

Andrew Murray:

My preaching was not in persuasive words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among the perfect: yet a wisdom not of this world; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which none of the rulers of this world knoweth. But unto us God revealed it through the Spirit. The things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God, But we received, not the spirit which is of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us by God; which things also we speak, not in the word which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth. Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things. -1 Cor.2:4-15.

In this passage Paul contrasts the spirit of the world and the Spirit of God. The point in which the contrast specially comes out is in the wisdom or knowledge of the truth. It was in seeking 'knowledge that man fell. It was in the pride of knowledge that heathenism had its origin; 'professing themselves to be wise, they became fools' (Rom. 1: 22). It was in wisdom, philosophy, and the search after truth, that the Greeks sought their glory. It was in the knowledge of God's will, the form of the knowledge and of the truth in the law' (Rom.2: 17-20), that the Jew made his boast. And yet when Christ, the wisdom of God, appeared on earth, Jew and Greek combined to reject Him. Man's wisdom, whether in possession of a revelation or not, is utterly insufficient for comprehending God or His wisdom. As his heart is alienated from God, so that he does not love or do His will, so his mind is darkened that he cannot know Him aright. Even when in Christ the light of God in its Divine love shone upon men, they knew it not, and saw no beauty in it.

In the Epistle to the Romans, Paul had dealt with man's trust in his own righteousness, and its insufficiency. To the Corinthians, especially in the first three chapters, he exposes the insufficiency of man's wisdom. And that not merely when it was a question of discovering God's truth and will, as with the Greeks; but even where God had revealed it, as with the Jews, man was incapable of seeing it without a Divine illumination, the light of the Holy Spirit. The rulers of this world, Jew and Gentile, had crucified the Lord of glory because they knew not the wisdom of God. In writing to believers at Corinth, and warning them against the wisdom of the world, Paul is not dealing with any heresy, Jewish or heathen. He is speaking to believers, who had fully accepted his gospel of a crucified Christ, but who were in danger, in preaching or hearing the truth, to deal with it in the power of human wisdom. He reminds them that the truth of God, as a hidden spirit mystery, can only be apprehended by a spiritual revelation. The rejection of Christ by the Jews had been the great proof of the utter incapacity of human wisdom to grasp a Divine revelation, without the spiritual internal illumination of the Holy Spirit. The Jews prided themselves on their attachment to God's word, their study of it, their conformity to it in life and conduct. The issue proved that, without their being conscious of it, they utterly misunderstood it, and rejected the very Messiah whom they thought they were waiting for and trusting in. Divine revelation, as Paul expounds it in this chapter, means three things. God must make known in His word what He thinks and does. Every preacher who is to communicate the message, must not only be in possession of the truth, but continually be taught by the Spirit how to speak it. And every hearer needs the inward illumination: it is only as he is a spiritual man, with his life under the rule of the Spirit, that his mind can take in spiritual truth.

As we have the mind, the disposition of Christ, we can discern the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. This teaching is what the Church in our days, and each believer, specially needs. With the Reformation the insufficiency of man's righteousness, of his power really to fulfil God's law, obtained universal recognition in the Reformed Churches, and in theory at least is everywhere accepted among Evangelical Christians. The insufficiency of man's wisdom has by no means obtained as clear recognition. While the need of the Holy Spirit's teaching is, in a general way, willingly admitted, it will be found that neither in the teaching of the Church, nor in the lives of believers, has this blessed truth that practical and all-embracing supremacy without which the wisdom and the spirit of this world will still assert their power.

The proof of what we have said will be found in what Paul says of His own preaching: 'Our preaching was not in man's wisdom, but in the Spirit; that your faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.' He is not writing, as to the Galatians, of two gospels, but of two ways of preaching the one gospel of Christ's cross. He says that to preach it in persuasive words of man's wisdom, produces a faith that will bear the mark of its origin; it will stand in the wisdom of man. As long as it is nourished by man and means, it may stand and flourish. But it cannot stand alone or in the day of trial - A man may, with such preaching, become a believer, but will be a feeble believer. The faith, on the other hand, begotten of a preaching in the Spirit and power, stands in the power of God. The believer is led by the preaching, by the Holy Spirit Himself, past man, to direct contact with the living God: his faith stands in the power of God. As long as the state of the great majority of our church members, notwithstanding such an abundance of the means of grace, is so feeble and sickly, with

so little of the faith that stands in the power of God, mighty to overcome the world, to purify the heart, and to do the greater works, we cannot but fear that it is because too much, even of our true gospel preaching, is more in the wisdom of man than in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. If a change is to be effected both in the spirit in which our preachers and teachers speak, and our congregations listen and expect, it must commence, I am sure, in the personal life of the individual believer.

