

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Sufficiency of God's Wisdom Part 1

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-43

As we embark upon a wonderful new year together as the church, I feel the prompting of the Spirit of God in my heart to use these first couple of Sundays of this new year, this one and the next, to lay again the foundation which has been laid for the life of our church, and that is a foundation built upon the Word of God. I look back over 21 years of ministry, it will be twenty-first anniversary for me on February 9, and I remember those great early days when our church began and the church doubled every two years at just explosive growth, tremendous excitement, exhilaration, enthusiasm, people flooding into our congregation. And we were somewhat in shock because we didn't do things very well, to be very honest with you. We were not very adept or skilled or experienced in many areas of ministry. And I'm certainly confident that the preaching wasn't that great. But there was a tremendous appetite for the Word of God.

It just happened that the Lord sort of put me in this place at a very pregnant moment in His plan for our country and this city, a time when people had begun to be personally interested in Bible study...the development of new translations starting with The Good News For Modern Man, then New American Standard, The Living Bible as it's called the paraphrase, The Amplified Bible and things like that where people could understand a little more clearly what the Bible taught...the Jesus movement that grew out of the hippie movement, a preoccupation with personal Bible study, small group Bible study, the development of Christian music and Christian publishing. And all of that created a tremendous appetite for the teaching of the Word of God. There was a real hunger on the part of people. And a tape ministry began to explode along with the church and radio and books and magazine articles and there was great interest in what was being said. And everyone was concerned...what does the Bible say..what does the Bible say? We want to know what the Bible says. Teach us the Word of God. We...we can't find places where the Word of God is really taught.

And God sovereignly grew this church in response to the appetite of people and the feeding of the Word. That was the foundation of our church. That is still the heart of our church, the teaching of God's Word.

In recent years, as you know, we haven't experienced the same kind of growth we experienced in those early years. It is not of concern to me to try to analyze all of that, since the Lord builds His church and builds it as He will. But it does remind me to let you know that as far as I can ascertain there is definitely a waning in the appetite for the Word of God. It is of great interest to me that there is less desire, less hunger for the systematic teaching of the Word of God than there once was. There

is a different climate in the church. Even in those early years when I would say something quite controversial or do a series that was very controversial, there was wide acceptance of that and great interest. I remember when I did the series on the Charismatic Movement, when that movement was just beginning to really explode and we showed how it did not fit with the Word of God and very carefully tried to go through all the elements of it. There was eagerness to put it in a book by a publisher, to put it in a magazine serializing it, to put it on the radio, to distribute tapes across the country. There was tremendous interest...what does the Bible say?...what is the Word from God on this? And when we took a very strong stand on the matter of biblical inerrancy and the fact that every word of God is pure and the Bible is in fact the revelation of God Himself, there was a great affirmation of that. And when we sought to show that from Scripture, there was great interest in how we could know that the Bible is really inspired by God.

We came to all kinds of issues and as we spoke the Christian community responded and there was always great interest and openness and people were saying, "What does the Bible say? What does the Bible say? Tell us what God's Word is on this." That was always the mandate of our church and with wide acceptance we carried on that biblical ministry.

But it's been interesting to note that in recent years there is a waning of that interest and people are not asking so much, "What does God have to say...and what is God's word on this?" That doesn't seem to be their concern anymore. In fact recently we were taken off 48 radio stations in one fell swoop, our radio ministry, 48 stations eliminated this month. Why? They said, "Because you're too controversial." The irony of it is that the last series that we're running on these 48 stations I made 18 years ago. All of a sudden what wasn't very controversial has become very controversial. It was a change in the climate. The issue today is not "What does God say? What does the Word say? Show us the Word?" The issue is, "We've got to be careful about people, people get offended, we've got to be careful how we handle them and how we treat them." And I have watched the church swing from a preoccupation with the Word of God to a preoccupation with the people of God. Where the real concern is how are people going to respond? What's it going to do in the Christian community? How is it going to affect our unity, etc., etc., etc.? And this preoccupation with the people of God also creates an interest in a man-centered kind of preaching rather than a Bible-centered kind of preaching. They're not nearly so interested in what the Bible means as they are with how they're going to have more comfort in their life. There's been an amazing transition and we've watched that happen. And I believe the legacy of that is a shallowness in the Christian church. And I might say an increasing shallowness in the Christian church.

