

THE REVELATION OF RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT SERIES

PART 15

"JUDGMENT AT THE HOUSE"

(CONTINUED)

II Thess. 2: 3...*"That Day will not set in---except the revolt come first, and there be revealed the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, the one who opposeth and exalteth himself on high, against everyone called God, or an object of worship; so that he, within the sanctuary of God, shall take his seat, showeth himself forth that he is God...For the secret of lawlessness already is inwardly working itself, only until he that restraineth at present shall be gone out of the midst: and then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the Spirit of His mouth, and paralyze with the forthshining of His presence..."* (Rotherham translation).

I Peter 4:17-18...*"For the time is come that JUDGMENT MUST BEGIN AT THE HOUSE OF GOD..."*

How clear the Lord makes His Word! How relevant it becomes, when once the anointing brings it home to us! When the light of truth shines upon the letter of His Word, it leaps from the pages of Holy Writ, and into our hearts; and as it enters, it causes hope to spring up within us! For not only does the Lord point out our problem in no uncertain terms; He also provides us with the solution! According to our text, we know and believe that in His Own way, and in His Own time, He shall surely put down that lawless one, who opposeth and exalteth himself on high...and the secret of lawlessness, which is inwardly working itself...though presently he seems to be firmly ensconced in the temple, and insulated from attack. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus shall paralyze and destroy all opposition to His purpose, and to His people, when once the work that it was intended and allowed for is complete; and there is not a power or force anywhere throughout the broad regions of creation that can hinder Him! Sing Hallelujah! There is great reason to rejoice! The Lord God Omnipotent reigns!

Howbeit, for the present time, we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened. Sometimes the time seems soooooo long, doesn't it? And the grief seems almost unbearable! We wonder how we would ever endure it, should the Lord tarry! We do find a bit of comfort in knowing that we are not the only ones who have experienced this. In another time in history, in a paralleled time of great distress, when the adversaries of Israel had "trodden the sanctuary", and defiled it with their vile and corrupting presence (Isa. 63:18); and when it seemed as if the Lord had caused His people to err, by hardening their hearts from His fear (verse 17), the prophet Isaiah cried out from bitterness of soul, in utter desperation to God, "O that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence, as

when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make Thy name (nature) known to Thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Thy presence! When Thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, Thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at Thy presence. For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him" (Isa. 64:1-4). To the ignorant and the unlearned, this prayer might have seemed a bit overdramatized; perhaps even a bit foolish. But we know that every line came by inspiration of the Spirit...the Holy Ghost put these words in his mouth! It only stands to reason, then, they would be fraught with meaning. There is an important process revealed here! You see, not only did they express what the prophet was feeling precisely at that moment, but they also revealed what the Spirit had already planned to perform in their behalf. The Lord of hosts had purposed to stand up for, and to defend His people, when once they had repented, and their hearts were aligned with His. This was His intention all along! He was just waiting till the conditions were right, and the people were ready. As soon as this was accomplished, the meeting would come to order, the Lord would make His appearance...and the fire would fall! They could count on it!

Nevertheless, had Isaiah been expecting a literal fulfillment of his request, he would certainly have been disappointed. Nowhere do we read where the mountains physically dissolved before their eyes. Nowhere does it say that the hills were set ablaze, to the astonishment of their foes. It may help us to understand that in a similar time to this, when describing a natural victory they had just gotten by the Lord, the prophetess Deborah sang, "Lord, when Thou wentest out of Seir, when Thou marchest out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, and the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel" (Judges 5:4-5). Now, if we were to make a review of the events preceding this in chapter 4 of Judges, we would not find any evidence of this occurring in the natural. There were no earthquakes, no rainstorms, and no melting mountains recorded therein. In fact, those same mountains which she mentioned are still with us today! However, this was understood by all who heard this blessed ballad to be figurative of the way God had just moved in judgment unto victory for them. He broke the staff of the wicked, and caused their oppressor to cease; and in the process, He elevated His people to a place of dominance! Beloved, there was no mistaking what God had done for them...and there was certainly no disappointment on their parts! God got the job done! He met their greatest expectations, by dissolving the strength of mighty kingdoms right before their very eyes, by subduing their enemies under their feet! Deborah's song merely reflected upon it in flowing poetic terms!

