

# 1 Corinthians 2 Commentary-Wayne Barber

PREVIOUS **1st Corinthians**  
**Dr Wayne Barber**

NEXT

## Related Resource:

- [1 Corinthians 2 Commentary - Verse by Verse](#)

## Index to Sermons on this Page:

- [1 Corinthians 2](#) - Grow Up
- [1 Corinthians 2](#) - The Wisdom of God
- [1 Corinthians 2](#) - The Wisdom of God - 2

## 1 Corinthians 2 Grow Up

When Christians live as if they are lacking, they are still immature. They don't realize who they are and whose they are and what they receive when they receive Jesus Christ. As a result, they attach themselves to a man or they attach themselves to a gift as if they are always lacking. We are not lacking, and when we mature in Christ, we will detach ourselves from these things and attach ourselves to Christ and live in the fullness that He offers each of us.

One of the most difficult things I do is come up with a sermon topic. I have more struggles there than anything else. But when you study scripture, you take it verse by verse and the topic has got to surface out of what the scripture says, not out of what you want it to say. So studying on further, even into chapter 3, I want to entitle this study "Grow Up." I hope before we finish this you will understand what we are talking about. Just grow up.

You know, when Christians live as if they are lacking, they are still immature. They don't realize who they are and whose they are and what they receive when they receive Jesus Christ. As a result, they attach themselves to a man or they attach themselves to a gift as if they are always lacking. We are not lacking, and when we mature in Christ, we will detach ourselves from these things and attach ourselves to Christ and live in the fullness that He offers each of us.

### 1Cor 1 Review

Well, we finished 1Cor 1. As I finish each chapter I want to go back and review. Now I am going to do this quickly. I want to make sure that we are always couched in a context. So we will go over it and over it. It will even change some in the way we present it as we do that, because as it is becoming more and more familiar to us, you have got to see the context. Observation, interpretation, application.

In 1Cor 1:1 the apostle Paul just identifies himself. He wants them to know that he is Paul the believer, the apostle of Christ Jesus. But in verses 29 he forms a grid. And that grid is the way you look at the book. This grid shows you what a Christian really is. He calls it the church of God. If you are a believer, then this is what you should be living like. They weren't in Corinth, but this is what it is supposed to be. This is right side up.

The first thing he says in 1Cor 1:2 is that we are a purchased people. The church of God is made up of believers who are a purchased people. He says, "To the church of God [not man] which is at Corinth." That phrase, "church of God," is found in Acts 20:28 where it adds "purchased by His own blood." So the idea is we are not our own. We are His, purchased by His blood.

So if you are a believer, you realize that you don't have rights to yourself, but you have privileges in Him. You are bought by Him. You are owned by Christ. He lives in you to do a work through you. And that purpose overshadows everything else. We are a purchased people.

Right in line with that, we are a purposeful people. He says, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling." The word "sanctified" carries the meaning right on. It means that we have been set apart for His purpose. There is the purpose right there. We're purchased, and we have a purpose. That purpose is to be that vessel through which God can use us. The word "saint," by the way, is what you call somebody who has been sanctified. Hagiazo is the word for sanctified; hagios is the word saint. So when you look in the mirror in the morning, say "Good morning, Saint." You are

reminding yourself of the purpose you have in all eternity. You don't retire, you just re-fire. God wants to use you. As long as your heart is beating, you have a purpose. God purchased you. He is going to use you until the day He takes you home.

Well, the third thing we saw in this is they are a prayerful people. That is what a Christian is: a person who depends upon God. Prayer is always our dependence upon Him. It says in verse 2, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling [now look], "with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours." That little word "call" does not mean just when the kids are sick. It does not mean just when the income taxes are due, but it means constantly depending upon Him in everything. It is a present middle participle. Present tense means constantly as a lifestyle. Middle voice means no preacher has to stand up and make you depend upon him. That is what you do. That is who you are. You have been purchased. You have a purpose and you live prayerful, dependent upon Him for everything in your life.

Of course, two of the things you depend upon Him for are found in 1Cor 1:3, grace and peace. He says, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Grace to help you deal with your sin every day and the enablement to be and do what He wants you to do. Then peace gives you that enablement for your relationships, with Him first and then with others.

Fourthly, we discovered that believers everywhere are peculiar people. Now, I know some peculiar believers, but that is not what I am talking about. In all the race of humanity, we are peculiar in this sense: we live in a needy world but we have everything we need to exist here. We can make it through. You see, it is all in Christ who lives within us. He says in 1Cor 1:4-7, "I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in everything you were enriched in Him [then he narrows it down], in all speech and all knowledge,[that has to do with their assignment that God had given them], even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you."

Now, the problem in Corinth was it hadn't been confirmed through them yet. In them it had; Christ was there, and He was their completeness. Then 1Cor 1:7 says, "so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ." So we are a peculiar people living in the world, fully contained in Christ Jesus. We have everything we need within in Him and therefore, we can be content in whatever circumstance we find ourselves, knowing that Christ one day will be coming for us.

Also we learn as we look in that grid that believers everywhere are a protected people. Now this is in the sense of security. We are protected, but not from circumstances. We have to go through things that are difficult like everybody else, but we are protected in the sense that we are secure all the way until the day of Christ. It says in 1Cor 1:8, "who shall also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, he didn't say "sinless." He said "blameless." There is a big difference. Knowing that we are going to sin, but any sin that we commit after we have received the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior can threaten our rewards, but it cannot threaten our eternal security in Him. That is what we need to know, blameless in Him. No accusation. We are kept until the day of Christ Jesus.

In 1Cor 1:9 we find that we are a partaking people. We partake of Him. We have a resource. It says in 1Cor 1:9, "God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." Fellowship means to partake in Him. Now it means we partake in the sufferings as well as in all the other things that we partake from Him. He is our resource.

I am so excited that I could alliterate all those things. Normally I can't do that. But we see that the church of God, made up of believers, is a purchased, purposeful, prayerful, peculiar, protected and a partaking people. Now that is what we are supposed to be. That is how we are supposed to live. That gives the whole gamut of what it means to be a Christian.

Now, what is the problem? The problem is they weren't living that way in Corinth. So Paul starts off and says, "This is what you ought to be. Now let me talk to you about what you are not." In 1Cor 1:10 he says, "Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you are all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment." Remember, that word "division" is the word schisma and it means to rip or to tear something. There is nothing nice about it. He is really alluding to a division in Corinth. When you are living according to 1Cor 1:29 there is no division, but when you are not living that way, there will be division and that is what he is getting to.

As a matter of fact, it evidences itself in the fact that they were attaching themselves to preachers of the Word, good men with a great message. They were attaching themselves to men. It says in 1Cor 1:12, "Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas,' and 'I am of Christ.'" Can't you just see this. Paul was the originator of the church, the founder. Can't you see people going around saying, "I love you, Brother Paul"? "He is my favorite. Brother Paul is my favorite." I am sure Apollos who came in to succeed him really appreciated that bunch. "We really liked the former pastor more than we like the one we got now. He was just so good to us. Paul came over and just preached the Word to us, and we just love him." They excluded everybody else who didn't think the same way they thought.

"We like Brother Paul. We like him." Apollos was the one who came in after him and succeeded him. Here is the bunch who says, "Oh, no, no, no. We don't like Paul. We didn't like him because he was too hard to understand. We liked Apollos. He was more down on our level." Then you had a bunch of them who said, "We liked Simon Peter. He was sort of the unsung leader of the whole

Christian church of that day. We like him.” But then you had another group who was the hardest group and they said, “But we are of Christ.” Oh, buddy, watch out for that bunch. They had the right man, the right message, but the wrong motive. They didn’t have a clue. They were excluding everybody who didn’t see things like they saw them.

Paul said, “What are you doing attaching yourself to men?” They had torn the body of Christ apart. Paul immediately focuses in on this. This is the context. You have got to stay with the context. First of all he attacks their faulty logic in 1Cor 1:13. He says, “Has Christ been divided?” Come on. Do you realize when you attach yourself to a preacher you are lacking and claiming that preacher has something of Christ that you didn’t get. If you don’t have his message and if you don’t have all this together, if you can’t stay around him and attach yourself to him, then somehow you are incomplete. Paul said, “What do you mean? Is Christ divided? Did I get something you didn’t get? Did Apollos get something you didn’t get?” No, if you received Christ, you got it all.

Peter himself said it one time. He said, “We are writing to those who have received a like faith as unto ours. You didn’t get anything less or anything more. God is not a respecter of persons.” Paul said, “What are you doing going around as if Christ was divided, attaching yourself to preachers rather than attaching yourself to Christ?”

Secondly, he attacks the faulty leaders they are attaching themselves to, good men but faulty men. You see, faulty logic always leads you to faulty leaders and Paul puts himself right in front. He doesn’t pick on Apollos and Cephas. He puts himself right up in front. He says in 1Cor 1:13, “Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” He is saying, “Hey, guys, I am not God. What are you doing? What are you doing attaching yourself to me? I was one of the others. I was a foolish man for years until Jesus saved me.”