Now over against this encroaching shallowness, I would like to replant, if I might, our feet firmly on the rock of the Word of God. If there's any message that I would like to give to Grace Community Church, it would be to reiterate our foundation as we go into a new year, as we go into the nineties and face a new millennium in ten years, I would like to plant us firmly on the solid rock of the Word of God. It is of little consequence to me, to be very honest with you, what the current trends are or what the current

interest might be among people. What concerns me is what does the Word of God say and what does it mean by what it says. People will also say, "Well, teaching the Bible isn't relevant to life, we need something more practical, more pragmatic, more applicable to our lives." And there are always people who want you to say, "Now when you get up in the morning, go over to your chair, sit down, open your Bible read 14 verses, write down ten little things, close your Bible, stop at ten o'clock and pray about this, write a prayer." There all kinds of lists and all kinds of little things you can tell people to do. There are people who believe that that's maybe what the preacher ought to do.

Let me see if I can't put that in perspective. While wanting to be practical, relevant and applicable, I must remind you as I've reminded my own heart that the best the preacher or teacher could do is to plant deeply within you the rich understanding of the Word of God. And when that rich understanding dwells in you and you walk in the Spirit, the Spirit activates it into practical operation. That is not a result of giving you clever little practical suggestions for life, it is the result of planting the Word so deeply in you that as you walk in the Spirit, the Spirit energizes the operation of that Word in the practical matter of living. We can't lose touch with that reality of spiritual life.

Well all of this shallowness has brought about an interesting revival of sorts. There is a revival of curious interest in the writing of the Puritans. In the seventeenth century in England there were a group of people called the Puritans. They were very devout. They were very concerned about the Word of God. They were very deep into the knowledge of the Word of God. They were very given to righteous living, to worship, to holy aspirations and sanctimonious devotion to Christ and to God. And it has been interesting to me that as the church has seemed to move into a man-centered preoccupation and as it has become shallower and shallower and less concerned about what God says, there has been a rise in interest in the writings of the Puritans. It's almost a sort of counter-culture developing. There is sort of a new Puritanism emerging as the church becomes more worldly and those who are serious about their faith reach out to try to find something of substance they can get their hands on. And since there isn't a lot in contemporary publication that you can really chew on, we are finding a great new interest in Puritan writing, Puritan teaching, Puritan theology. In fact, reprinting Puritan books seems to be the order of the day.

Why is that? Why this revived interest in Puritanism? And I confess to you to be one of those who himself is very interested in it and find much of a kindred spirit in my own heart with them. Well one writer puts it this way. "We cannot deny that the Puritans were strongest just where evangelical Christians today are weakest." So I understand this interest in Puritan theology, this concern for depth, this concern for a deep knowledge of the Word of God for meditation, for prayer, for some kind of profound understanding of divine truth, for true spirituality. Because it is in a sense the opposite of what many are experiencing in the thin veneer of spirituality that often coats the church today. This same writer says, "Here were men...referring to the Puritans...of outstanding intellectual power in whom the mental habits fostered by sober scholarship were linked with a flaming zeal for God and a minute acquaintance with the human heart."