In like manner, Isaiah's desire was for God to come on the scene; for Him to remove the ominous mountains of opposition that loomed up before them. His grievance was not with the natural mountains encompassing them; most assuredly, he was not vexed with the earthly, physical hills. There was neither righteousness nor unrighteousness found in them; so therefore, they were incapable of committing an offense. Nay, he was grieved that their adversaries had taken over the temple; that they had defiled it with their abominations. This is why he prayed so fervently for deliverance; for direction and divine

enablement. Like David (in Psa. 18), he knew that their enemies were simply too strong for them to overcome by themselves; therefore, they needed the presence of the Most High to melt down the opposing forces of darkness! He, and He alone, was their only hope...and so they took their appeal to the Higher Court!

We, too, have experienced what it is like for the enemy to trespass the temple. We know exactly how it feels for him to tread within the sanctuary, to pollute the inner court, to bring us into bondage at his will. We have all known "the abomination that maketh desolate", in a real and personal way...without knowing exactly what to do about it in and of our selves. We, too, have been overwhelmed by the enormity of the situation, to the point of mental (and sometimes even physical) exasperation! However, we have also learned that the moment we turn to the Lord with our whole hearts, investing our faith solely in Him, He rends the heavens and comes down; and when He does, He causes "the mountains" to flow down at His presence! "What", someone may ask, "are these 'mountains' you speak of? What do they represent?" Well, we know that for Isaiah, they stood for external obstructions and difficulties; natural foes surrounding them. Their struggles were chiefly from without. But for us, they represent (among other things) the various and sundry "summits" of natural reasoning the man of sin raises within our minds; the "mounts" of humanistic ideas, opinions, theories, and philosophies which so frequently influence our thoughts, clog our intellects, and interfere with our walk in the Spirit. Collectively, we might say that they represent the mind of the flesh; where carnal wisdom and knowledge comprise it's steep grades. In other words, they signify the kingdom of Adam in general; that fog-covered peak from whence he reigns! Time and again, this "mountain" of earthly, human insight has risen up between our ears; and like fools seeking the wisdom of the guru on yonder mountain top, we have ascended it's perilous, dizzying heights (oftentimes hanging, for dear life, over some of it's "rock bluffs"), in order to gain his advice and direction about the issues of life. You know as well as we do, as often as this has happened, it has usually served only to distract us from following the Spirit's lead! It has kept us from ascending the "Hill of the Lord", and standing in the "Holy Place"! And beloved, this is exactly why it must melt with fervent heat! It acts as a substitute for the mind of the Spirit!

THE MOUNT OF MAN'S WISDOM

If ever a man understood the seriousness of this fatal distraction, Paul did. He was directed by the Spirit to preach the gospel, and to assemble those who believed, in, of all places, the city of Corinth. Now, in case you are unfamiliar with it's background, let us tell you a little about it. Corinth was one of the main intellectual hubs of their day. It housed within it's boundaries a vast assortment of religious ideologies (primarily Egyptian, Roman, and Greek), and was politically and socially founded on the philosophical teachings of some of the greatest minds ever to emerge from the preceding era of Greek glory. The observations and lessons on life of men such as Pericles, Anaxagoras, Thales, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, profoundly effected them (and formed the basis for the two main schools of Hellenistic thought there: the Epicurian and the Stoic). Because of it's location along the great highway between Rome and the East, and because of it's close connections with neighboring Athens (the educational center of their

day, and the seat of the greatest university in the world at that time), any new movement in thought or society passed through there, before being dispersed throughout the province of Achaia. It's importance, as to the Hellenization of the masses (the influence of Greek thought and culture upon others, it's infiltration into other world views), was immeasurable.

Although Corinth was an exceptionally beautiful city, displaying within it's borders some of the most exquisite style and architecture ever to emerge in the history of civilization, it was also very vile. It was wholly given over to idolatry. Generally speaking, it was built upon the beliefs of pantheism (the belief that God and nature are the same), of polytheism (the belief in many gods); of the mythology and superstitions surrounding them; on beliefs that were as changeable as the weather that blew in from the Aegean and Ionian seas. Because of it's placement along the commercial trade route (which attracted visitors from all over the known world), and because of the powerful Epicurean influence in society (which promotes the pursuits of, and participation in sensual pleasures), it earned the title, "Vanity Fair".