We must learn to fear our own wisdom. 'Trust in the Lord with thy whole heart, and lean not to thine own understanding.' Paul says, to believers: 'If any man thinketh that he is wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise' (I Cor.3:18). When Scripture tells us that 'they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh,' this includes the understanding of the flesh, the fleshly mind of which Scripture speaks. Just as in the crucifixion of self I give up my own goodness, my own strength, my own will to the death, because there is no good in it, and, look to Christ by the power of His life to give me the goodness, and the strength, and the will which is pleasing to God, so it must be very specially with my wisdom Man's mind is one of his noblest and most God-like faculties, But sin rules over it and in it. A man may be truly converted, and yet not know to what an extent it is his natural mind with which he is trying to grasp and hold the truth of God. The reason that there is so much Bible reading and teaching which has no power to elevate and sanctify the life is simply this: it is not truth which has been revealed and received through the Holy Spirit.

This holds good, too, of truth which has once been taught us by the Holy Spirit, but which, having been lodged in the understanding, is now held simply, by the memory.' Manna speedily loses its heavenliness, when stored up on earth. Truth received from heaven loses its Divine freshness, unless there every day be the anointing with fresh oil. The believer needs, day by day, hour by hour, to feel that there is nothing in which the power of the flesh, of nature, can assert itself more insidiously, than in the activity of the mind or reason in its dealing with the Divine word. This will make him feel that he must continually seek, in Paul's language, 'to become a fool.' He needs, each time he has to do with God's word, or thinks of God's truth, in faith and teachableness, to wait for the promised teaching of the Spirit. He needs ever again to ask for the circumcised ear: the ear in which the fleshly power of the understanding has been removed, and in which the spirit of the life in Christ Jesus within the heart listens in the obedience of the life, even as Christ did. To such the word will be fulfilled: 'I thank Thee, Father, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.'

The lesson for all ministers and teachers, all professors and theologians, all students and readers of the Bible, is one of deep and searching solemnity. Have we felt, have we even sought to feel, that there must be perfect correspondence between the objective spiritual contents of the revelation, and the subjective spiritual apprehension of it on our part? between our apprehension of it and our communication of it, both in the power of the Holy Spirit? between our communication of it, and the reception by those to whom we bring it? Would God that over our theological halls and our training institutes, over the studies of our commentators and writers, our ministers and teachers, there were written those words of Paul: 'The things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God: unto us God revealed them through the Spirit.' Would that our ministers could influence and train their congregations to see, that not the amount, or the clearness, or the interest of the Bible knowledge received will decide the blessing and the power that it brings, but the measure of real dependence on the Holy Spirit. 'Them that honour Me. I will honour:' nowhere will this word be found more true than here. The crucifixion of self and all its wisdom, the coming in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling, as Paul did, will most assuredly be met from above with the demonstration Of the Spirit and of power.

.Believer! it is not enough that the light of Christ shines on you in the Word, the light of the Spirit must shine in you. Each time you come to the word, in study, in hearing a sermon, or reading a religious book, there ought to be, as distinct as your intercourse with the external means, a definite act of self-abnegation, denying your own wisdom, and, yielding yourself in faith to the Divine Teacher. Believe very distinctly that He dwells within you. He seeks the mastery, the sanctification of your inner life, in entire surrender and obedience to Jesus. Rejoice to renew your surrender to Him. Reject the spirit of the world which is still in you, with its wisdom and self-confidence; come, in poverty of spirit, to be led by the Spirit that is of God. 'Be not fashioned according to the world,' with its confidence in the flesh, and self, and its wisdom; 'but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God.' It is a transformed, renewed life, that, only wants to know God's perfect will, that will be taught by the Spirit. Cease from your own wisdom; wait for the wisdom in the inward parts which God has promised: you will increasingly be able to testify of the things which have not entered into the hearts of men to conceive: 'God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit.'

O God! I bless Thee for the wondrous revelation of Thyself in Christ crucified, the wisdom of God, and the power of God. I bless Thee, that while man's wisdom leaves him helpless in presence of the power of sin, and death, Christ crucified proves that He is the wisdom of God by the mighty redemption He works as the power of God. And I bless Thee, that what he wrought and bestows as an Almighty Saviour is revealed within us by the Divine

The Revelation of the Spirit

light of Thine Own Holy Spirit.

0 Lord! we beseech Thee, teach Thy Church that wherever Christ, as the power of God, is not manifested, it is because He is so little known as the wisdom. of God, in the light in which the indwelling Spirit alone reveals Him. Oh! teach Thy Church to lead each child of God to the personal teaching and revelation of Christ within.

Show us, 0 God ! that the one great hindrance is our own wisdom, our imagination that we can understand the Word and Truth of God. Oh! teach us to become fools that we may be wise. May our 'whole life become one continued act of faith, that the Holy Spirit will surely do His work of teaching, guiding and leading into the truth. Father ! Thou gavest Him that He might reveal Jesus in His glory within us ; we wait for this. Amen.