Now if you wanted a good definition of Puritans, that would be it. They were sober scholars of the Word, flaming zealots for God with a minute acquaintance with the human heart. The writer goes on, "Where the Puritans called for order, discipline, depth and thoroughness, our temper is one of casual haphazardness and restless impatience. We crave for stunts, novelties and entertainments. We have lost our taste for solid study, humble self-examination, disciplined meditation and unspectacular hard work in our calling and in our prayers. Again, where Puritanism had God and His glory as its unifying center, our day and our thinking revolves around ourselves as if we were the hub of the universe." And then he goes on, "The hollowness of our vaunted biblicism becomes apparent as again and again we put asunder things God has joined. Thus we concern ourselves about the individual but not the church, about witness but not worship. In evangelizing we preach the gospel without the law and faith without repentance. We stress the gift of salvation and gloss over the cost of discipleship. No wonder so many professed conversions fall away. Then in teaching on the Christian life, our habit is depicted as a path of thrilling feelings rather than of working faith, and of supernatural interruptions rather than rational righteousness. And in dealing with the Christian experience, we dwell continuously on joy, peace, happiness, sanctification and rest of the soul with no balancing reference to the divine discontent of Romans 7, the fight of faith of Psalm 73 or any of the burdens of responsibility and providential chastenings that fall to the lot of the child of God."

That's right. What he is saying is we have become shallow, self-centered. That is in contrast to the Puritans. And in studying and reading much of Puritan material, I have found a very simple underlying principle through it all, and that is this: everything in the Christian life depends upon depth in the Word and depth in the Spirit. That's the bottom line of all Puritan writing. They were very very clear about the fact that the main source of all knowledge to deal with the issues of life is the Word of God and that Word is only activated in the Spirit energized believer. So they were dealing with the Word and the Spirit. Oh, they understood that we can learn some things from observation. There is an empirical data observed, things to be learned. We can learn some things from personal experience as well. We have lessons that are profoundly taught to us through our own experience. But the number one source of all matters regarding life was the Word of God which Word became operational in the life through the Holy Spirit.

There is a book entitled, *The Genius of Puritanism*, written by Peter Lewis. And in it he writes this, "The Puritans were physicians of the soul, skilled enough to avoid the vagueness and subjectiveness which leaves the anguished mind clutching at uncertain straws with uncertain hope. They believed the Word of God in Scripture to be the comprehensive source to cover every basic human condition and need and they knew their Scriptures well enough to apply with responsible authority the available salve to the exposed sore," end quote. They knew the Word and by the Spirit they knew how to apply it.

Beloved, the duty of the preacher then is to give you the knowledge of the Word, the deep knowledge of the Word, to teach you the necessity of a Spirit-controlled life, therein the responsibility is fulfilled. If I can teach you the truth of the Word of God so that it sets you on a course of learning on your own, so that the things of God become deep in your heart, then as you walk in the Spirit, those things become living realities. It is not the preacher's task to pass out clever ditties and formulas. It is the preacher's task to bury the Word of God deeply into the heart so that the Spirit of God can draw its truth into action.

And so, the Puritans taught that the key to resolving all situations and solving all problems in life was the diligent study of the Word in the Spirit with prayer. People today who have problems and difficulties in life don't do that. They bypass the diligent study of the Word of God in the Spirit with prayer and then want the preacher to fix them once a month or once every couple of weeks when they come to church. Of course the Puritans also believed that the primary place of pastoral counseling was the pulpit, that the task of the preacher in the pulpit was to bring the Word of God in contact with the people so that it could under the Spirit's use resolve the problems of their lives. And by the way, the Puritans didn't believe that the Christian life was one of unbroken happiness, unbroken joy, and unbroken victory. They saw it as one of trials, tribulations, difficulties, temptations, anxieties, chastenings, etc. And they were armed with the Word of God and the Spirit of God. They knew what they needed to know and they knew on whom they needed to depend.