Every vice known to man was freely and openly practiced there. There were no moral restraints; no sense of guilt or conviction among it's citizens. In fact, a magnificent temple was constructed atop the Acrocorinthus (a massive rock mount which jutted out from the northern end of the isthmus) for the Greek goddess Aphrodite (the supposed "goddess of fertility"), wherein a thousand so-called "priestesses" (actually temple prostitutes) ministered. In this evil metropolis, fleshly, sensual indulgence was not only tolerated; it was incorporated as a part of their religion! What a stronghold for satan to occupy! And what a paradise for Adam!

In addition to it's many attractions, Corinth was also the home of the famed "Isthmian Games". They were held at the shrine of Poseidon (the so-called "sea god"), and were conducted in typical Greek and Roman fashion. We might add, however, that while the Olympic games mainly placed emphasis on physical strength and endurance, glorifying the abilities of the human body (even to the point of deification), the Isthmian games also included contests of intellect. For endless hours, rhetoricians and philosophers would present and debate subjects before crowds of spectators, seeking to prove their mental or verbal superiority. They measured might by their long-winded discussions, their perseverance in their arguments, and their ability to convince their peers. This, to them, was the supreme honor, and worthy of all their wearisome efforts!

It was against this mental "mountain" that Paul contended. And what a tremendous challenge it was! The Himalayas could not have looked bigger! He knew that these images and impressions, these tendencies and thought-patterns were deeply ingrained in the minds of his listeners. He was well aware of this "vanity fair" in the flesh, this insane and lustful line of reasoning many of them had grown up with, and had been diligently instructed in from little on up. However, he was not intimidated by this in the least! He knew that even though they were habitually inclined to think in these terms, God had purposed a divine "meltdown" of all that was not of Him; and so he rested in the revealed Word of God! He was confident that no matter how imbedded this mindset was in his

congregation, or how paganized their perspectives were, Christ could blow upon it all with the fiery breath of divine inspiration, and reduce it to ashes in a moment! There were no "ifs". "ands", or "buts" about it!

TWO KINDS OF WISDOM

Knowing somewhat of the social and psychological setting, we are better able to understand both the structure and the substance of Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth (we would encourage you to turn there now in your Bibles, if you will). Throughout the letter, and especially throughout the first four chapters, a distinct contrast is made between the wisdom of men, and that wisdom which comes from above. This is extremely important for us to keep in mind, while we conduct our survey. One of his opening lines is: "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift: waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ..." (I Cor. 1:4-7). This is one powerful statement, to say the least, and a lot to absorb all at once; so let's take a little time to chew on it. Shall we?

To begin with, it seems quite possible that some may have been told, or perhaps were under the impression that to become a Christian meant choosing a way that was inferior to the more popular forms of thought or speech then prevalent. Knowing that the inhabitants of Corinth considered themselves to be among the most gifted, intellectually advanced, and sophisticated civilizations on the face of the earth; and knowing that it would not be unlike them to boast of their supposed superiority, gives us reason to believe that this could very well have been the case. But Paul assures his readers that by the grace of God, and through the indwelling of His Spirit, they had become the privileged recipients of a very unique treasure. This special, supernatural enrichment was not the result of works, which they could take credit for, and not because of any special scholastic aptitude which they possessed, but came in the form of spiritual gifts and enablements (which they received when they were born again, and their spiritual faculties were awakened); gifts which gave them access to "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God", Whose judgments are unsearchable, and Whose ways are past finding out (that is, by human efforts; Rom. 11:33). They were freely given to them by God! Therefore, regardless of what their pagan peers may have believed, or what they may have been propagandizing throughout the community, the apostle says that they had absolutely nothing on God's people! In fact, rather than coming behind in these areas, the saints were actually light years ahead of them! For while the Greeks had to rely on the mountain of preconceived notions and opinions they had developed, or the towering peaks of poems, proverbs, principles, and adages derived from their founding philosophers on various subjects stored in their heads, the saints had been brought to the foot of another mount, yea, even unto that Mount Zion, where they had the very wisdom of God on every subject at their disposal (at the Spirit's discretion, of course). They just operated according to a different set of principles, that's all!

