*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

January 6 - 11

*First Corinthians*

**Monday, January 6 1 Corinthians 2:1-5**

*“I came to you in weakness”*

Paul uses himself as an illustration of how God is able to use the weak to confound the strong. If any of the readers had been offended by his earlier statement that there were not many among them who were wise according to the world, they could be comforted by the fact that Paul included himself in the statement. The spirit of humility he asked of his readers he had exhibited himself both in his message and in the manner of his life. The correspondence between the minister and his gospel is what gave it power, because the messenger must match the message.

Paul is here laying a foundation for dealing with the divisions in the church. He wants to remind them that neither the gospel he preached not the manner in which he preached it had in any way contributed to the schism in the congregation. He had come to them as an announcer of good news – not to argue or persuade. Since the gospel is not a system of philosophy or logic but a statement of God’s revelation in Christ, the proper stance for its messenger is proclaimer.

*We share the gospel, Lord, to win converts, not compliments. Amen.*

**Tuesday, January 7 1 Corinthians 2:6-9**

*“We speak the wisdom of God”*

Paul has made a strong case that the gospel owes nothing to human wisdom and that both its messenger and message are despised by the rulers of this world. But now he seems to be aware that people might take what he has written to mean that any kind of wisdom is bad. So in these verses he makes an emphasis on the kind of wisdom that is good – divine wisdom. He teaches that there is such a thing as Christian wisdom. It centers in God’s plan of redemption as revealed in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

The “wisdom of God” is a reference to the gospel in all its implications. It is not just a sermon on the cross but involves all that is included in understanding God’s redemptive purpose, the nature of God, and the destiny of humanity. The mystery or “hidden wisdom” of God is that which was hidden in the past but which has now been made known by a revelation of God. This wisdom is such that human beings were incapable of anticipating it, a plan which no one but God could have made, and which people cannot understand unless the Spirit assists them.

*You have revealed your wisdom to me, Lord, by your Holy Spirit. Amen.*

**Wednesday, January 8 Isaiah 64:1-4**

*“No ear has heard and no eye has seen a God like you”*

Isaiah calls on God to leave his home in the heaves and to come to his people’s aid. The reason for his doing so is that the nations may know the name of God, that is, that they might know exactly who God is, the sole Sovereign of the universe. Only when those nations see God blessing and defending his people will they recognize him appropriately. God’s actions in the past demonstrate that Isaiah’s petition is not based in fantasy. Whenever God had manifested himself in the past, dramatic things occurred, from the parting of the Red Sea to the stopping of the rain for three years. God can act and he has acted, so it is not foolish to ask him to act again.

But if Isaiah knows that God can act, he also knows that there are conditions for that to occur. God acts in behalf of those who wait for him, that is, those who put their trust in him rather than in their own intellectual understanding of God’s character and what they may expect from him. From the beginning, the “ears” and “eyes” of those who see themselves as wise have attempted to manipulate God in order for him to do their bidding, but they will not succeed.

*There is no God like you, Lord, and I put my trust in you. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

January 6 - 11

*First Corinthians*

**Thursday, January 9 1 Corinthians 2:10-12**

*“We have God’s Spirit, not the world’s spirit”*

The phrase “spirit of the world” refers to the spirit of this age. In all of Paul’s writings he contends that history is divided into “this present age” and “the age to come.” By “this age” he means that world which is marked by rebellion against the creator – a self-centered world. By the “age to come” he means that Kingdom which God has already begun to create through Christ. While Paul was quite realistic about the powers of the world, his writing is infected with a great confidence concerning God’s ultimate triumph in all things.

While Paul will begin to develop the idea of immature and worldly Christians in the next chapter, he introduces here the contrast between the natural and the spiritual person in his discussion of divine wisdom. To him the “natural person” was one who, because they had not received the Spirit of God in their life, still had their understanding very much limited to this world. It is not the suggestion that a person cannot understand, but that a person, even at his or her very best, cannot understand spiritual matters without the help of the Spirit of God.

*Your Spirit lives in me, Lord, helping me to understand the things of God. Amen.*

**Friday, January 10 I Corinthians 2:13-16**

*“It all sounds foolish to them”*

William Barclay defines the person without the Spirit as the kind of individual who “lives as if there was nothing beyond the physical life and there were no needs other than material needs.” Such a person “thinks that nothing is more important than the satisfaction of the sex urge” and thus “cannot understand the meaning of chastity in singleness and fidelity in marriage.” One “who ranks the amassing of material things as the supreme end of life cannot understand generosity,” and one “who has never a thought beyond this world cannot understand the things of God.” Surely sexual immorality, materialism, and atheism prevail even more pervasively in our Western world today than in mid-twentieth-century Scotland where Barclay first wrote these words.

The person with the Spirit, that is, any Christian, has the ability to bring God’s perspective to bear on every aspect of life. As such, Christians are not subject to any merely human evaluation, meaning one that does not take God’s perspective into account. Even evaluation by fellow believers is provisional; the only judge who ultimately counts is God.

*Make me wise, Lord, that I may see all things from your point of view. Amen.*

**Saturday, January 11 Isaiah 40:12-14**

*“Who knows enough to teach God?”*

Earlier in the chapter, Isaiah verified God’s desire and intention to deliver his people; but can he do it? After all, from one perspective, he seemed unable to prevent the Babylonians from capturing the land and city in the first place, so why should we think he will be able to deliver the people now? Isaiah’s approach to answering the question is to assert that God is unique. He is able to deliver not because he is greater than the Babylonian gods; he is able to deliver because he is the only God!

In these three verses the prophet employs a series of rhetorical questions intended to bring the reader to the point of saying that God is the sole Creator of the world, and he needed no one’s help or advice. Similarly, he has ordained what is right and good for how people are to live with their God and with one another and, again, he needed no one’s assistance to do so. Being able to do such amazing things all on his own, is it too much to believe that he can rescue his people from their captivity?

*You have rescued me from sin, Lord, and I praise your name. Amen.*