Beloved, I submit to you that the church has somehow lost that today and we want everything else fast and we want some fast spirituality bypassing the deep knowledge of the Word of God and the power of a Spirit-filled life. So I believe that even though we're nearly 21 years into this ministry, it's time for us to reestablish the rock on which we stand. And I want to share with you some thoughts from my heart regarding the priority place of the teaching of the Word of God. People will often say to me, "Every time we've come to your church, you're always teaching out of the Bible. Is that all you do and why do you do that?" And there are some of you who have been here a long time who are saying, "Is that all he does and why does he keep doing that?" And just to kind of help you see and know again by way of reminder, if you already have understood these things, let me see if I can't reestablish the foundation for the next set of years that we face as to why we do what we do. Now remember, I believe the climate has changed but the mandate hasn't. We have not experienced the kind of growth we once experienced. The appetite is different, it's a different time, it's a different mood. But I believe the shallowness of Christianity is going to show up more and more. And as it gets shallower and shallower and shallower, finally you hit the shore and there's nothing left and I believe the teaching of the Word of God, as always, will become again the main staple, the main interest of the church. People who now are more concerned with people's feelings will become again, I trust God, more concerned with what God has to say.

Now how can we understand the significance of Scripture for us? Let's open our Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 2...1 Corinthians chapter 2. I'm just going to give you kind of a little bit of a

running start and we'll look more at this portion of Scripture next Lord's day. But I want to draw you to chapter 2 because I think it's very basic.

Paul's intent from chapter 1 verse 18 to the end of chapter 2 of this letter to the Corinthian church was to contrast, listen carefully, to contrast human wisdom with divine wisdom. Or to put it another way, to contrast what God said with what man says. And what really comes home in this portion of Scripture is that these two are mutually exclusive...they are mutually exclusive. Man does not accept God's wisdom. God does not accept man's wisdom. That is very clear from chapter 1 verse 18 and following. Man looks at God's wisdom and says, "Foolish." God looks at man's wisdom and says, "Foolish." They are mutually exclusive. And that is Paul's point. It is a point that needs to be made. Why? Because the Corinthians like people today had been strongly influenced by secular philosophy. They had been strongly influenced by the prevailing thinking of their time, by the prevailing leaders of their culture. They had their philosophers. They had their erudite and learned men. They had their writers, their sages and wise men at that time. And they were educated in the writings and the musings and the philosophies and belief systems of their own philosophers. They were also deeply embedded in a culture that gave great priority to esoteric wisdom. And so when they became Christians and they were then exposed to the revelation of God, there was a very obvious point of conflict. For the philosophers of their world who has so influenced their thinking, saw the truth of God as foolishness, and the truth of God viewed all that philosophy as foolishness and so the believer was caught in that very very difficult bind. No different, by the way, than what we experience today. We believe the Word of God. We believe the Word of God says the word of man is foolishness. We understand that man says the Word of God is foolishness. And yet we are in many ways a product of human thinking as well as divine revelation, so we exist in a sort of squeezed position. And that is no different than what Paul was dealing with here.

In the first chapter, you remember, in verse 18 he says the word about the cross, the revelation of the gospel is to people who are perishing foolishness. They view it as idiocy, stupidity, that some man would die for the sins of the world and thereby provide salvation and access to eternal life, that's stupid. That is not intellectual. That is not worthy of consideration. That's a foolish stupid viewpoint. However, on the other hand, to those who believe, he says in verse 24, who are the called, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. So while the world says it's stupid, we say it's wise. And we say what they believe is stupid. We have a conflict.

Now listen carefully. Since the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world are mutually exclusive, the church has always had the difficulty of protecting itself from the wisdom of man. That is a grave challenge. And I'll tell you something, no one is able to do it who doesn't deeply understand the Word of God. If you don't know the Word of God richly, if you don't understand and discern the principles of revealed truth in God's Word, you will...mark it...be unable to evaluate human wisdom. You'll get suckered.

So, let's go back then with Paul to his letter to the Corinthians and let's find out how it is that we are to trust in, depend upon, build our lives exclusively on the Word of God...the Word of God. That's the issue before us.