Those guiding principles are clearly contained in this passage. First of all, let us go back and look at the wording again, including the next line that follows: "...Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you to the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ..." (verses 6-8). There are three words that should be of particular interest to us: 1) testimony, meaning in the Greek (#3142), "evidence given; witness; martyr"; 2) confirm, meaning (Gr. #950), "to stabilize, establish, confirm; also sure, steadfast, and basis"; and 3) coming, or "apocalupsis" in Greek (#602), meaning, "unveiling, uncovering, or revelation" (that the apostle was not referring here to a literal coming should be seen by his usage of this word. It is the same word which John employed in the opening line of the book of Revelation: "The revelation ["apocalupsis"] of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him, to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass..."). Now, by taking these definitions into account, we can more readily comprehend what Paul was saying. While it was true that the basic testimony, or glad tidings of Christ had been confirmed and established in them, forming a sure and steadfast foundation to stand upon, it was likewise necessary for them to wait patiently for the progressive and on-going revelation of Christ, through the operation of the Spirit, in order that they might be confirmed unto the end. Periodically, at the times appointed of the Father, the Spirit of Truth would pull back the veil, so to speak, and reveal new facets of the mind of Christ to the eyes of their understanding, and thereby enable them to walk together in the Spirit, yea, even upon the revelatory "stones in the midst of the fire". At such times, He would provide the needed materials to build upon the foundational truths of salvation, by imparting, not natural, but spiritual wisdom and knowledge sufficient to meet the demands of the day, as well as lead and guide them into all truth. If they would take heed to His Words, He would teach them not only the principles of the doctrine of Christ, but also how to go on unto spiritual maturity, or perfection (Heb. 6:1). However, it was only as they learned to wait for His coming. For it was during this waiting process that they would come to differentiate between what was of the mind of the flesh, and what was of the mind of the Spirit; where they would be given the opportunity to develop their spiritual discernment to higher and higher degrees of perfection. O, if we can but see this, it will help us beyond words! Waiting on Him to reveal His mind and will on every point makes all the difference in the world!

The words that bring this opening exhortation to its climax also possess in them a wealth of worth to our spiritual understanding, as they reveal the end result of this process. Hear ye them. "God is faithful, by Whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (verse 9). Noting that the word, "fellowship", is translated from the Greek word, "koinonia", meaning, "partnership, participation, intercourse, or benefaction", it is easy to see the connection (we might mention that the word, "benefaction", according to Webster's Dictionary, means, "a handsome donation or gift to a charity, club, organization, etc."). Simply put, this process of waiting for the revelatory directives of the Spirit will bring us into vital union and joint-participation with the Son, where we may share the benefits of the life and experience of sonship with Him. Beloved, we can rest assured that if the testimony of Christ has been confirmed in us, we have also been called into fellowship with the Son. And if this be so, then God will be

faithful to provide all the leadership and direction we will ever need to enter into this place of maturity (that is, provided we learn to wait for Him)! Praise His name!

