eternally saved simply by believing—how could anyone boast in such a message? This is not the kind of “wisdom” the Greeks wanted to collect.

【Analogy】 In today's cultural context, a comparable form of “wisdom of word” is the various popular modern psychologies. Today, psychology is a popular area of competing theories—each psychologist has his own framework of wisdom, theorization, and

interpretation to explain issues that only God can correctly interpret. God has clearly explained the root of all psychological problems: sin. And the solution to sin is the cross—by trusting in the cross for salvation and continually repenting and obeying God, we can find healing for every psychological issue. However, the famous Freud came up with this rather bizarre and complex theory called psychoanalysis... Later came behaviorism, Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), client-centered therapy, family systems theory, and so on...

【Key Point】 When this cultural atmosphere seeps into the church, one of the outcomes is **factionalism**. People, with a **competing attitude** to win the game, all **rally behind their favorite leaders** and **fervently promote all their stuff**. And this **divides the church** because **they don't have the same favorite leader**. And the result is: “One says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos.’”

- So that the cross of Christ would not be made void”: To “be made void” means to be rendered useless, to lose its original power and effect. When people are all attracted to the worldly “wisdom of word”, the cross can no longer exert its saving power or sanctifying effect.

Responses to Wisdom (v.18)

- “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing”: “This is foolish, stupid, totally unwise,” they say. The result of evangelism depends not on the preacher’s giftedness, wisdom, or skill. **Don’t we worry when our listeners get offended by our gospel message!**
- “But to us who are being saved it is the power of God”: The same message receives very different responses. The issue does not lie with the message, but with the hearer—whether they are “perishing” or “being saved.”

【Principle of Absolute Truth】 When the message of the cross is rightly proclaimed, people immediately split into two groups: one group will say in their heart, “What kind of message is this? So foolish!” The other will say, “This is not foolish—this is the power of God! The cross gives me such a living hope, that my sins can all be forgiven and I can live forever with a holy God—this is absolutely the power of God!”

【Application 1】 Are you someone who is perishing or someone who is being saved? Do you truly regard the cross as the power of God, applying all its truths in your daily life? Or do you consider the cross foolish and pursue instead the wisdom that the unbelieving world boasts in?

【Application 2】 Are you willing to be regarded as foolish by the world? One implication of this verse is that when we share the gospel, we will inevitably be mocked by the majority as fools. Are you willing to bear such a name for the Lord?