Now just another note of introduction. I said at the beginning regarding the Puritans that they knew that it was the Word of God deeply into the life and it was the Spirit of God deeply in the life that created the man of God. You will never be able to understand the Word of God apart from the Spirit of God. So I just want to establish that. That though we talk about the Word of God in this text, we do not talk about the Word of God apart from the Spirit of God. Martin Luther used to say, "The Bible cannot be understood simply by study or talent." He said, "You must count only on the influence of the Holy Spirit." And Zwingli, the great reformer, put it this way, "Even if you receive the gospel of Jesus Christ directly from an Apostle, you cannot act according to it unless your heavenly Father teaches you and draws you to Himself by His Spirit." It's the work of the Spirit.

Let me add something to Luther and Zwingli. MacArthur says, fast company, "Even if you receive spiritual truth as a Christian, you cannot apply it apart from the instrumentality of the Spirit of God."

So when we talk about the Word as foundational, we are assuming that the Spirit who authored the Word and the Spirit who is the indwelling resident truth teacher, 1 John 2:20 and 27, is necessary for the understanding of that Word. He will guide you into all truth, said our Lord. John Calvin wrote, "The testimony of the Spirit is superior to reason for these words will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. Scripture carrying its own evidence along with it does not submit to proofs and arguments but owes the full conviction with which we ought to receive it to the testimony of the Holy Spirit." Did you hear that?

The Bible doesn't seek to even prove itself, it leaves that to the Spirit to do in the heart. It is the Spirit then who convinces that the Word is true. It is the Spirit who convinces that the gospel is true. It is the Spirit then who activates the Word in the life of the believer to produce obedience. So, we are depending then on the Word of God and the Spirit of God, not on the wisdom of men, not on the wisdom of this world.

Now, somebody might say, "Well, if you want nothing to do with the wisdom of this world, nothing to do with the reasoning of men, then you're coming up with some simplistic low-level sort of ignorant stuff for old women and little kids. This is not worthy of the profound capabilities of the human mind," some person might say. So Paul says, "Well wait a minute. You call it foolishness, but it isn't. What you see as foolish is a greater wisdom than what you see as wisdom." Do you understand that? See, the world sees what it offers as wisdom and what the Bible offers as foolishness. God says what you offer is really the foolishness and what the Bible offers is really the wisdom.

So look at verse 6 and that's where we'll start. "Yet in spite of the fact that the world says it's foolishness, we do speak...what?...wisdom." Now stop at that point. Paul wants to establish at the very beginning that he is not a teacher of some kind of fruitless nonsense, that he is not teaching some foolish stupidity, but that what he is teaching is really wisdom. In fact, the highest wisdom. You see, they object because he doesn't teach philosophy. And he says philosophy can't save, so it's foolish, I reject it. And they say, "Well, what you teach is foolish." And he says, "No, what I teach is wisdom." But look here, "We do speak wisdom among those who are teleios, teleios, plural...among those who are mature, among those who are perfect, among those who are full-grown." What does it mean? Christians...Christians. Those who have been perfected forever by the sacrifice of Christ, as Hebrews puts it...the saved. He's contrasting the saved here with the unsaved. He's not talking about advanced Christians. He's not talking about mature Christians as opposed to baby Christians. No. He uses the term here, "We speak wisdom among the saved." Those who have been perfected by the sacrifice of Christ that have a mind to understand the true wisdom of God. So the wisdom of God is available to believers and believers understand it and they understand it as wisdom.

Beloved, it is so true, isn't it? We don't understand the full comprehension of biblical truth, but we know that it is wiser than anything man has ever come up with. We see it as wisdom. We see it as infinite wisdom. We see it as the wisdom of God. I believe we can all cry out, no matter how limited our mental capabilities, with Paul and say in Romans 11:33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His ways and unfathomable His steps." We can all say it is wisdom, it is profound, it is deep. We understand that that God came into the world, died on a cross in a substitutionary act of atoning death. We understand the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We understand that He lavished on us in all wisdom and insight the fullness of His glory. We understand how wise God is, what majestic wisdom there is. In fact, Paul says of the Colossians that His desire is that they would be filled with all spiritual wisdom. So we have been given the knowledge of wisdom.