THE CROSS OF WAITING

This brings us to our next point of emphasis. Without changing the subject, but rather building on it's premise, Paul makes this forceful proclamation: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment" (verse 10). Now, lest you miss the true intent of these words, please listen carefully to what we have to say. This is central to our theme. Be it known that this was not just the impassioned appeal of the apostle (concerning the subject he was preparing to address), but was also the emphatic declaration of the Spirit. Let it be engraven in your minds; let it be written in your hearts! **KNOW OF A SURETY THAT IT IS GOD'S ULTIMATE INTENTION THAT WE ALL BE PERFECTLY AND COMPLETELY JOINED TOGETHER IN THE SAME MIND AND JUDGMENT; THAT IT IS HIS PURPOSE TO BRING US INTO AN ABSOLUTE HARMONY OF THOUGHT AND SPEECH IN ALL THINGS.** Not just in a few things, dear friends; but in ALL things! Can you believe that? If it were not possible, he would have never expressed it this way. Can you envision how such a thing might be? Picture for a moment an entire body of believers scattered all around this world, who are so united in spirit, so integrated in thought, and so attached to their divine Head, that when one receives a heavenly transmission, they all receive it simultaneously. When one speaks by the inspiration of the Spirit, they all either speak the same truth, or build upon it, without the need of conferring one with another. When one has a thought, they all share the same thought, without having to communicate verbally with each other (or even on the internet!). Their judgments are without human error, their discernments are in perfect accord. Imagine a people without division, schism, or discord of any form, a people who have but one common consciousness, one inspired mind between them all, and you will understand what Paul was saying. We have become so accustomed to our differences, it is hardly imaginable. We have become so used to offering our pre-programmed excuses (such as, "Well, no two people believe exactly alike on every issue..."), until we are almost satisfied with them. In fact, some think that it has to be this way, until "the rapture" occurs! Nevertheless, it is still one of God's primary objectives...and He will not change His mind about it (it is we who must change; and change we shall! The fire will see to that)!

Having brought this glorious vision to their attention, and having reminded them that this was the desired state for which they had been apprehended, Paul then precedes to address one of the chief problems in their midst, namely, partiality and sectarianism (verses 11-17). As you may recall, some of them had begun to denominate themselves into different groups, saying: "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, etc.", and thus set themselves at variance. (While it is tempting to make a rabbit-trail departure from the course of our presentation, and discuss this particular "mountain" in greater detail, we will restrain ourselves for now. Suffice us to say that this is still a major reason why God's people are divided). One thing was certain, however, and that was that even if certain among them

did want to go back to playing "follow the leader" (as had been their custom in Hellenism, i.e. "I am of Plato, I am of Aristotle", etc.), Paul would have no part of it! He would not allow them to think that there was any benefit or advantage to come from this; and neither would he give them grounds upon which to build. Couldn't they see how this line of reasoning actually undermined and contested the very purpose for which they had been called? Couldn't they see how this was but one more of Adam's "wise" ideas, based on principles which contradicted the very nature of Christ? You would think that this would be one subject on which they all would have been in perfect agreement; and yet, much to Paul's chagrin, they were not! With this, he says, "For Christ sent me...to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent" (verses 17-19). The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament more accurately renders the tenses. It gives it this way: "For Christ sent me...to announce the glad tidings; not in wisdom of word, that be not made void the cross of the Christ. For the word of the cross to those (who are in the process of) perishing is foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is power of God. For it has been written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the understanding of the understanding ones I will set aside". In these short words, Paul was basically telling them that regardless of what they might have been expecting of him, or to whom they might have been comparing him, he had not been called to build himself a following, he was not attempting to impress anyone with his oratorical skills or eloquence, and he was not interested in entering into long, drawn out philosophical debates (as did their previous leaders), in order to convince and win them over to his way of thinking. He was simply sent to preach the gospel, and let God do the rest. At the same time, however, he was also pointing out the purpose of God to them, as well as reiterating and reminding them of the principle previously set forth in his opening line. How did we draw that conclusion? Well, notice that regardless of the translation, all three of these verses were spoken by Paul in the same breath, signified by the linking preposition, "for" (in other words, each line serves to clarify the one before it). Furthermore, we would point out that the word, "perish" in verse 18, and the word, "destroy" in verse 19, are the same word in the Greek text (#622). The parallel between these verses signifies a connection, in that they are joined together by a similar action. Ah, beloved, this is our Lord's aim, not so much to destroy individuals (for they are quite capable of doing that all by themselves), but rather, to destroy the wisdom of the wise. It is a fact that if men are perishing, it is because of their lack of the right kind of knowledge (Hos. 4:6). Their minds are filled with all kinds of man-made proverbs and principles, ideas and theories, axioms and maxims (even mountain folklore and superstitions), much of which may be very sound and logical from a practical standpoint, and perhaps even applicable in certain situations, but not divinely inspired. Therefore, God is bent on defeating the so-called wisdom of this age in us, as well as in every man. He is determined to overpower that wisdom which springs forth from the heart of man, and thereby, turn every one of us from our wayward course. And just how does He go about doing this? By the word, or message, or principle of the cross! This is a wonderful thing to consider, to say the very least; but it is even more wonderful when we realize that this revolutionary process has already begun! Slowly but surely, definitely and deliberately, He is dissolving the understanding of the seemingly

