

2:6 Imparting Wisdom to the Mature

Worldly Wisdom.

Origen: When Paul talks about the wisdom of the rulers of this world he seems to be talking not about one wisdom common to them all but about different kinds of wisdom which are peculiar to each. On First Principles 3.3.1.1

True Wisdom Found in the Cross.

Chrysostom: Paul is saying that when he, a man thought to be foolish and a preacher of folly, gets the better of the wise, he overcomes their wisdom, not by foolishness but by a more perfect wisdom. This wisdom is so broad and so great that the other kind appears to be foolishness. True wisdom is the gospel, the means of salvation through the cross of Christ. The perfect are those who believe. They are indeed “perfect,” because they know that all human things are utterly helpless, and therefore they ignore them, being convinced that they have nothing to gain from them. This is what true believers are like. Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 7.1.3

2:7 The Hidden Wisdom of God

From the Beginning.

Chrysostom: Paul is keen to point out that God always loved us, even from the very beginning, when we did not yet exist. For if he had not loved us, he would not have foreordained our riches. Look beyond the broken relationship which has come in between, and you will see that God’s love for us is more ancient still. Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 7.4.5

2:8a Rulers of This Age Do Not Understand

2:8b Crucifying the Lord of Glory

Even the Crucifiers Are Not Beyond Forgiveness.

Chrysostom: Could Herod and the priests who wanted to crucify Jesus have been forgiven? Yes. If they repented, they were forgiven. Even Paul, who persecuted the church, was forgiven when he repented, and so they could have been as well. The ignorance of the rulers was not concerning Christ’s person but

rather concerning the significance of the event which was taking place on the cross. Jesus prayed that they might be forgiven, not because they did not know him but because they did not understand what they were doing. Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 7.5.10

What If Christ Had Not Died?

Augustine: But if Christ had not been put to death, death would not have died. The devil was overcome by his own trophy, for the devil rejoiced when, by seducing the first man, he cast him into death. By seducing the first man, he killed him. 11. By killing the last man, he lost the first from his snare. The Ascension 263.12

Who Killed the Lord of Glory?

Oecumenius: This applies to Herod and Pilate. It does not apply in the same way to the high priests and scribes, because they knew that Jesus was the Christ. They were more like the workers in the vineyard who said: "This is the heir. Let us kill him, and the vineyard will be ours." 14. Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.15

2:9 What God Has Prepared

Good Things to Come.

Isaac of Nineveh: When it says "which eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard" and the rest, Scripture has declared to us that the good things to come are incomprehensible and have no similarity to anything here. Ascetical Homilies 2.16

A Spiritual Body.

Origen: From this we may gain an idea of how great the splendor, the beauty and the brightness of a spiritual body is. On First Principles 3.6.4.17

A Paraphrase?

Chrysostom: Where are these words written? Either they are a paraphrase of some passage [such as Isaiah 52:15], or they were written in some book which has now disappeared. In fact, many books were destroyed, and very few survived the first 21 captivity intact, as we know from the documents which have survived. Not all the words of the prophets are extant, but Paul, who was learned in the law and was also

speaking by the Spirit, would have known them all accurately. Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 7.6.22

God Foresees Human Choices.

Severian of Gabala: One should not think that God has indiscriminately revealed the mystery to some and allowed the rest to perish in ignorance. Rather one should know and be persuaded that by the foreknowledge of his power God prepared the right thing for each person according to his deserts, for he foresees what each one will choose even before it happens. Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.²³

2:10 The Spirit Searches Everything

The Deep Things of God.

Clement of Alexandria: Those who possess the Spirit seek out the deep things of God, that is, the hidden secrets that surround prophecy. Stromateis 2.7.3.²⁴

The Limits of Human Searching.

Origen: Only the Spirit can search everything. The human soul cannot do this, which is why it needs to be strengthened by the Spirit if it is ever going to penetrate the depths of God. Commentary on 1 Corinthians 1.10.6–10.25

Accurate Knowledge of God Is Beyond Our Searching.

Chrysostom: If the Spirit, who knows the secret things of God, had not revealed them to us, there is no way that we could ever have known them. The word search does not imply that the Spirit was ignorant but refers rather to accurate, detailed knowledge. It is the same usage as when Paul speaks of God, saying that he searches the human heart. ²⁷. Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 7.7.²⁸

2:11 Only the Spirit Comprehends God's Thoughts

Unity of Father and Spirit.

Severian of Gabala: God and the Holy Spirit are two persons, whereas a man and the spirit in him are not two persons but one man. What Paul means is that just as in the man there is a cohesion in knowing, so the knowledge of the Father and the Spirit is one. What the Spirit searches is therefore already known to him. Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.³¹

2:12 Receiving the Spirit from God

Human Wisdom.

Oecumenius: I think that by "spirit of the world" Paul means human wisdom and learning. Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.³³

2:13 Taught by the Spirit

Interpreting Spiritual Truths.

Chrysostom: Some spiritual truths are unclear and need to be interpreted, but this can be done only by comparing them with other spiritual things. For example, when I say that Christ rose again, I compare this to the deliverance of Jonah from the belly of the whale. 1 And when I say that he was born of a virgin, I compare this to the miraculous childbearing of barren women like Sarah, Rebekah and so on. 2. Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 7.8.³

2:14a A Folly to Unspiritual Persons

The Unspiritual Try to See Without Light.

Chrysostom: God gave us a mind in order that we might learn and receive help from him, not in order that the mind should be self-sufficient. Eyes are beautiful and useful, but if they choose to see without light, their beauty is useless and may even be harmful. Likewise, if my soul chooses to see without the Spirit, it becomes a danger to itself. Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 7.9.⁵

2:14b Spiritual Gifts are Spiritually Discerned

The Unspiritual Are Unable to Understand.

Chrysostom: The man who can see sees everything which belongs to the blind man, but no blind person can tell what he is doing. Likewise, we who believe can understand both our own affairs and those of unbelievers, but they are helpless when it comes to trying to understand us. Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 7.11.6

2:15 The Spiritual Person Judges All Things

The Spiritual Man.

Origen: The spiritual man is able to judge everything, whether it is Greek or barbarian, wise or foolish. He cannot be judged by anyone because of the depth of his understanding and his responses. Commentary on 1 Corinthians 1.11.44–45.8

2:16 Who Knows the Mind of the Lord?

Do We Know All That Christ Knows?

Chrysostom: We know the things which are in the mind of Christ, which he has willed and revealed to us. This does not mean that we know everything which Christ knows but rather that everything which we know comes from him and is spiritual. Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 7.12.14

The Father in Us.

Oecumenius: The “mind of Christ” refers to the Father. Paul is saying that we have the Father of Christ in us. Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church.16