1Cor 1:14 says, “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius.” In baptism you make the statement of attaching yourself to Christ. At salvation, He attaches you to Him. In baptism you are making a public witness that you are living attached to Him. It doesn’t have anything to do with your salvation. It has everything to do with your witness. And Paul said, “You weren’t baptized into me. You didn’t attach yourself to me. You were baptized into Christ.” He uses that as a picture here to help them understand. He says, “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, that no man should say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other.”

I love his nonchalant attitude towards baptism because some people say it is essential to salvation. Is that right? Well, why in the world is he so nonchalant about it? He said, “I wasn’t called to baptize. I was called to preach the gospel.” The gospel doesn’t include baptism in the sense of water immersion, in the sense of salvation. Baptism comes next as a public witness of what we have just experienced in putting our faith into Jesus Christ.

He goes on and focuses in now on the message of men. He says, “Now, look. If you are going to put your faith into men, if you are going to attach yourself to men, you have got to understand something. The wisdom that a man comes up with is absolute foolishness when compared to the wisdom of the preaching of the cross. Now this is the key right here. He takes all the messages but he narrows it down to the preaching of the cross. And he said, “You find the most intelligent man on the face of this earth and you preach the message of the cross and that man is going to look at it and call it foolishness because in his mind, he doesn’t see himself as a sinner, especially if he is a wise man, a mighty man or a noble man,” as this comes up later on in 1Cor 1:26-27. You see, Paul says, “Hey, these people see that as foolishness.”

That is how foolish man really is. He would take the wisdom of the preaching of the cross and call it foolishness. That is how much a fool man really is. Now why would you want to attach yourself to men? That is his whole point.

1Cor 1:18 says the message of Jesus dying on a cruel cross is to them that are perishing foolishness. “For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

Then in 1Cor 1:19-31 he takes that message of the cross and makes it his center point here. The wisdom of God makes the wisdom of man just absolute stupidity. He just shames the wisdom of man with the preaching of the wisdom of the cross. In 1Cor 1:19 he quotes out of the Old Testament where God said He would destroy the wisdom of the wise and the counsel of the prudent or clever ones. Now, that was in a context of when God said, “Listen, you have got a big enemy coming in, but don’t you pay attention to man, you pay attention to Me.” What did the people do? They turned from God’s wisdom and turned to their own thinking and that is when God said, “I am going to destroy the wisdom of the wise and will destroy the wisdom of the clever and the prudent of that day.”

Well, in 1Cor 1:20 he points to the two people who make up that kind of wisdom in the world. There were only two groups, the Jews and the Gentiles. And so he points to them. First of all, he says where is the wise man today? That points to the Greek or the Gentile thinking and the foolishness of man’s wisdom. But then he says, “Where is the scribe?” That points to the Jewish people who thought they were wise. Then, in case he missed anybody, he says, “Where is the debater of this age?” He throws in the guy who just likes to argue in the barber shop. He says, “I just want to make something clear to you. All of this wisdom is foolishness to God. They think they are so smart.”

In 1Cor 1:21 he shows that as smart as they think they are, they couldn't even discover God and God's wisdom was all around them, in creation and in other things. They couldn't even discover God. As a matter of fact, Israel was God's idea to begin with. They didn't even come up with themselves. God came up with Israel. And he says their wisdom has never caused them to discover anything about God. God had to reveal Himself.

You see, the Jews were hung up in looking for a sign (1Cor 1:22), and the Greeks were hung up in trying to figure it all out. He said that is their whole problem. They can't receive the wisdom of the preaching of the cross.

In 1Cor 1:23-25 Paul shows that the message of the cross puts to shame all the wisdom of the Jew and of the Greek. Then in 1Cor 1:26-31 he closes the chapter and he says, "Now let me just ask you a question. Look around you. Look at your congregation. How many people in there are wise? How many people in there are mighty? How many people in there are noble?" He is not saying that God doesn't love these people. He is saying these are people who are wise in their own estimation, they are strong in their own strength, they are mighty in their own nobility and riches and they say they don't need Christ. And when you preach to them the foolishness of the cross, the message of the cross, they see it as repulsive. "What do you mean Jesus died? What do you mean the blood of this man cleanses me? I am not even a sinner! I am not lost!" They don't want to admit that they are lost. So the preaching of the cross is foolishness to the world.

Paul is saying, "Listen, if you ever attach yourself to man, this is the kind of wisdom he comes up with. Man laughs at the preaching of the cross. Why would you want to attach yourself to man? Any man that preaches the right message is the message that God has had to give to him." That is what Paul is saying. "Take me out of the lineup. What I preach to you, God gave to me. I wasn't smart enough to come up with it myself. This is a message that originated in the heart of God."

So the whole implication here is, why in the world would you attach yourself to men? Why would you act like little babies having to follow a man around just because a man preaches the message that you need to hear? Why don't you let the message drive you to Christ? Why don't you let the same message that drove him to Christ drive you to Christ and drive you to the cross and let you live in the fullness of what God has to offer you?

Remember the question he asks. He said, "Was I crucified for you? Were you baptized in my name?" He is still trying to remove his name from this list of people they have attached themselves to.

## Chapter 2

So we come into 1Cor 2:1. There are two things that I want you to see here. Paul takes them back to when he first came and established his ministry there at Corinth. This is so imperative. He said, "Hey, let me take you back, let me remind you of some things."

The first thing he does is, he says, "I came to you with a determination to only preach Christ and Him crucified. That is the only message I brought to you. That determination carried me the whole time I was there." This is significant because he is taking the attention away from himself and putting the attention back on Christ and back on the message. This is very, very key. If you are a preacher or a leader, remember that is your key. Never point to yourself, point back to Him. Keep taking people's mind off of you and putting their mind on Christ and putting their mind on the message.

There are many people who enjoy people attaching themselves to them. But the true person to whom God has given a message never pulls attention to himself. He puts the attention back on Christ and the one who is the center piece of the message.

Well, 1Cor 2:1-2 read, "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." That is a significant phrase. In defense of the fact that you never attach yourselves to him, Paul takes them back to when he first preached there at Corinth. He reminds them that his message was a message given by God. He said, "Now listen, when you go back, remember my method. Remember my method. Did I ever point to myself in my method? Did I ever do that? No, I didn't."

1Cor 2:1 again says, "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God." The phrase "superiority of speech or of wisdom" is the key. The term "superiority" comes from the term *huper*, which means above, and *echo*, to have or to hold. So together it means to take something that you know and hold it up over somebody, to act superior in your knowledge over other people.

Now Paul had the ability to do that. The apostle Paul was an intelligent man, probably the most intelligent person in all of the New Testament, other than Jesus. He had the ability to woo and wow them and all these other kind of things, but he didn't come that way. He had made a determination in his heart. He said, "Nothing I ever did pointed to me. Everything I did points to Him and His message. Why would you attach yourself to me?"

He didn't water down the gospel with his own opinions and intellect so as to make it more appealing to the Corinthian mind. Paul

knew what they would have liked. He knew. He knew exactly what they would have liked. He had been in those arenas before and he knew how to jump in. He knew how to use certain things to pull them to him and his wisdom, not to God and His message. He simply preached the message of the cross. He says, "Now why in the world would you attach yourself to me, because I never for one second drew attention to myself. I drew all the attention to Him. I only preached Christ. That was my method. I determined to do that."

Secondly, he says, "Now if you will remember back, my message never pointed to me. It pointed to Christ." Look in 1Cor 2:1 again. "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God." Now the word "proclaiming" is kataggello. Kata is an intensive; aggello is the idea of delivering a message but with openness and simplicity and plainness. That is what he said. "I don't think any of you could have missed it." That doesn't mean he didn't use illustrations. It meant that whatever illustrations he used simply enhanced what he was trying to tell them of the message that Christ had given to him.

He said, "When I came to you I didn't say anything about what I may have wanted to talk about. I came only for one reason and I didn't point to myself by my method. I certainly didn't point to myself in my message. I simply gave you the message of the cross, the testimony of God."

Now the testimony of God is the key word. Marturion is the word used of a witness on a judicial stand. It must be precise with nothing added to it and nothing taken away from it in order to be what is truth. It must be told in total simplicity. You see, we live in a world which says, "No, no, no! Dress it up with all the academia you can to make it appealing." No! It must be told in total simplicity for it not to deny the truth of what is being testified to. Now that is very important for you to understand. Paul said, "I could have done a lot of things with that message. I could have watered it down, added to it, done a lot of things, but I didn't. I preached as simple as I knew how to preach it so that you could understand it. I never pointed to myself, only to Christ."

He said, "I didn't come in here with something to add to it. I didn't try to make it appealing. I know you think this message is foolish, but I came determined to preach just this message. And that message did not point to me. That message pointed to Christ, the one crucified. Why would you attach yourself to me? My method and my message had nothing to do with me and had all to do with Him."

Well, not only that, but he also wants them to remember his determined motive. This drove Paul. This was his motive in life. Never did he preach himself, only Christ crucified for others. He never preached himself and him being the servant to others with that message. Look in 1Cor 2:2. He says, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." The word "determined" there is the word that means to make a decision between that which is good and that which is evil. He had to make a decision. He knew if he added anything to it, that was evil. But for that to be righteous and good, it is to take the message in its entirety and in its simplicity and be determined only to preach that message.

