

GOD'S SECRET

Read: 1 Pe 1:10-12 Text: 1 Co 2.6-10

1: God's wisdom

The gospel: a message of wisdom
but not of this age
recognised by believers

2: God's secret wisdom

That's been hidden
but destined for our glory
that no rulers of this age understood

3: God's wisdom revealed by the Spirit

And so: Stick to God's wisdom!

I heard a great true story this week. During the 2nd World War, a guy worked in the underground resistance movement in Holland against the Nazis. A lot of his work was secret. If the Germans found out about it he was dead.

And at one time he had a particular secret. He was hiding Jews in the house to keep them safe. But in the middle of that, there was a knock at the door. He opened the door and there were a couple of German soldiers standing there, in their uniforms, carrying their guns. And they had a question for him, was he hiding any Jews?

So what should he do? He had this secret, and he didn't want them to know about it.

He finally made up his mind and said, 'Yes. I'm hiding Jews.'

The secret was out. ... Now they knew.

And they just laughed. Good joke. They didn't believe him - he wouldn't be telling them he was hiding Jews if he really was hiding Jews. And they headed off to the next house down the street to ask the same question.

And God has a secret too. He has the answer to all the world's problems. And he hasn't been keeping it to himself either. He's been telling the world about it from the very beginning. But do you think most people believe him? And they don't! They laugh and move on to the next possibility.

Point 1

And as we've seen from this letter in the last few weeks, one of the problems the Corinthians had was that they didn't think highly enough of God's secret either. They thought the wisdom of their day was pretty good. But the wisdom of their day said it was everyone for themselves - survival of the fittest. And you had to be the best at whatever you did without worrying about anyone else - look out for number 1. And keeping up with the latest catchy ideas was more important than the truth.

But of course we're like that too. We take on ideas from the people around us – we accept them as gospel even when they're not. Australia tells us that sport is everything, and so we're inclined to give sport a bigger part of our lives than it really deserves. We don't call it today's wisdom, we just know that's the way things are.

Australia tells us that money and lifestyle are everything, and so we're inclined to believe that as well. We make our choices in life by how much we'll get out of it, how much money we'll earn, how it will improve our lifestyle.

Australia tells us that fun and pleasure are everything. And so we find ourselves sacrificing the things that are really important and not giving them the time they deserve, for the things that are more fun, no matter how superficial they might be.

We give too much importance to the wisdom of the world around us as well.

But the bible comes with a different wisdom. The bible brings the gospel. It talks about how to be saved from sin. It talks about what God's doing, and what he expects us to do. It challenges us to stop listening so much to the world around us, and live life God's way instead.

And this isn't the wisdom we usually hear from the people around us. They ask us how we can even know there is a God. How we can possibly believe a book as old as the Bible and expect it to be relevant today? They wonder why we'd even want to be reading the bible when we could be out enjoying the sun, or the surf, or be out playing footy or golf.

But the bible gives us the answers to life's biggest questions. And it tells us the way Jesus approached life - the way we should be living it as well.

And so it turns out that the people who really know what life's all about aren't necessarily the surfers on the world circuit, or the footballers representing Australia, or the music stars and movie stars that are winning Grammys and Oscars after all. Some of them do know what life's all about but not because they're the world's top surfers, footballers, rock stars, or movie stars, but because they're Christians. It's Christians who really know what life's about. They've accepted the gospel. They've come to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. They're wanting to live life God's way.

Point 2

And that's God's open secret - the gospel. And like that guy in Holland who told the Nazis that he was hiding Jews, it's out in the open. It's been made known to the public from the very beginning, maybe not all the details, but at least the general plan. But people, generally, just haven't believed it's true.

The gospel's the mystery God has slowly revealed down through the centuries, until Jesus walked the earth.

And possibly we all like a good murder mystery. But actually, the gospel isn't that kind of mystery. It's not a puzzle that we can work out on our own. It's not a mystery where we can collect all the clues and find the murderer before the movie or book tells us who it is. It's the kind of mystery that no one would be able to work out if God didn't tell us how it worked. And so no one knew how the gospel was going to work out in Jesus Christ apart from the snippets that God showed to the prophets. What does Peter say? 'The prophets searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. ... Even angels long to look into these things.'

