**Bible Study July 20th 2023 – Gifts of the Holy Spirit part 7- Word of wisdom**

Over the next two weeks we are going to look at the first two gifts in the list of spiritual gifts in **1 Corinthinas 12.8-10** – the word/utterance of wisdom and the word/utterance of knowledge.
The word of wisdom, like all the other gifts in this passage, is a supernatural gift. It doesn’t refer to wisdom which someone has acquired through many years of experience. It is not the sort of wisdom that someone is able to gain by reading the scriptures (**Proverbs 1.2-6**). This is supernatural wisdom that is given for a particular situation.

Also, like all the other gifts, it is given “for the common good” (**v7**).
**James 1. 5-8** we are told that if we lack wisdom we can ask and God will give it to us. Sometimes God will give us wisdom personally so that we know what to do in a particular situation.
e.g. a few years ago, a group of teenagers started congregating at the side of our house to smoke and drink. It was a comfortable little sun trap and I can understand why they gathered there but when they left they would leave behind their bottles and cans. It was not doing my blood pressure any good; that was until a thought came into my mind: make it less comfortable. So, I planted some wild roses at the side of the house. We didn’t see them again!

If we ask God for wisdom He will give it to us, however, a word of wisdom is not given to an individual for their own benefit but for the benefit of others. For this reason it is not called the gift of wisdom but “the word of wisdom”.

Probably the best way to explain what this gift is, is to look at some examples:

1. **1 Kings 3.12** – God gave Solomon a wise and discerning mind. In **v 16ff** when Solomon was able to resolve the dispute between the two women as to who was the true mother of the child, the people stood in awe of the king and perceived that “the wisdom of God was in him” (v28). Not only did Solomon have the wisdom to write many proverbs but this was a flash of supernatural insight about how to resolve a seemingly impossible dispute. When he said, “Bring me a sword…Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other”, I believe that this was a word of wisdom from God. When one of the women was prepared to give up her child it revealed that she was the true mother.
2. We are now going to turn to two examples from the person Whose wisdom was even greater than Solomon’s (Luke 11.31).
**Matthew 22.15-22** - Jesus’ wise answer to the Pharisees and Herodians who were seeking to catch Him out with a trick question. If Jesus had said “Yes, you should pay tax to Caesar” He would have likely faced opposition from the Jewish people who resented Roman rule. Many Jews considered paying taxes to Caesar to be a sign of submission to a foreign power and viewed it as a betrayal of their identity and of their allegiance to God.
On the other hand, if Jesus had answered “no” and declared that it is not lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, He could have been accused of sedition and rebellion against the Roman authorities which could have led to Him being arrested and even executed prematurely.
However, Jesus demonstrates His wisdom by providing a third option. Instead of a direct yes or no answer He asks to see a denarius, a Roman coin used for paying taxes and asks whose inscription is on it. When they reply that it is Caesar’s, Jesus says “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s”. This answer both acknowledges the obligation to pay taxes while affirming that there is a higher allegiance which is owed to God. In **v22** it says that they marvelled. Surely that was because this answer came not from natural wisdom but from supernatural wisdom. They were seeking to trick Jesus with their question but Jesus was “aware of their malice” (**v18**) and saw the hypocrisy of their question.
3. Another example from Jesus’ ministry is **John 8.1-11**. When Jesus says in **v7** “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her” this word of wisdom displays profound insight which exposes the hypocrisy and self-righteousness of the woman’s accusers.
By challenging the accusers to examine their own hearts Jesus makes them aware of their own sinfulness. Jesus’ words show wisdom by redirecting the focus from judgement and condemnation to self-examination and mercy.
4. Jesus warned His disciples of the persecution that they were to face but He promised them that if they were brought before kings and governors the Holy Spirit would give them wise words to speak (**Luke 21.12-15; Mark 13.11**). **Acts 4.1-22** is an example of this. **V8** says that Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit gave him the words to speak when he needed them. The religious leaders had already experienced the wisdom of Jesus and so now when they heard the words of an uneducated fisherman they “wondered and recognised that these men had been with Jesus.” (**v13**)
5. Another example of a word of wisdom is James and the Jerusalem Council (**Acts 15.1-29**). A dispute arose in the early church concerning whether Gentile believers need to be circumcised and follow the law of Moses. The apostles and elders gathered in Jerusalem for the Jerusalem council to address this issue. James, the brother of the Lord, delivers a word of wisdom proposing a solution that balances the inclusion of Gentile believers while establishing some guidelines for their conduct. His words helped to bring unity and clarity (**Acts 15.13-22**). In the letter which was sent to the churches giving these instructions it says “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things…” This is an acknowledgement that the Holy Spirit was speaking through James.
6. When the Apostle Paul took the Gospel to Corinth there were many in that city who put great importance on human wisdom which was often expressed with great eloquence. Paul’s Gospel message to them was a word of wisdom – his message was Christ crucified. Read **1 Cor. 1.17-25**. To the wise Greek philosophers nothing seemed more foolish than a Messiah who was crucified on a cross; how could he save anyone? And yet this message was the power and wisdom of God.
Paul goes on to say, however, that even though his speech was not “in plausible (persuasive) words of wisdom” (**1 Cor.2.4**) that he did impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God that had been revealed through the Spirit (**1 Cor. 6-13**). This wisdom was imparted to the “mature” (**v6**) not to those who were unspiritual (**v14 & 3.1**). But to those who were spiritually mature enough to receive it Paul imparted words of wisdom, not “taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit” (**2.13**)
7. Paul told the Corinthians “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (**1 Cor. 2.2**) but that was not the focus of his message everywhere that he went. At Athens he “preached Jesus and the resurrection” (**Acts 17.18**). We are told that the city was full of idols and that his spirit was provoked with him (**v16**) but when they took hold of him and brought him to the Areopagus he didn’t just stand up and condemn their idolatry but God gave him a Gospel message that was a word of wisdom – **Acts 17.22ff**.