The word for "know" is the word eido, which basically comes from the word horao. It means to say "yes," but it means more to understand and perceive something. In other words, you know something but you understand it. A lot of people can know about things and not have this word. They don't have that intuitive perception of something. That is what he said. He said, "While I am among you, that is the only thing I am concentrating on. It is the only thing I want to be bothered with. I want to just perceive this one message. I didn't come to Corinth to discuss your opinions. I didn't come to talk about intellectual arguments. I came with one thought in mind and that is the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I only want that to be perceived."

Now, be careful here. It doesn't mean he didn't preach anything else. That is not what he is saying. He is saying that until this message is perceived, there is no reason for anything else because you can't understand anything else. There is no revelation until this revelation comes to a person's heart, the message of the cross, the fact that I am a sinner and that fact of salvation. When Jesus died for me on the cross, He had to shed His blood for Wayne Barber. I have got to understand that. And God will reveal that to me with the proper preaching of His Word.

But not only that, once I am saved, I also have to remember I continue to identify with the cross. I have to die daily. And if I don't, then I haven't perceived the message. So why learn anything else? It doesn't make any sense anyway. This is the bottom line of all of it. This is what makes the wisdom of men look foolish. They reject it. They call it foolishness. God says you have got to understand this. Flesh will not cut it when it comes to God. The cross is what crucified it, and the cross is what you need to embrace as a believer. As an unbeliever, you must come and identify with Him who died for you on the cross. This is the central message.

Acts 18:11 talks about the time that he spent at Corinth. It says, "And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them." It didn't mean that he just taught one thing, but this one thing was the very central focus that must be perceived and be understood or there would be no understanding of the rest of it.

I tell you what, we are living in a day when people hate this message, folks. I go a lot of places and if I have learned anything, if it is going to be of benefit to you, I will come back and tell you. If you don't want to hear it, then welcome to the human race. Nobody else does either. Just like Paul said in the book of Philipians, "There are those among us who are enemies of the cross." Do you

know how you are an enemy of the cross? When you think you have got something to offer Jesus rather than Jesus having something to offer you as you surrender to Him. That is when you know that you are an enemy of the cross.

I will tell you another way you will know you are an enemy of the cross. When you call everything in your life a demon instead of realizing it is your wicked flesh you are dealing with, then you are an enemy of the cross. You don't understand what happened at the cross. You haven't got a clue. And people that get off in that kind of stuff are people who don't understand the crucified life. They don't understand the exchanged life, the Christ life. They haven't learned how to deal with self at the cross. They don't want to learn because it makes them have to die to what they want and surrender and yield to what God wants. That is foolishness to man. Man doesn't want to hear that.

So, therefore, we are forced with this message. Paul says, "Hey, I came for you to perceive one thing and that is the message of the cross, the testimony of God. I was determined to preach it." He would not offer his message in any way. Again, I want to make sure I impress upon your mind. I hope it is impressed upon mine. Paul knew how to add to it. He spent his life knowing what he could add to it. He knew what appealed to the flesh. But he made a determination and said, "I am not going to do that. I am going to do it differently. I am going to just preach Christ and Him crucified."

Paul said, "I am determined. I am just going to preach that one message." In other words, "I know what could be added to it, but I am choosing one thing. I am choosing to preach that which offends your flesh because until your flesh is offended, you will never understand anything else. Until it is reckoned dead, you will never understand anything else. It will all be distorted and confused in your mind."

The second thing I want you to see is, he came in demonstration of the Holy Spirit and His power. He didn't come in his own power. He came in the power of the Holy Spirit of God. Look at 1Cor 2:3-5: "And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."

Now look at 1Cor 2:3 real carefully. He says, "I was with you in weakness and fear and in much trembling." The word for "weakness" is *astheneia*. It means powerless. Now, this is the apostle Paul. I always see him as a bold man. But he said, "When I came among you I was with you with weakness."

Then he says, "I was with you with fear." The word "fear" is *phobos*. It is translated fear, terror, honor, reverence, respect, but the idea of fear is in there. The word for "trembling" is the word that is the emotional accompaniment to fear. In other words, when you are afraid inside, it begins to show on the outside and you literally tremble on the outside.

Now, what in the world is he talking about? Paul, the great missionary was with them with weakness and fear and trembling! What was his problem? Well, look in 1Cor 2:5. I want to show you what he was afraid of: "that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God." Paul knew what he could have done. He could have won those people to him. He could have won those people to his own wisdom, to his own intellect and then they would have had a reason to attach themselves to him. But he chose against that. And the thing that made him fear, the thing that made him tremble and felt weak was the awesome respect that he had that the message wasn't from him. The message was from God.

I think I know how he felt. Every time I speak, my hands are just wet on the inside of the palms. Every time. If it is ten people, if it is 4,000 people, I do the same thing. There is a churning in my stomach. It can be a little small group I am meeting with on some morning. But when I open up the Word of God, there is something that comes over me that is incredible because I know that one day I am going to stand before a holy God and be judged with more judgment than you are for having handled His Word. I also know what Paul told Timothy: when you preach, you do so in the presence of God. God is watching as we are preaching.

I want to tell you something, friend. If you understand the difference of that and what man can do in his human ability, you will understand why Paul was amongst them with fear and weakness and trembling; because he didn't want to leave with them anything of himself to where they would end up resting their faith on the wisdom of men rather than on the power of God. He was so cautious and so respectful. He is trying to help them understand something. "Why would you attach yourself to me," he asks. "I am the one who was there, scared to death that I would be in the way. What are you doing attaching yourself to me? Don't ever attach yourself to me. I am a faulty man," he says. "Attach yourself to God, the one who gave me the message that I brought to you, the message of the cross."

He said, "I didn't come with persuasive words of wisdom." The word "persuasive" comes from *peitho*. The word *peitho* is the word that is used there. It is found in Hebrews 13:17 and is translated "obey". It is an action caused by allowing someone to be persuasive. You listen to them and you change your conduct because of what they say.

The word for "words," when he says "persuasive words," is the word *logos*, which means intelligent words. Now it can be divinely intelligent, but intelligent well thought through words.

And the word for “wisdom”, of course, is the word we have already looked at, sophia, which is the word that means the ability to rightly use truth. There is a man’s wisdom, and there is God’s wisdom. There is another word in the Textus Receptus that is left out of the New American Standard. It should read, “Not in persuasive words of man’s wisdom.” He said, “I didn’t come to you with persuasive words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” You see, if he had come the other way, he would have brought a response to himself and his message rather than a response to Christ. He did not come that way. So why would you attach yourself to him?

The word for “power” there when it says, “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,” is dunamis. It means ability. There are two kinds of ability. There is the ability of what you can do and there is the ability of what only God can do. He said, “I didn’t come in my ability, no sir. I was scared to death because I didn’t want to get in God’s way. I came in the ability of His Spirit of what He did in and through me.”

Why is all that? Look at 1Cor 2:5: “that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.” That is the bottom line, folks. Why in the world would you attach yourself to a man? Isn’t it amazing how people are so immature that they would attach themselves to a man, not realizing that man is not worth a grain of salt except for that which God has done in his life. And if he is worth anything, he has a fear that he will ever get in the way of God and draw a man to himself and not to Christ which is his message.

I love what Spurgeon said about this very thing. Spurgeon said, “The power that is the gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher. Otherwise men would be the converters of souls. Nor does it lie in the preacher’s learning, otherwise it would consist in the wisdom of men. We might preach until our tongues rotted, until we would exhaust our lungs and die. But never a soul would be converted unless the Holy Spirit be with the Word of God to give it the power to convert a soul.”

That is exactly what Paul is saying. He is saying, “Man, if anything ever came out of me that is good, you had better point back to the one it came from. Your faulty logic has led you to attach yourself to a faulty man. Don’t you do that. That is a sign that you are immature. You are a little baby in Christ. You haven’t grown.”

You say, “Wayne, you are making that up.” No. Go to 3:15. Just take your time and read it and see what it says. He says, “Could I call you mature? No. You are little infants. You are little babies.” Why? Because you still go around attaching yourself to men. Grow up. Grow up and attach yourself to Christ. You don’t need the preacher in the sense of having to attach yourself to him. They are given to the body as gifted teachers, etc., and all these things are important. But remember, you have all of God you are ever going to get right now, right now. Why follow a man around? Walk after Him. That is what he is saying.

But to walk after Him you have got to perceive the message of the cross, and most people think that is foolishness. That is why they go after men. That is why they go after gifts. They don’t want to go after Christ.

But I want to tell you something, you better not be attached to a preacher. You better attach yourself to God. That is the mature believer. That is the one who comes out of the nursery and realizes who it is that lives in them. Appreciate them, yes. Listen to them, yes. But don’t attach yourself to them at the exclusion of the rest of the body of Christ. They are not worth their salt unless God has done a saving work in them and unless God is empowering what they are preaching. The message is from Him, not from them. That is what Paul is saying.