When you became a Christian, you received the capability to understand the gospel, to understand the truth of God revealed. So it is wisdom, but it's wisdom among those who were saved. The world looks at us and thinks we're idiots, fools, stupid. Now let me tell you basically why. Because true wisdom is not humanly discovered. Take a bunch of philosophers, pick any you want, stick them in a corner for a few years and tell them to come out with the best philosophy they can come up with. They won't come up with the gospel. The truth is not humanly discovered. They have no capability to discover it. They could never invent it. They wouldn't. Even though it exists, they wouldn't agree with it. You see, true wisdom is not humanly discovered. There's a corollary to that. True wisdom is divinely revealed. Man can't discover it, God has to reveal it. And when man first sees and hears it, he says it's ridiculous, that's idiotic that someone would die for the sins of the world, that by believing in this guy you could have eternal...it doesn't make any sense. True wisdom is not humanly discovered, they'll never come up with it. True wisdom is divinely revealed. And those who could never come up

with come up with it because God reveals it to them.

So, let's look at verses 6 and following and just at least get started in the contrast between the wisdom of men and the wisdom of God. Now let me give you back the main thought that I'm trying to drive home today. Listen. The reason you hear from this pulpit always the Word of God is because the Word of God is the only source of true wisdom. The rest, mutually exclusive from the true wisdom. We don't need that, it only confuses. And you will only be able to protect yourself discerning the truth when you know the true wisdom of God.

So let's take the first point, I'll give you two, one today and one next time. True wisdom is not humanly discovered...true wisdom is not humanly discovered. Now did you hear what I said? If true wisdom can't be humanly discovered, then stay away from those people who are saying they discovered it. Verse 6, "We do speak wisdom but it is a wisdom that belongs to the saved, a wisdom...listen to this...not of this ion, not of this frame of reference, not of this time, not of this era." It is a wisdom that is not a part of this world, this age. "Nor...he says...of the leaders of this age who are kartargeo, passing away." He says we have a wisdom but it's not the wisdom of this age. It's not some human wisdom invented by some man who lived in space and time.

The leaders or princes, the word "princes" appears in the King James, the "rulers" appears in the NAS. The best is "leaders." It means the philosophers, the teachers, the writers, the lecturers, the world's leading lights. He says the wisdom we teach is mutually exclusive from them. It may be that they're intelligent, it may be that they're educated, it may be that they are gifted, but they are also...are you ready for this?...temporary, they're passing away, being rendered completely ineffective would be another way to translate that verb. Their power and wisdom is human, their power and wisdom is limited. Their power and wisdom is temporary. They are morally impotent and spiritually ignorant. True wisdom comes not from them. It is not discerned by men because it is not a part of their system. It is not in their minds. They are incapable of it. It is outside their powers of observation. It is outside their powers of experience. Listen carefully, and they don't have any other source for truth. It's either observation or experience. We say you can learn some things from observation, some things from experience, but everything is qualified by the Word of God, right? All they have is observation and experience and no standard. And so they don't know the truth.

Just to make it as relevant as I can. The temporary philosophy, and we don't hear a lot about that today. If you hear about somebody who is going to college to study philosophy, you think they must be about 85 years old. They must have come out of some other era. Who in the world studies philosophy? Philosophy is dead as a proverbial doornail. You don't hear anybody talk about philosophy. But the new philosophy has another name. The new philosophy is psychology. That is a world view. That is a world view. But, you see, it is called...it is psychology not philosophy because it focused on man because we live in a totally individualistic man-centered cultured. People not interested in studying the great sweeping realities of truth, they're interested in figuring themselves

out. So the philosophy is self-focused rather than world focused. It is not a world view, it is a self view. So the new philosophy is psychology. Everybody is in to understanding man's psyche, ego, figuring him out, discovering the truth about him or the only truth that's relevant. People don't care about the truth of the world, all they care about is what is relevant to me. And so the new philosophy is psychology. And if you look to psychology to find the wisdom of God, you're going to get in a lot of trouble because it is mutually exclusive. There is no psychologist on the face of the earth who will on his own come up with divine truth.