"prudent", by the simplicity of the cross...and He has started the work in us! Hallelujah! This should give us reason to shout! Now, when we begin to contemplate the word of the cross, our first impression should naturally be of the atoning work of our Lord, which was carried out by way of crucifixion. This is, by far, the most important aspect of the cross, and what actually gave meaning to the cross, in that it provided a way for all men to be saved. Without it, the cross would have just been another cruel form of execution. But because of it, it represents the one and only passageway into the presence of God. There is no other! No doubt, to suggest to the rational, natural thinking man that the redemption of mankind depended on someone dying disgracefully upon a cross seems like absolute and utter foolishness to him. He cannot understand why redemption should be necessary in the first place; and even if it were, he cannot see how such an obvious display of weakness and impotence could possibly accomplish anything to that effect. But those of us who are already in the process of being saved, who have had the eyes of our understanding enlightened by the holy Spirit of Truth, understand that it is the very radiant, transforming power of God! We know that this simple message, when quickened by the Spirit, has within it the power to reduce men to repentance, to change the way men think. We know this, because we are living proof of it! Did not our hearts burn within us, when first we heard our redemption story? Did not He reduce all of our strong arguments and defenses to cinders by the loving, fiery "breath of His nostrils"? In that brief, blessed moment, He took us from the realm of the perishing, and into the process of salvation, by simply revealing truth, and nothing but the truth, to these troubled hearts of ours! Praise the Lord! He crossed out our former way of thinking, and replaced it with the mind of Christ; and in so doing, He caused the mountains of man-made logic to flow down between our ears!

However, it is important that we keep in mind that salvation is a process. The work is still on-going, as we follow on to know the Lord, and changes are still taking place daily. He is progressively renewing our minds! But now that we have begun this process (or rather, now that this process has begun in us), there is something else that must be taken into consideration, which the world (and many in the church) considers equally as foolish; and that is, what the cross symbolizes. For, you see, this is the crux of the cross for the true believer. The cross speaks to us of restriction; of restraint; of being totally and completely surrendered to the mind and will of the Father. It speaks of total abandonment of one's own life, in order that God's purpose might be fully carried out...and beloved, we must needs see that this surrender begins in the mind. Was it merely coincidental that Jesus endured the agonies of the cross on a hill called Golgotha...being translated, the place of the skull? Was it without profound implications? Surely not. Therefore, as believers, when we speak of the word of the cross, we should naturally understand that we are not just reflecting upon an event which initiated our salvation; we are referring to that which perpetuates it. We are referring to the cross principle; the principle of waiting, patiently waiting, for the quickening of the Spirit.

Many people have no problem accepting the historical application of the cross. They have already crossed that "mountain", by the help of the Lord. They have admitted that they need a Saviour; and that there is none other but Christ Jesus. They are not ashamed to confess Him before men, and they are not ashamed of His cross. In fact, they will proudly

wear their pretty little gold pieces around their necks, or on their lapels, in honor of that old rugged cross. But to bear the cross in the place of the skull? To be restricted in the activities of the mind? To be restrained from passing one's own judgments, from forming one's own conclusions? How utterly foolish! According to the average christian, God is so busy running the universe, He hasn't the time to spend on our petty problems. Besides, they feel that He has given us the Scriptures as a general guide in life, to interpret and apply as we see fit (whenever they seem relevant to us). Their philosophy is that since our conversion, He has left it up to each one of us to make our own decisions in life; and therefore, it is our responsibility to amass as much wisdom as we can, on as many subjects as are obtainable, and from as many sources as are available, in order to strengthen our faculties of discernment, and to make the best decisions possible. To wait for divine direction would be an absolute waste of time (not to mention an infringement upon their "rights" to free choice)! This disdainful attitude is reflected by the fact that instead of denying themselves, and waiting upon the Lord for true wisdom and revelation on matters of importance, they would rather deluge their minds with the counsel of the carnal. They would prefer to indulge themselves on the wit and wisdom of their favorite newspaper columnists, talk show hosts, or other worldly-wise philosophers; to spend hours upon end listening to or reading the "learned" advice of the so-called "professionals"; to mold their mental "mountains" from these oftentimes conflicting opinions; and then be at liberty to make their determinations at their own discretion, rather than to consult the Lord, and sit in His "waiting room" for one minute (this would mean that they would have to acknowledge His will, once He made it known...and then be obliged to accept it)! Isn't that the truth? They can tell you all day long what "so-and-so" thinks about a subject; and they can quote from a long list of "authorities"; but they haven't a clue as to what the mind of God might be!