## 1 Corinthians 2 The Wisdom of God - Part 1

We have seen in Corinthians already that there are two kinds of wisdom. There is the wisdom of man, fleshly wisdom, and then there is the wisdom of God. Of course man thinks he is so smart, but he shows himself to be a fool when he looks at God’s wisdom and calls it foolishness. Man does not want to hear about God’s wisdom. God’s wisdom is wrapped up in a message, in the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 2 where I want to focus on “The Wisdom of God.” We have seen in Corinthians already that there are two kinds of wisdom. There is the wisdom of man, fleshly wisdom, and then there is the wisdom of God. Of course man thinks he is so smart, but he shows himself to be a fool when he looks at God’s wisdom and calls it foolishness. Man does not want to hear about God’s wisdom. God’s wisdom is wrapped up in a message, in the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That has been Paul’s argument since way back in 1Cor 1:10. The apostle Paul preached the message of the gospel which contained the wisdom of God. Apollos, who was his successor, also preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. Simon Peter, who is called Cephas, also preached that message. Now, what Paul is doing here by talking about the wisdom of man and the wisdom of God and people who preach the gospel, he is attacking a problem in the Corinthian church. They have heard these preachers, these great

preachers, and they have attached themselves to them. They have not allowed the message to attach themselves to Christ. So Paul is saying, "You have made a terrible mistake."

1Cor 1:12 says, when he speaks of the division in the church there in Corinth, "Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying [now when he says "each one of you," it has affected the whole church] each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I am of Apollos,' and 'I am of Cephas [then, of course, you have that other group], and I am of Christ." That is the worst ones. They have the right person and the right message but the wrong motive. Don't worry about them. They have attached themselves to a preacher.

Now Paul does not mention Apollos or Cephas, but he talks about himself. He puts himself into the forefront. All the way through he is saying, "Why in the world would you attach yourself to me?" In 1Cor 2:16, he takes them back to when he first came to Corinth. He says, "You examine my message. Nothing I did pointed to myself. Everything I told you, even the way I went about it, pointed to Christ. I made a choice. I wasn't going to come with the eloquence of wisdom. I wasn't trying to woo you to how smart I am. I brought the message of the preaching of the cross to you." He said, "Look at my message. My message wasn't about Paul. My message was about Christ. And not only that, look at my motive, the motive of my heart." He said, "I came in demonstration of the power of the Spirit of God. I did not come as a man filled with his own wisdom. I came as a preacher filled with the wisdom of God."

I love the verse found over in 2 Corinthians 4:5. It is exactly what he says in 1Cor 2:15. He says, "For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord." That is so important to remember: that is the same thing he is trying to remind them, "We do not preach ourselves as lord, we preach Christ as Lord." Then he says, "And ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus' sake."

So, in 1Cor 2:6 he continues now to go deeper into that argument. Why would you attach yourself to a preacher? Why would you do that? He goes on to explain why they should not do that, which is the narrowed context of what we are in.

We are going to get into some troubled waters here and if you don't stay with the narrow context that we have already seen, very fixed and very clear, a lot of things can happen in your mind and a lot of wrong things can come out. So stay in that narrowed context. It is very, very important. Once again he shows us that it is immature, it is silly for them to attach themselves to men. It makes no sense whatsoever when they realize that these men who have preached the gospel did not preach it because they had come up with it or because they had discovered it. The only reason Paul preached it was because God had revealed it to him.

If you have a preacher that you just like, do me a favor and pray for that person, but don't put that person on a pedestal. I just want to encourage you with everything in me, because that preacher is no different than any of us who can't get out of the rain without the grace of God. It is God who has revealed to him the message. Whatever a preacher says that is eternal and brings out the depths of the scriptures of God did not come from that man's brain. It came as a result of the revelation of the Holy Spirit of God. Please understand, this is what Paul is attacking. He will bring it up again in chapter 3. I mean, he is not through with it yet. Don't attach yourself to a preacher. Listen to the message. And if the depths of it are there and God is being revealed, then let the message drive you to Jesus and attach yourself to Him. That is the key. The preacher is not the man who came up with it. It is God who revealed it to his heart.

### **God's wisdom cannot be dethroned by man**

Okay, he is going to go deeper now into the wisdom of God. First of all, God's wisdom cannot be dethroned by mere man. In other words, it cannot be dethroned and taken off of its pedestal where it ought to be and brought down to the level of man to where man could take credit for it. Paul says that it is foolish to think that a preacher would ever take credit for what he said and want people to follow him because God's wisdom, the message of the gospel, cannot be dethroned by mere man.

Look at 1Cor 2:6: "Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away." Now, I want you to look at that phrase, "Yet we do speak." Remember, the narrowed context. The narrowed context tells us Paul is referring to the apostles; in other words, the ones who gave us the doctrine. He says, "We speak, yes, but we speak with a wisdom that is not from ourselves."

Now in a broader sense it can refer to anyone. But in a narrow sense, the context, I believe he is talking about the preachers, those who people are attaching themselves to. He is defending the fact that they are not doing it out of their own strength. They are not doing it in their own power. They are doing it in the power of the Spirit and they are doing it with a message that comes from God. The word for "mature" there is sort of an interesting word. It is not really "mature." It can be translated that, but it is the word *teleios*. It means to accomplish a goal.

If I am running a race and I see the finish line ahead of me, I have not accomplished my goal until I have crossed that finish line. Whether I win or not is irrelevant. Do I cross the finish line? When a person has crossed that finish line and met that accomplishment, then the word *teleios* is used. So you can see the word "mature" can come from that word, but the idea is to come to a point to where something happens as a result of that.



Well, there is much discussion as to who are the mature he is talking about. He says, "Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are the mature." First of all, could it be that the mature are the believers who did not see the gospel as foolishness, but because of the grace of God were wise in receiving it and received Christ into their hearts? Now they understand what Paul is saying. Then the wisdom of God would be the gospel. That is what he has been talking about. He has not strayed from that at all as he has walked his way through the context. By His grace they can now understand.

There is another side thought here. It could be that the mature he speaks of in this verse could be compared to the babes in Christ in 1 Corinthians 3:1: "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able." In this case the mature would be those who could receive the solid food, and the immature would be the babes who had to receive only milk. What Paul would have been saying there is, "The mature group of you who understand the surrendered and the daily walk of the cross, you can understand what I am saying. Now some of you can't."

Maybe that is what he is saying. I don't think so. I think the first definition is what he is using here. I am not going to fight anybody over it, but I think the word for "mature" here refers to believers in respect to mankind. Mankind in general has rejected the gospel message, but believers have received it. Therefore, they are the mature. When it comes to humanity, there is a group of people who has accomplished a goal. They didn't actually accomplish it. God accomplished it for them, but they are at a point they can understand the things of God, whereas the people of the world who profess themselves to be wise, these are the ones who cannot understand the word of God.

Why do I think that? He has only had two groups in mind as he has come down to this point. One group has been the foolish and the other has been the wise. The foolish are those who have looked at God's gospel and rejected it. The wise are those who have received it. He has not changed at all as he has walked down his defense why they should not attach themselves to men. So I think the word "mature" here would cover just the believers, those who have been brought into a place. Now the Holy Spirit lives in them, and they can understand the things of God. So he says, "Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature."

Let's go on in the verse: "a wisdom, however, not of this age." Paul is saying no man in this age can take any credit for the gospel message that we are preaching. The word for age there is the word *aion*. If you have a King James Version, I think it says, "not of this world." That is not a good translation. An *aion* is an age that starts and has an end to it. However, within an age there are many ages. Let me give you an illustration of that.

I was born in 1943. I don't know when I am going to die, but there will be a stopping point, just as there was a starting point of my physical life here on this earth. In the midst of that, there are many ages. I was in preschool from age one to five. I started the first grade at six years old; then from first grade to sixth grade; from seventh grade to ninth grade; from tenth grade to twelfth grade. I went to college and seminary. But these are ages within my life.

So not only is Paul referring to the age in which he is living, that no preacher such as himself or anybody else can take credit for the message they are preaching because it is a wisdom that is not of that age, but he is also saying, of any age. There is no man who ever drew breath on this earth who can take credit for the gospel message of Jesus Christ. It is a message that God gave to man. Why would you attach yourself to a preacher when God Himself had to give the preacher the message? We are preaching to those who can now understand a wisdom. And this wisdom is not of this age.

Then he goes on to say, "nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away." The word for "rulers" is *archon*. It means the leaders, the ones up front. When we think of the leaders of our age we think of government officials. We think of intelligent people, of Nobel prize winners and people like that. Paul says, "Listen, all of these rulers here of this age are passing away."

There are many things that he is thinking of here. First of all, let me identify the rulers he is talking about. Look in 1Cor 2:8. He identifies himself. He says, "the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood." Evidently he is talking about the lost ones, the Jewish and the Greek and the Gentile rulers of that age: "For if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Now these rulers who have rejected the gospel message in their own foolishness are passing away. There is no man who can take credit for the gospel message. I mean, even the ones we want to deify and lift up among the world, they are passing away.