That's well illustrated by Larry Crabbe in one of his books, and I know some of you have read some of his writings. Listen to what he says, and I think it's very insightful. He said this, "Freud said that man is selfish and one ought first to know it then accept it as okay. Ego psychology claims that man can be strengthened to successfully re-channel his selfishness into personally and socially acceptable outlets." Karl Rogers denies any inner badness and teaches that man is filled with only goodness and should therefore let all that goodness hang out. B.F. Skinner contends that man is neither good nor bad, he is a complicated mass of responses which in terms of intrinsic value amounts to a large zero. Since man can be controlled, let experts, Skinnerians psychologists, control him toward ends desired ultimately by the controller who is himself totally controlled.

Then existentialism doesn't know if man is bad like Freud said, or if man is good like Rogers said, or if man is neither good or bad. Existentialist says man is just logically absurd and needs something besides rational meaningless. Therefore leave rationality behind and blindly hope that some experience will fill your void.

There you are. Freud, the most influential philosopher of our time, although lived well over a hundred years ago, Freud says man is basically bad but it's okay to be bad. Karl Rogers says man is basically good and it's really okay to be good, so let all your goodness hang out and if it looks bad you just redefine it as good. B.F. Skinner says man isn't good or bad, he's a big zero who just reacts like an animal...he's Pavlov's dogs, let him salivate any old way he wants. And the existentialist says none of it means anything, just hope that somewhere sometime you'll have some experience to make you feel like you exist for a reason and are more than protoplasm waiting to become manure. That's the legacy of philosophy.

You see, none of that stuff comes close to divine truth. And unless we understand how antithetical and contrary to divine truth it is, we get ourselves in a sort of Corinthian confusion where we're trying to marry the extant philosophy of the time with the revealed Word of God which marriage is impossible without adulterating God's revelation. Human wisdom is passing away. Human wise men all pass away. They die. Their philosophy perishes with them.

Now look at verse 7 for a moment. "But," and this is the adversative but, ala in the Greek, strong adversative, "But on the contrary, on the other hand, not like that but this, we speak God's wisdom."

We don't mess with that. We don't care about the leaders of the world who are passing away. We don't care about the philosophy of our age. We speak God's wisdom. P.S., who by the way is not passing away. We attach ourselves to the eternal one and His eternal wisdom, God's wisdom. By the way, in the Greek order here, God is in the emphatic position. You see two types of wisdom compete for the souls of men...the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God. Again I say, they are mutually exclusive. God does not accept man's wisdom, man does not accept God's wisdom. The psychologies of this world and the philosophies of this world laugh when you mix Christianity with them. Even they know that Christianity to them is unacceptable and we should mock any attempt to mix the philosophies of this world with our faith.

Now would you notice here that the mystery of God...this is so powerful...that the wisdom of God is in a mystery? It says that we speak God's wisdom in a mystery...the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory. Now somebody might say, "Oh boy, now we're getting into some kind of secret knowledge here. Wow, we have wisdom but it's a mystery. How do we solve the mystery? How do we get to the secret knowledge?" Well you misunderstand the word "mystery." I want to sort of reduce a lot of technical verbiage down to a very simple understanding. The term "mystery" in Scripture is a technical term. It doesn't mean what you think it means normally. When you think of a mystery you think of something that's very hard to figure out. No. Mysterion, the term mystery in Scripture, New Testament, is a technical term for truth which man has never known but is now revealed. Okay? Truth which man has never known but is now revealed. It doesn't refer to something in the occult or some puzzle that you can't solve. It refers to a secret which it is impossible for man to penetrate but which God has revealed.