As applicable as it was then, Paul's proclamation still rings true today. "Where is your wise man now, your man of learning, or your subtle debater---limited every one of them, to this passing age? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. As God in His wisdom ordained, the world failed to find Him by it's wisdom, and He chose to save those who have faith by the folly of the Gospel. Jews look for miracles, Greeks look for wisdom; but we proclaim Christ---yes, Christ nailed to the cross; and though this is a stumblingblock to Jews and folly to Greeks, yet to those who hear His call, Jews and Greeks alike, HE IS THE POWER OF GOD AND THE WISDOM OF GOD" (verses 20-24, NEB). In man's relentless pursuit of truth, he overlooks the obvious. While searching the world over for answers to his perplexing problems, Wisdom stares him in the face. The ancient error of the Greeks remains the same among those who are still being influenced by the current Hellenistic teachings and philosophies being circulated in our day (and, believe us, they are still around, having infiltrated every branch of modern culture and society); to wit, while they seek wisdom independently, in hopes that it will eventually lead them to God (or at least, perchance, find it's way into divine purpose), they fail to recognize that WISDOM IS A PERSON. And though Wisdom came disguised as folly, and God's Power came concealed in weakness, He was (and is), nevertheless, wiser and stronger than the conventional wisdom of men. THIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN GOD'S WAY. He takes "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise...the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base

things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence" (verses 27-29). We ask: was not this evidenced in the days of His flesh? At twelve years old, with no formal education, our Lord puzzled the rabbis in the temple with His exceptional understanding (Lk. 2:41-47); in manhood, He amazed the multitudes with His inspired oratory (Jn. 7:15). Their response was, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned"? Indeed, how? If we may, we would like the privilege of answering that: He knew how to screen His thoughts, watch His words, and wait on the Spirit for unction!

Be it known that as the pattern Son, Jesus experienced the discipline of the cross long before He ever went to Calvary. Throughout His earthly sojourn, He learned the importance of waiting on the Spirit, for the Spirit to give Him understanding. No matter how strong the urge, He refused to think like other men, to be conformed to this world. He gave Himself completely over to the mind of the Spirit, without being governed by the powers of human deduction, or without being led by the impression of His senses. His testimony was, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these doeth the Son likewise" (Jn. 5:19). He had ascended to His rightful position on Mount Zion, with the seal of God in His forehead! He was crowned with righteous judgment! Therefore, when the scribes and Pharisees tried to catch Him in His words, He was already on top of the situation! With just a few choice words, He left them baffled and speechless! Their seemingly unconquerable "mountains" of Talmudic traditions and teachings melted down like hot wax before His presence, and their best-laid schemes went up in smoke (you might say that He just "burned them up", huh)! What happened, you ask? Why, the Lamb passed judgment from Zion, that's what! He set their little "world" on fire!

NOTHING BUT THE CROSS

With these things fresh on his mind, it is no great wonder why Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (2:1-2). Certainly, this beloved brother understood the principle! He knew that if he would sequester his thoughts, accepting only those which came via the cross; and if he would keep his spiritual eye focused upward, and not be distracted by what his natural mind might tell him, the Lord would be faithful to provide all the wisdom and discernment he could possibly need to instruct this need-stricken people. God would breathe heavenly answers for their earthly dilemmas, and would melt down all the mental obstacles which loomed up before him, if only Paul would "be patient therefore unto the coming of the Lord"! This was imperative to his mission!