There is an idea in this. The word for passing away is *katargeo*, and here it means they are really ceasing to exist and their message has to continually be upgraded. Have you ever noticed that every age has somebody with something new that they are finding? All of a sudden, it makes everything else obsolete. Then all of a sudden he is gone, and what he has found is gone, and somebody else comes up with something new. Then all of a sudden he is gone. It is constantly like that. But with the Word of God, the wisdom of God, it is not that way. It is the same yesterday, today and forever. That is what Paul is saying. He is saying, "Listen, the wisdom that we preach to you is not something that man can come up with and somebody else can improve upon. It is the same message that has been there all along. In fact, it was predestined before the foundations of the world."

Let me share something with you before we get any further in this. If you ever hear a preacher or somebody say, "I found a new truth," you had better back off and get on your knees and pray for that individual. Because when it comes to the Word of God and the gospel message, there is no new truth. It is all there from cover to cover, and it is not going to get new. I am hearing this kind of stuff when I watch television. They come up, "Well, I have got a new revelation about this and I have a new truth." No, that is the way it is in the world, you see. And the next generation will come up with something new and the next generation will come up with something new. But when it comes to what we preach and what Paul said he preaches, it is the gospel, it is the wisdom of God and no man of any age can ever take credit for it because it is not of this age. The rulers of this age are passing away.

What we preach and what he preaches has been hidden since before the foundation of the world so that man cannot take credit for it. It says in 1Cor 2:7, "But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory." Note the narrow context here. He is defending these preachers who brought the message to Corinth. He says, "You should not attach yourself to them because what they speak is God's wisdom, not theirs. It is in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory."

The word for "mystery" there is the word that means something that is not naturally known. In other words, what Paul is preaching you can't sit down in a little study group and come up with it without the Word of God and the Spirit of God. What Paul is saying here is that this wisdom, this gospel mystery, has been hidden. It has been hidden. It is something hidden. The word for "hidden" comes from two words. It means to hide away from where you can't get to it. Perfect passive. Perfect tense means he made a decision back here and that is the way the gospel is going to remain because of a decision he made back here. Passive voice is, man didn't have anything to do with it. God decided it was going to be this way. And so, when you hear a person preach the gospel and you take a friend to hear it and that friend just spits in its face and says, "That is stupid. That is foolishness," and walks off, don't expect him to be able to figure it out by his human mind. It is revealed by the Spirit of God. It is not something man can discover. It is something which has to be revealed.

Paul said, "We speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory." The word "predestined" is *proorizo*. It always expresses purpose of something. It means to make a decision beforehand based on knowledge that one has. Before man was ever born, before there was ever a glimmer of man's wisdom, this wisdom of God had been determined before a man ever drew a breath on this earth. This wisdom which contained the gospel message, the redemption of all mankind, which contained all the benefits of salvation, which contains the hope that we have in Christ Jesus, was hidden and was chosen before the foundation of this world.

For what? He says there in the verse it was predestined "to our glory." Now what do little phrases like that mean? The little preposition *eis* means something that is moving into something with a result in mind. Why did God predetermine before the foundation of the world this marvelous wisdom that He is going to encapsule into the gospel message? Why did He do it the way He did it? Well, He did it for our benefit. For all of us that now have not been foolish but have received what Christ has done for us. We have not looked at the message of the cross as foolishness, but we have received Christ into our life. We have been wise in that respect. We have been brought into an understanding now of what the Word of God has for us. We have all the benefits in salvation, and one day, when we see Christ, we will have a brand new, glorified body. All of that was thought about before the foundations of the world. It was hidden and put into the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So what Paul is saying is, "When we preach to you, we are preaching something that never has changed. It has been that way since the foundation of the world, predetermined by God Himself. And you can't just figure it out with your own human mind. It is something the Spirit of God has got to reveal to your heart."

1Cor 2:8 says, "the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood." These rulers that we talked about a moment ago are the ones who crucified Jesus, the Jewish leaders and the Gentile rulers of that day. If they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord. Now, I guarantee you, Paul made a lot of people mad when he preached these kinds of things. There are a lot of people who say, "Wait a minute. I have all kinds of degrees, and you know good and well I can figure it out. You just give me enough time and I will figure it out." But Paul says, "No, you won't either. You will come up with one conclusion. The conclusion all men have come up with, that the gospel is foolishness. You can't even see yourself as lost. It is the Spirit of God that convicts a man as to his lostness. It is not what man discovers on his own, it is what God reveals to the human heart."

The wisdom of God cannot be dethroned to where man can take credit for it. So why would you attach yourself to a man? That is the whole point. That is the argument Paul has been giving to them. Don't attach yourself to the preacher. If the message opens up your heart and you have received the things of God, you attach yourself to God who is the author of that message.

1Cor 2:8 goes on, "for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Then in 1Cor 2:9, as if to document how this wisdom of salvation, this gospel message that Paul preached, was so precious and predetermined before the foundation of the world, look at what he quotes. He quotes out of Isaiah 64:4. He said, "But just as it is written, 'Things which eye has not seen

and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.”

In essence, by quoting this passage what he is saying is, “There has never been a man on this earth whose eye has witnessed this, whose ears have heard this in order to perceive it, whose minds have conceived of it. There has never been a man on this earth until he sees a believer and he realizes this believer has something within him that is far beyond what man could ever do or man could ever think up. It came from God and it was predetermined before the foundation of the world.”

It has to do with our salvation and with the benefits of our salvation. No man could come up with this, folks. You won't hear it in a classroom. It is when the Holy Spirit of God reveals it to man's heart.

Turn over to Isaiah 64:4, because Paul doesn't quote it quite exactly the way it is written in Isaiah. I think this is important to understand. When Paul uses an Old Testament reference, sometimes he doesn't quote it exactly and some people have trouble with that. No, Paul has a point to make and he pulls the main thought out of something. He may quote it differently to establish the point that he is trying to make. You see, all the benefits of our salvation are wrapped up in the gospel message. It is not just getting saved. It is everything that goes along with our salvation and our calling. All of that has been hidden. It is a mystery. And until the Spirit of God reveals it, man is not going to know it. Therefore, how can a man take credit for it?

Isaiah 64:4 reads, “For from of old they have not heard nor perceived by ear, neither has the eye seen a God besides Thee.” There has been nobody to compare to our God. Now note the last phrase. “Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him.” Paul is saying, “Man, when I came among you, there has never been a man on this earth who could ever sit and say, ‘I have seen something like that. I have heard something like. I have perceived it. I came up with it.’ No, no. They stand back in awe at the message of salvation.” But not just the message of salvation; it is also how the God of salvation deals with the people who receive that message. They have never seen anything like it. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard. Man cannot conceive of this.

You take the Buddhist, the Hindus and the different religions of this world. Man came up with them. There is nothing in those religions that will come anywhere close to what Christianity is, what the message of salvation brings to our heart. And every man has to stand back and say, “We have never seen anything like this. We have never heard of anything like this. We have never conceived of anything like this.” Paul said, “You see, it is something that had to come straight from God.”

I tell you what, when you watch people walk through difficult times and valleys and trauma, the world has to stand back and say, “I have never known anything like this. I have never conceived of how God would intervene in the lives of His people like that. Our God doesn't intervene in our life.” You see, Buddha is dead.

Buddha said there was no way of salvation. He had these followers who came after him and they say there was no way of salvation. There is no salvation. This is it. Then one day he died. His followers said, “Well, since he said there was no way, he must be the way.” And so they all worship him and he is dead. He is in the ground. He is gone.

There is nothing like what we know. It came from God, predetermined before the foundations of the world. No human eyes have ever seen and no human ears have ever heard to perceive and no mind has ever conceived of it. What we know in salvation comes only from God, and it astounds the world when they see how our God works in our lives, how He intervenes and how one day He puts a hope within us that when we see Him, we will be like Him. There is nothing like this in the world. It came only from God. Therefore, how could the men who preach this message ever take credit for it? How could they ever dethrone the message to where it could become theirs? It is not theirs. It is God's, and it has always been God's. It is from the foundation of this world. God's wisdom will never be dethroned by man seeking to take credit for it.

I tell you what, folks, watch out for a person who preaches and draws attention to him and what he says and does not draw attention to God and what He does. You be real careful. How do you know somebody is right? Well, when you leave, who did you leave impressed with, the Christ of the message or the messenger to where you would want to attach yourself to him?

Paul is warning them right here, I think, on both sides. Not only don't you attach yourself to a preacher, but preachers, don't you ever employ any human methodology that will cause people to be attached to you either. The message you preach is from Him, not from you. And it is so astounding. It has been a mystery and a mystery has to be revealed. It cannot be just discovered. It is the kind of thing that when you get into it, human minds cannot reason it. It has got to be the Spirit of God in the mix who helps a man to understand.

### **The wisdom of God cannot be discovered by man**

That is our next point. The wisdom of God cannot be dethroned to where a man can take credit for it. But the wisdom of God cannot be discovered by mere man so that man can take credit for it. In other words, you can't bring it down to man's level, so man cannot discover it. It has to be revealed.