So he says we speak God's wisdom formerly hidden now revealed...formerly hidden now revealed. And what was it? The New Testament, Christ and all that was written about Him. Man could never know that. Man could never know about Christ, could never know about salvation in Christ, could never know about justification, sanctification, glorification unless it was revealed. It is the sacred secret made known. So he says we speak what has been hidden and is now revealed. The mystery, Ephesians 3:9 says, which for ages has been hidden in God and now the manifold wisdom of God is made known, Ephesians 3:9 and 10. So our wisdom is the gospel, the New Testament. It was hidden, it is now revealed. By the way, it's still hidden to unbelievers, right? It is still hidden. The god of this world has...what?...blinded their minds lest the light of the glorious gospel shine unto them. And God Himself has left them in their darkness.

Now listen to what I say. Paul is saying look, this wisdom now revealed is not some afterthought. God didn't say, "Oh, boy, all those people are down there getting all mixed up with human wisdom, I better get some wisdom down there. I better make up a story and get it down there." No. It says this wisdom which was hidden God predestined before the ages to our glory. Now listen to this, the wisdom...now follow this thought...the wisdom that we find in the Word of God was predestined to be revealed to us before the world began...before there was time, before there was ion, before there were any ages,

God laid down the plan to reveal this truth. For what purpose? To our glory. Is that incredible? To our eternal glory, that we might spend eternity with Him. There is God in eternity past devising a plan by which He will reveal His saving truth to a bunch of unworthy sinners in order that they may enjoy eternal glory.

Now listen to the contrast. Don't tell me that the plan of the eternal God predestined before there was time to be revealed to bring us to eternal glory needs the help of the leaders of this age who are passing away. See the point. Who needs it? This is what I love about the Puritans. When you read the Puritan literature on counseling, there's nothing about psychology in it because no such thing existed. The philosophy of psychology was non-existent because Freud hadn't been born yet. And so when they have volume after volume after volume about counseling, it's all about the Bible and what the Bible says and what the Bible means and how it's to be applied. We have a wisdom that is transcendent. We have a wisdom that proceeds from the infinite and eternal God that was laid down before time began and has been revealed in order that we might be redeemed for our own eternal glory for that pleases God. That is way beyond and mutually exclusive from any of the human stuff concocted by men who are passing away. That's his point.

And people say, "Why do you teach the Word of God all the time?" That's why...that's why. It is the source of our truth.

Dick Mayhue gave me an article this week with an interview in it, Carl Henry, one of the great theologians of our time. He says, "I'm quite willing to concede and insist that the church has unnecessarily accommodated this trend by a failure of cognitive analysis." The church doesn't think anymore is what he means. "For the past half generation, evangelical churches have gravitated toward the experiential and even the emotional at the expense of the intellectual. I certainly insist on the importance of the whole man, the entire self. But if the church does not know what the intellectual differences are, she will readily fail to understand differences all the way down the line."

What he's saying is if we don't know truth from God from truth from man, we can't discern anything. Then he says this, "In short, if the difference between the drug culture and Christianity is only that Christianity offers a more intense and lasting experience, then we're in real trouble." We can't sell an experiential Christianity. He goes on to say, "We must take our stand that God has spoken." That's why we teach the Word.

Well, there's so much more in this great passage. Read it down through verse 16 as preparation for next Sunday. Let's pray together.

We remember that the people of old said, "It was good to go to the house of the Lord." And, Father, though you do not dwell in temples made with hands, it is good to be with the church which is the temple of God. It is good to be here. It is good to be refreshed in spirit. It is good to rejoice in praise

and worship. It is good to be instructed. It is good to fellowship with those of like precious faith. It is good to confess sin. It is good to draw aside from the things that occupy us, to be reminded of the rock on which we stand, namely the wisdom of God. And may it be our portion and our strength and may we be deep in the Word, walking in the Spirit that the Word might flow through our very lives, that we might live in a biblical way. Help us not to settle for shallowness but like those Puritans of old be sober in our scholarship, zealous for our God with a burning passion and understanding of the human heart that we might see the wisdom of God at work in us and in others through us. We pray in our Savior's name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).