They could only know what God had told them.

On the other hand, in every age God has told enough so that people could be saved.

And this isn't God's contingency plan either. It's not as if Adam and Eve's sin threw a spanner in the works of God's plan and so he quickly had to put together Plan B, some way of getting out of the mess that they'd thrown things into. It's not as if God was having to plan on the run and was only able to tell us a bit at a time because he only knew a bit at a time himself. This is a plan that God had worked out even before he began creating the world at the beginning of time. In his sovereign will, sin was already factored into God's plan before Adam and Eve ate the fruit, before Satan entered the garden, before creation, before time even began. It was there on the blueprint even before construction started. Serving his ultimate glory, and the ultimate glory of the children of God.

But because people aren't naturally inclined to believe the gospel, it does mean that as we talk to them about it that we shouldn't expect them to see it straight away as obvious. *We* see the sense in it, and so we sometimes expect them to see the sense in it straight away too. But they've probably grown up believing something else is obvious. They've spent however-many years believing something else was true. And now we're asking them to challenge that and believe something we're telling them about. In fact, you can imagine that if the guy telling the Nazis about the Jews in his house started trying to convince them that it was true, they'd believe his story even less. 'Guys, I am hiding Jews in the house! They're in the cellar! They're in the attic! Come and get them!'

Point 3

And that doesn't mean that we shouldn't try to convince people the gospel's true, but it does mean that something else is needed as well.

It's like when you're trying to understand something and it's just not coming together. Maybe you're at school, and the teachers teaching something that's obvious to them, and it's obviously clear to everyone else, but you're still trying to work out what they're on about, just not game to admit it in front of everyone else.

Or maybe you're on the jobsite. Something on the plan just doesn't seem to work. The architect or engineer thought it did, and it got through council. But it's just not making sense to you.

And then something clicks, and it's clear as daylight. It was there all the time. But there was just one piece that hadn't slotted into place in your mind. One piece of the puzzle that wouldn't fit and was stopping you from seeing the whole picture.

And in the case of the gospel, the something else, the final piece in the puzzle, is the Holy Spirit. We might think that we accepted the gospel, but we've only accepted it because the Holy Spirit has opened our hearts and convinced us that it's true. Look at verse 14, 'The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they're foolishness to him, and he can't understand them, because they're spiritually discerned.'

And so when we're living the Christian life for all to see - when we're sharing the gospel with others, trying to show them that it's true - the other thing we need to be doing is praying that God will work in their hearts by his Holy Spirit, open their eyes and minds so that they can see the truth. Without that the gospel's just a good story, another possibility, a good thing for society, something that's been good for you but not necessarily everyone else, something for the kids, whatever. But when the Holy Spirit opens their hearts and minds, then they see it for what it is, the truth, the way things are, the only solution to everything we need.

Conc

You know, there are some pretty well-known secret societies in the world. You probably think of the Ku Klux Klan, the Mafia, or the Freemasons. Looking on the internet, it seems that secret societies have been around for almost as long as time itself. And there seems to be a secret society for everything. There's even a 'Secret Society for the abolition of secret societies'. Although their secrets aren't all that secret after all.

And the gospel is a secret too, or a mystery, that hasn't been all that secret either. The beginnings of it is already there in the 3rd chapter of the bible. It's developed throughout the Old Testament, and finally

revealed in all its glory in the New. It's the truth about the way things really are. It's just not generally accepted as that because people can't see it.

Which leaves us with the challenge to do three things.

Firstly, in the world of information and ideas that we live in, not to accept and live by anything that goes against the Bible.

Secondly, not to expect that people will see it as the obvious truth straight away as we share it with them.

And thirdly, as we keep talking with them anyway, to pray that the Holy Spirit works in their hearts and minds so that they can see the truth, so that they look to Jesus in faith, and be saved.