I keep bringing you back to that narrow context. Don't attach yourself to a preacher because man's wisdom is nothing compared to

the wisdom of God. Look at 1Cor 2:10. Look at the “to us” there. It is very important. “God revealed them,” the things of 1Cor 2:9 which man has never heard or perceived or seen, “through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.” God’s wisdom must be revealed to man or man will never find it. He says, “For God has revealed to us.” Who is he talking about? I think again he is saying these preachers of the gospel, the apostles, remember it is by revelation of God that we speak to you in that day. Of course, the wider meaning would include all of us, but I think the narrow context refers to them.

God has revealed. The word for “revealed” means He has uncovered, has taken the lid off. He has taken the lid off this message. He has helped us to understand it. We couldn’t understand it apart from Him. But God has revealed it in our life. Later on in 1 Corinthians 15:3 Paul says, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received.” That is another way of saying the same thing. He is saying, “Hey, I got it from God, and I just gave it to you. Why in the world would you want to attach yourself to me?” “That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.”

He says, “For to us God revealed them,” but how did He reveal them? It is getting exciting here. How did He reveal them? He revealed this truth, that has been hidden before the foundation of the world, that is a mystery to the minds of man, through the Spirit. God reveals it through the Spirit. And, of course, when he says “the Spirit” he is speaking of the Holy Spirit of God, the third person of the Trinity.

You know, it is amazing how we are living in a day where we think that there are three Gods instead of one. It is one God in three persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Do you believe the Holy Spirit is God? All of God? Absolutely all of God? You had better believe that because if you don’t believe that, you don’t believe the Word of God. Is Jesus all of God? Yes. Is the Father all of God? Yes. But He is one God in three persons. So many people get confused on that. They say, “Well, explain it to me.” I can’t explain it to you. If I could explain it to you, God would be no bigger than my brain. If that is the case, what are we doing in church on Sundays. I mean, He is bigger than any of us. We can’t understand that. That is why Jesus said the Spirit will come to be in you, but I will be with you and the Father will be with you. That is very important to understand. When you get Jesus, you get all of God. It is the Spirit of Christ. There is no jealousy in the Trinity. The Spirit of God is the one who reveals to us.

Now I want to tell you what Paul just did. It is very subtle. You might miss it. What he just did was take all the religions of mankind that men have come up with and he just sat them on the shelf. He showed that Christianity is transcendentally superior to all these religions because ours had to be revealed to us by the Holy Spirit of God. His wisdom is beyond the wisdom of man. It goes even back before the foundations of the world with His predetermined plan to do what He has done. The power of the Spirit of God.

Look at 1Cor 2:10 again: “For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit [now look at this] searches all things, even the depths of God.” Oh, the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Spirit, is the one who searches the very depths of God. Now, before we go any further, you can’t understand this to mean investigate. He doesn’t investigate anything. It sounds like that when you first read it, doesn’t it? He goes out and searches all of this stuff and gets the information and brings it back to us. No, He is the information, folks. That is what he is saying. The Holy Spirit of God, present tense, searches. He is the one, now listen, who sounds the very depths of the wisdom of God.

A Christian has someone living in him that a nonChristian doesn’t. So, we can’t even be understood by the people of this world. The things we know didn’t come from a classroom. The things we know came as revelation of the Spirit of God through the Word of God. All this has been a mystery and a part of God’s predetermined plan. In other words, He is always available to reveal whatever it is our minds cannot fathom.

Now folks, I tell you, that gets really overwhelming when you think about it for a while. Included in this would be the attributes of God. Do you realize that we make statements in the pulpit like this and think that some people understand it when yet that one statement could take you a lifetime and you would never understand it apart from the revealing of the Holy Spirit of God. We are all guilty of that. Omniscience. My goodness, what does that mean? Omnipotence. Omnipresence. He is ever present. How in the world does that work? The attributes of God, the grace of God, the goodness of God, the judgment of God, the wrath of God. All these things. The thoughts of God, the purposes of God, the plans of God, the providence of God. All of that. In these deep things that the Holy Spirit reveals would be included the cross of Christ, the Holy Trinity, the incarnation, the union of our spirit with God’s Spirit. You could just go on and on and on.

And there are times when I am studying the Word of God I think I am getting more stupid as I get older. The more I think I know, the more I realize there is to know. I am thinking, “You know, God, I cannot even begin to fathom the depths of Your knowledge.” And God says right back to me, “That is right, son, and you don’t you ever forget it. But My Spirit searches the deep things of God and My Spirit will help you understand that which I want you to understand. You just continue to live in that relationship with Him.”

In Romans 11:33 it says, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!” I am always getting burned for something I say about counseling, but I want you to know that I thank God for them. But I want you to know I realize the task that you have because when you try to explain the things of God,

I am in the same boat. When I try to explain it, they are unfathomable. They are unsearchable.

Paul is saying, "When we came amongst you and we preached, it had to be that which God had revealed to our hearts for that which we received we preached unto you. We would have never known anything were it not for the Holy Spirit who searches and sounds the depths of God."

1Cor 2:11 he says, "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God." Now he is going to make an illustration here. He starts off with the illustration of human beings. You know, sometimes when I am preaching you ought to see what I see. I see people yawning. Every now and then I will catch somebody staring off into space. I will start off the message and I will say something profound and I hear snoring. Most of the time, you can't tell what is going on inside somebody else. You can't tell it. I wish I could. But you just can't do it.

That is what he is saying. He said only the spirit of a man, that particular man, knows what he is thinking. He compares that then to the Spirit of God. But before we go any further, remember something. Any tangible illustration never fully and completely explains a spiritual eternal truth. Remember that. Sometimes you get hung up in that. For instance, Jesus said the branch should abide in the vine. Now what branch wakes up in the morning and says, "Hmmm, I think today I will abide in the vine." No branch does that, it just hangs there. But as believers, we do make a choice. And so you don't use a tangible illustration to fully explain it. And this does not fully explain the work of the Spirit, but it brings its point and it is well taken. He says, "Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God."

The word for "knows" there is eido. In other words, perceives, knows and understands. The Spirit is God. The motives, the thoughts, the volitions of an individual man nobody knows but that man himself. But in the same way, only God knows the thoughts of God. No man can discover them. No man can crawl up and say, "I figured it all out." No, sir. Those thoughts have to be revealed to man. Only God knows those thoughts. Paul makes his point.

Then he says in 1Cor 2:12, "Now we have received." Now who are the "we" that he is talking about here? What is the narrow context? What is he defending? He is defending the fact that you never attach yourself to a preacher. But now the "we have received," in a wider sense, means all believers. But let's stay in the context of what he is talking about. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God."

We have received not the spirit of the world, thank God. The spirit of the world is what crucified Christ. The spirit of the world is what thinks the gospel is foolishness. That is not the spirit we have received. We have received the Holy Spirit of God who searches the deep things of God. The word "received," aorist active, means we willfully receive. He says, "We have not received the spirit of the world." The word for "not" means absolutely not in any way, shape or form. The word for "world" there, kosmos, has the meaning of the disposition of the world, the mindset of the world, the desires of the world without Christ. He said, "We didn't receive that spirit. We received the Spirit who is from God."

Then he says, "that we might know the things freely given to us by God." The word "know" is the same word we says earlier, eido. The Spirit knows. He comes to live in us so that we might know. It means to know and intuitively understand, the perceive something, to grasp it and be able to handle it.

We know the things freely given by God. The word is charizomai. It is the word that means that we could not have deserved in a million years.

Paul then drives the point home in 1Cor 2:13. Here we go again: "which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words." He is saying, "Listen, guys, I am an apostle. I am set apart in the gospel of Christ. I have come unto you. Don't you attach yourself to me. What I am saying to you, the Spirit of God first of all has revealed the thought and then empowered the words to speak to you. It doesn't come from me, it comes from Him. And if there is a change that comes in your life and if there is something eternal that happens in your life, it is not me, it is God in me and through me that is causing this to happen."

The wisdom of God cannot be dethroned as if man could take credit for it. And folks, I am sorry to say, but there are many preachers who love taking credit for it and love that kind of affection. They love to draw people to themselves.

Secondly, it is not discovered. It must be revealed unto man. I was at a conference several years ago in another state. One of the speakers opened his Bible, read a verse, shut the Bible, pushed it aside and used that verse to help him say what he really wanted to say that night. As a matter of fact, he told funny stories from the very first to the last and I laughed till I thought my sides were going to split. He was the funniest man I think I have ever heard in my life. But at the end of his message, I left, not being impressed with Christ or anything eternal. Being impressed with a humorous man who could really tell some stories.

The next speaker got up. He said, "Now, ladies and gentlemen, hopefully you feel as I do. Maybe you are finally ready and hungry

enough to hear from God and not from man." Oh. And he went to the Word of God and I want to tell you, he did not back off an inch until he finished that message. When he finished, my sides didn't hurt from laughing. When he finished, as a matter of fact, I was so jerked on the inside by the Spirit of God and convicted about things that I knew that God had done something within me that was eternal. And when I left, I didn't leave remembering the man. I left remembering the Christ that the man talked about.