Now, in case you think that we are reading too much into this "word of the cross", or perhaps are wrongly associating the principle of the cross with the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, we urge you to read the rest of chapter 2. It speaks for itself. Over the years, we have heard some very sincere folks say, "You should stick to the simplicity of the

Gospel, the basic message of salvation, and leave all that 'revelation' business alone. Remember, Paul said that he purposed to preach about nothing but the cross". Well, we don't want to seem contentious, but that is not exactly true. What he actually said was that he determined not to know anything, or to be consciously aware of anything, except the cross. But isn't that saying the same thing? Not at all. Certainly, while he was specifically addressing the unregenerate, or those who were still in the "infant" stage, he would stick with the "milk" of foundational teachings; but if you will recall, this was the same apostle who publicly expounded on the order of Melchizedek, the experience of the third heaven, the adoption of sonship, and many other such things which even Peter said were "hard to be understood", and of which "those who are unlearned and unsettled wrest, as they do also the other scriptures" (II Peter 3:16)! You see, the problem with those who think we should only preach about the cross is that they have just not read far enough! They have obviously not read Paul's next lines: "Howbeit, we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor the of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory...Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (verses 6-8, 12- 13). In other words, when he was among those who had "come of age", who had likewise learned the cross principle of waiting, he freely spake with them in another language. The terminology he employed while speaking this ancient "mystery language" was quite familiar to them, because the Spirit had already melted down certain opposing aspects of the old mentality, and revealed it unto them by way of experience; but to the "princes" and wise men of this world, to those who still resorted to their own understanding, it was like a foreign language. Despite all of their learning and wisdom, and despite their heads full of knowledge, they just could not comprehend what he was saying! Why was this? Because it takes the Spirit to reveal the things of the Spirit! "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (v. 14). This is true with all of us. As long as we try to see things through Adam's "eyes", from the human perspective, we will never see truth. However, once the Spirit reveals something to you, you know it! And you can immediately relate with others who have been taught the same. This is how the Spirit is bringing us into the same mind and judgment!

(Wuest's translation of verse 6 certainly gives us something to think about. It reads, "There is a wisdom, however, which we are in the habit of speaking among those who are spiritually mature, but not a wisdom of this present age or even a wisdom of the rulers of this age who are in the process of being liquidated...". Considering our topic of discussion, this is an interesting choice of words, wouldn't you say)?

Now, if you have been following along in your Bibles, we would like you to go back and notice something that Paul just happened to "squeeze" in between verses 8 and 11. "But as it is written, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of

man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (verses 9-10). Does this sound familiar? Of course it does! This brings us full circle to the passage we opened our message with from Isaiah 64! Do we think that Paul had this "mountain melting" process in mind when he inserted this quotation? Most definitely! Why else would he have used it here, if it were not the perfect metaphor?

Beloved, as is quite often the case, there are many other things we would like to expound upon at this point; but because of the brevity of space, they will have to wait. Our main intention in this message has been to establish a principle, to draw attention to the operation of God through the Spirit, and to show that God is even now consuming and destroying the man of sin by "the spirit of His mouth", and by "the brightness of His coming". Can we not see that God is currently liquidating and bringing to nought the wisdom of the wise in a very steady and systematic way? Can we not see that He is changing the way we think, one "mountain" at a time, and replacing it with the mind of Christ? We can either hasten the work by cooperating with Him, and waiting patiently for His "coming"; or we can learn the hard way. But He will accomplish what He set out to perform! You can settle that in your mind now!

We needn't expect the worldly-minded or the carnal to understand what is happening in us now...their day will come soon enough. Besides, they can't figure us out, anyway! "He that is spiritual judgeth (discerns) all things, yet he himself is judged of no man" (v. 15). Because of the peculiar dealings of God, and the principles upon which He is teaching us to walk, we are like aliens from another planet to them! However, when God has thoroughly judged His house, and the mystery of God is finished, there shall stand with the Lamb a company of mature ones high atop Mt. Zion, with seals in their foreheads (Rev. 14:1). They shall have apprehended that for which also they were apprehended, yea, even the mind of Christ. When this happens, a new dispensation shall begin for this world; a new government shall be established; and then shall come to pass the long-awaited prophecy of Obadiah, "But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness...and saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau (the flesh); and the kingdom shall be the Lord's" (verses 17, 21)! So be it!

to be continued...

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