Now that is the key. The times when I get in the way of that, you just pray for me, because I have stepped over into the flesh. We are to be vessels through which Christ works. Why would you attach yourself to a man? Why? It makes no sense in the world, but people are doing it in the 20th century, just like they did it at Corinth. "I am of this pastor. I am of that pastor. I am of that pastor. He just does something for me that nobody does. I am telling you. He is just wonderful." Bless your little immature heart. If you would get attached to the one he is preaching about, watch what He will do in your life that will awe you for all eternity. That is the difference.

## 1 Corinthians 2 The Wisdom of God - Part 2

The wisdom of God cannot be delivered by man; the wisdom of God cannot be discerned by man. The Christian must rely on the Holy Spirit with to help him discern the wisdom that comes from God.

I want to take you back into a little bit more of the history and understanding of the city of Corinth. Now having been there, it has opened my eyes. As a matter of fact, the book has come alive to me. We must understand this. Corinth was a fascinating and a very unusual place. If you have read through, you realize that Paul says things and addresses things in 1 Corinthians that he does not address in any of his other epistles. None of them. To the Romans, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, none of them except in 1 Corinthians. How do you explain that? Why is it that he brings out certain things there that he does not in other places?

I think part of the reason is that we don't understand the culture and the history of Corinth during that time. You do know that when you study Scripture, having an understanding of the culture and history is very imperative to understanding what the Word of God is saying. If that were not true, how could we ever let Abraham get away with having a concubine? How could we ever translate the 11th chapter of Daniel? Without the historical understanding of that, you would be totally lost. The culture and the history of a place helps us to better understand the author's intent and what he is doing under the direction of the Holy Spirit of God.

Corinth was one of the wealthiest cities in the world, possibly the wealthiest at that time. What was the reason? Most of it was due to the location in which they were found. They were located on an isthmus. Now I understand what an isthmus is. It is a small piece of land that connects two large bodies of land. When Rome conquered Greece they split Greece into Asia Minor, Macedonia and Acaia. Acaia is the lower part of Greece. Athens is in Acaia. However, if you will look over to the left of Athens and down just a little bit on a map, you will see a peninsula sort of jutting out the very bottom part of Greece. And connecting that little peninsula to the upper and main body of Greece is a little isthmus about four miles long, maybe about four miles wide. That is about all it is. Corinth was located there.

Now, here is why it was such a strategic place. If you were a sailor and you were coming from Ephesus, which was over in modern day Turkey and you were coming and going to Rome, you would have to actually sail out and sail south, go underneath that peninsula, come up through some very horrendous seas in order to get up into Rome. As a matter of fact, sailors did not even want to go that way. So the Corinthians were ingenious. They came up with a plan. They said, "Hey, let us pull your boat across the land." As a matter of fact, the road is called "The Pulled Through Road." They pulled the boats across about four miles now of dry land. There is a canal there now and ships have tug boats to pull them through, but back then they did not have that. It was a road. They basically rolled those ships on stones and rocks across the land connecting the Gulf of Corinth with the Saronic Sea, saving the sailors the pain of having to sail around the southern tip of Greece and also making a ton of money for themselves. It was very expensive to have that done, and they became very, very wealthy.

If you wanted to go to Athens and you were living down in that peninsula, you had to go through Corinth. Corinth was just a strategic city placed there and became very wealthy as a result of it.

Well, when wealth is not governed by the mind and the will of God and when it is among pagans, it is always associated with idolatry and immorality. You know, if you went to Corinth back in those days and you wanted to worship a false pagan god, you would have difficulty choosing which one you were going to worship. They had so many. But there were three main gods they worshiped. The temples are right there. We stood right in the city and saw these things. It is incredible when you see it. It just sort of makes the book come alive.

First of all was the worship of Apollo. Apollo was the god of light and knowledge and arts. He comes into play here in just a moment. Then they had the worship of Aphrodite; that was the goddess of love. There is a huge acropolis with a temple named after that god. An acropolis, as we described earlier, is a huge rock mountain that looms over the city of Corinth. It is beautiful really, the way the

city sits at its base. On the top of that, they had the temple to Aphrodite or Venus, the goddess of love. There were 1,000 priestesses, they called themselves; women who were nothing more than temple prostitutes.

They also had public baths there. These women would come down to these public baths and that is where they would entertain the sailors coming through. On the bottom of their shoes they would write in their language, "Follow me," and wherever they stepped that was not stone, the sailors saw the "follow me" and they followed them and things were not good. This was the worship. The sexual things that took place on top of that mountain are beyond anything we would ever want to discuss. As a matter of fact, today, they say that there was so much venereal disease in that area because of this promiscuity that there is in the museum at Corinth today, there is a room of things that they have found suggesting this, that they won't even allow tourists to go into because it is so embarrassing and so humiliating. I say that to let you know the degradation of the area of Corinth. It was something that was normal everyday life.

Then there was the temple of Poseidon. Poseidon was the god of athletic strength, a man. In other words, that is where they would have the Isthmian Games. They were called Isthmian Games because of the isthmus there that Corinth was on, very much like the Olympic Games. They would have them every so many years. They would have it right by the temple of Poseidon, which was outside the city of Corinth. There was a big stadium there right beside it because they worshiped the physical abilities of man.

Now, here is something I ran into that I did not know and it helps us begin to understand why the apostle Paul has such concern that they are attaching themselves to men with a message. In every area of idolatry that was there, there was this mystical getting of knowledge from the spiritual world, now not the holy spiritual world, but the demonic spiritual world. They would go into trances. They have even found the base of the drug LSD that was used sometimes to quicken these trances that people would go into. Then they would speak in an unknown tongue or language, and they would have people around them who would say they could interpret that tongue. They would give a message to the people who would come and want that message.

There was a word in their culture that is not in ours that we need to understand. It was the word we get "ecstasy" from now. In their language, it was existemi. It comes from ek, out of, and histemi, which means to stand or put something. Together existemi meant to stand outside something. This was their mind set of that day. There were barriers, there were boundaries that man was not to cross. These entered into the spiritual domain and several people of their day would seek and venture to go beyond those boundaries. So they would worship this way. They would go into a trance.

This is important. The temple of Apollo was where most of this took place. It took place in all of them but this is where most of it took place and I will show you how significant that is in a moment. They would get into this trance. The people had to get to where their minds were totally out of gear, unintelligible; there was not a matter of intelligence and understanding here at all. They had to get into this mindset, this unintelligible type setting where their mind was totally vacant. Then they would begin to speak in this unknown tongue or unknown language. When this happened they were said to have now reached the pentacle of ecstasy. They had stepped outside the bounds. In their culture, once you had done this, you would tend to go beyond, there was no return. You would go beyond. As a matter of fact, the boundaries now had been lifted.

But not everybody had this experience, only certain ones. They were delving into the demonic world, and as they did this, they received messages and would become like gurus to the people. The people would say, "I have to attach myself to him because he has got something I don't have. I have to follow him because he says something and he tells me things that I couldn't get any other way." This was the lifestyle and the norm of the pagan people there in Corinth.

The temple of Apollo sat in the center of the city, while Aphrodite was up on top of the Acropolis and Poseidon was outside the city. There was no way not to be affected by this. You couldn't even go to the market, which sat on the other side up high, unless you were looking at it at all times. This was where this knowledge, this supernatural knowledge would come in. As a matter of fact, while we were there, they explained to me that Rome never did this, but the Greeks did. This is why it is so important to know this. They would go to these people called mediums, who would delve into the spirit world, to find out solutions to national problems.

The oracle of Delphi is a good illustration. There was a woman at Delphi who would sit cross-legged and get into this trance. She did not use drugs. I understand this was not used there. But she would go into a trance and speak in a language nobody had ever heard before. Some of her little followers would get around and say, "We know the answer to this." They would come up with a message and they would actually take it and give it to the government leaders.

They had an enemy who was attacking them and they knew they were coming. So therefore, they sent officials up there to get a word of wisdom of what they should do. Well, she babbled some things and some of her interpreters said, "Here is what she said. She said that you will be saved by wood." The people said, "What does that mean? I think it means for us to go back and build a wall around the acropolis. We will go up on top and they can't get to us. That is what she means by wood. We will build a wall of protection from the enemy." One of the younger ones said, "No, I don't think that is right. I think she is saying we need to build boats and get on the boats and get out of here. That is what she is saying." Well, the young ones built the boats and the old ones built the

wall. The young ones were right. The enemies burned the walls and went right up and conquered them. But the ones who went out in the boats and sailed out to sea were saved.

So, they put credibility to this babbling and said, "You know, there really is a message here." One story fed the next and the next fed the next and that was the lifestyle of the Greeks in that area of the world at that time.

If you can't see the connection, I don't know if you are listening. The apostle Paul is saying, "Why are you attaching yourselves to men who have a message? The pagans are doing the same thing and you know this. Don't you ever attach yourself to a man." Then he begins to show that the wisdom that Paul and Apollos and Cephas have did not come from the demonic world, it comes from the Spirit who is of God and is intelligent and reasonable. A man can understand and live in light of what he understands.

Now, if you will follow the term "we" from chapter 1 and chapter 2, I think you will understand the narrow context. Paul is speaking of the apostles, which is important, because he is justifying the message that he, Apollos and Cephas have preached. As a matter of fact, he is not through with this. He picks it up again in chapter 3. So he is still talking about that one context. In many of the things he says about "we," even though he is referring to the apostles, it also refers to the whole body of Christ.

Look with me at the "we" phrases there. Look at 1:23: "but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness." Who is "we"? That is Paul, Apollos and Cephas. That is any of the apostles of that day.

Look at 2:6-7. He says, "Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory." The demonic spirits didn't do this. God predestined this before the ages.

1Cor 2:12-13 read, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words."

Let's look at this for a second. The Corinthians had attached themselves to Paul, to Apollos, who was the second pastor of Corinth, and then to Cephas who was the unsung hero and leader of the whole church of Jesus Christ in that day. Paul is saying, "What are you doing? The message we are preaching didn't come from some demonic experience. We don't have something you don't have. We have a message given to us by God the Holy Spirit, predestined before the foundations of the world, and if you will just listen to the message, let it lead you to Christ, you can receive Him and you will have everything we have. We don't have anything you don't have. We don't have something you can't understand."

That, to me is his whole point. He is refuting this whole practice and is showing them that God's wisdom cannot be dethroned by mere man. In other words, man can't take credit for it and the demonic spirits surely can't take credit for it. You can't go to the oracles of Delphi and find a woman and come up with the wisdom of God. It only comes from the Holy Spirit of God. Secondly, it cannot be discovered by mere man. Man does not discover what God has hidden. It is a mystery, and God must reveal it to man.

### **The wisdom of God cannot be delivered by man**

That is where I want to pick up in 1Cor 2:12. He says, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God." Again we see the contextual "we." However, that is true for all believers. All of us have received the Spirit of God. He says, "received," aorist active, which means willfully received. He says we have not willfully received the spirit of the world. We did not do that. The word for "not" means absolutely not in any way, shape or form.

The "spirit of the world" is key. The word for "world" there is the word that means the disposition, the mindset, the desires of this world without Christ. It is the spirit of the world that crucified Christ. It is the spirit of the world that looks at the gospel as foolishness. It is the spirit of the world that the people go into the temple of Apollo and they get all kinds of these demonic messages. We did not receive the spirit of the world, but we received the Spirit who is from God. We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God.

The word "from" there means more than just from. It is not as if He is sent from God, He is out of God. He is out of God Himself. The word is ek, out of, not apo, away from. We have received the very Spirit of God. God Himself lives in us. You don't have to come to us because you also received the Spirit of God. You don't have to go up to the mountain there. You don't have to go to the temple of Apollo. You come to the Spirit of God who lives in you. What He has taught us He will teach you. He lives in us. No man has a corner on it.

The Holy Spirit of God has been willfully received into our lives. Why? "That we might know the things freely given to us by God." The word "might know" there is eido. It means to know intuitively. Because of His Spirit living in us, we might intuitively perceive and understand the things that are freely given to us by God.



Look at what it says in 1Cor 2:11: "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God." The same word for "know" is there. It is like Paul is saying, "God's Spirit knows so we can know because we have received God's Spirit in our life." Every person who is a believer, who has received Christ, has the Spirit of God living in him. The Spirit of God becomes our teacher, and all of us have access to the same information. It is the Word of God.

The phrase, "that we might know," is present active subjunctive. There are conditions to it. But when we do know and surrender to what the Word of God says, the Spirit gives us full understanding and leads us into all truth. And so every believer has the Spirit of God, but particularly those who are preaching the message to them in the context of 1 Corinthians.

Paul goes on to say, "that we might know the things freely given to us by God." I guarantee you that in the temples of Apollo and Aphrodite, you never learned anything about what those gods, false gods, had given to anybody but what they demanded out of others. But in our God, through the Holy Spirit's power, we can know the things freely given to us by God. Paul is driving home a point. God's wisdom cannot be dethroned by mere man. God's wisdom cannot be discovered by mere man, and God's wisdom cannot be delivered by mere man.

Look what he says in 1Cor 2:1. I want you to see that, because Paul says it very clearly. By the way, the apostle was who we got the Word of God from. They didn't have this. We do. Where did it come from? From the apostles and the prophets. That is what Ephesians 2:20 says to us. But I want you to look back in 1Cor 2:1. He says, "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God." I didn't color it up, I didn't water it down. Verse 2 continues, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

Now having said that, drop down to 1Cor 2:13. I think he is explaining some things now. He is referring to the things he just mentioned in 1Cor 2:12. He says, "which things [What is he talking about? The things that are freely given to us by God mentioned in 1Cor 2:12.] we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words."

Oh, there is so much in this thing. It never gets out of me like it gets in. The word for "words" here is important because it has everything to do with Corinth. The thing that Corinth was into was unintelligible words and messages, that which bypassed the human mind and reason and understanding. But that is not what God does. God never bypasses the human mind. God gives to us that which we can understand. It is enlightened by the Holy Spirit of God, and we can act upon. It is not mystical. It is very clear as to where we are to be.

The word for "taught" means that which was imparted by the Holy Spirit of God: "which things we also speak, not in words [intelligent words] taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit." I think what we have here is one of the greatest proof-texts of verbal inspiration you can find anywhere of how God did not just inject the specific word to every person and made them use the same word, but how God had the wisdom and the intelligence and picked men like Peter and Paul and James and others and John. Each one of them had their own vocabulary. But God the Holy Spirit, having the thought, gave it to Paul and let Paul use his own vocabulary. God the Holy Spirit combining spiritual with spiritual put the two together and came out with the very thing God wanted to say and never at one time at the expense of Peter's or Paul's personality. It is a beautiful picture here of how we got the Word of God because these were the apostles speaking at that time.

It says again in 1Cor 2:13, "which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words." Now, in all the translations I looked at, I like this one the best. It is very difficult. The Greek is not easy. The key word is *sugkrino*. The word comes from two Greek words *sun*, which means together, and *krino*, which means to judge. It means to join together, to compose and to combine. I like the word "compose." That really struck a note in my mind. Oh man, the beauty of God here. He says, "I want my word to be known to man. I picked Paul, a Jewish man, and called him from his mother's womb. I want a Jewish man who knows the law. But I want to teach him grace so I can use him." God takes the spiritual teaching and teaches it to Paul and then even gives him the verbal inspiration of how to speak that word and communicate the very thoughts that God has. To me, this is the full picture of a composer putting it together and making the melody come out exactly the way He wants it to come out.

God used different men, but not one time is there a contradiction in scripture. Dwight L. Moody, right before he died, said, "When I first got saved I could find 1,000 contradictions in the Word of God. Now I am about dead and I can find only one and I am too hardheaded to let the Holy Spirit of God clear it up for me." That is a good word. If you can find a contradiction in the Word of God, friend, you are a better man than anybody else. God used different men in 66 different books through different times and different places, different backgrounds, different vocabularies. Listen to the Greek of Peter and listen to the Greek of Paul. Yet God took His

thought that He wanted, used man as His instrument and spoke through man the Word that was predestined before the foundation of the world.

None of these apostles spoke in their own power. They spoke only by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. This is why we now have the New Testament as it was written from the pages of their lives in that time by the Spirit of God. Paul is saying, "We are not like some of these mediums. We are not like some of these people who go out and get this babble that nobody can understand and then people say they understand and tell you what it means. No, what we have said to you is the reasonable, logical, understandable Word that God Himself has given to us and even given us the vocabulary with which to communicate it to each of you."

### **The wisdom of God cannot be discerned by man**

The wisdom of God is so far different than the pagan wisdom of this world and the spirit of this world. It cannot be dethroned by mere man, cannot be discovered by mere man and cannot be delivered by mere man. But there is one more area that I want to concentrate on. It cannot be discerned by mere man.

Look at 1Cor 2:14. He says, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." Now he is making a contrast here. He takes what he just said, that the Spirit of God gave us the thoughts, the vocabulary to speak those thoughts, combine spiritual things with spiritual things and then he compares that kind of man with the Spirit of God living in him to teach him and to help him understand the things of God. He compares that with the natural man who cannot do these things.

The natural man here is the word *psuchikos*. That is an interesting word. It is important because it is only used in that form four other times in Scripture. Now there is a lot of dissention here. Is the natural man of chapter 2 a saved man and he is just simply pointing out the fact that the natural part of us cannot discern the things of God but only the Spirit of God can? Or is the natural man a lost man? Well, let's look and see what he says. I have my view on it. I believe he is a lost man and here is why.

First of all, Paul uses the word in 1 Corinthians 15:44. *Psuchikos* is called the natural man, soulish man. I believe he is talking about a man devoid of the Spirit of God – period. That is what I believe. I would never force that on anybody. Following the context makes all the sense in the world. But in 1 Corinthians 15:44 it is not real clear as to exactly the difference, but I will show you in another place it is: "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body." Notice the spiritual body is not first. It is the natural then the spiritual. He is talking about the death and resurrection of the body and how it is going to be raised a spiritual body. When it dies, you put a natural body in the ground and when it is raised, it is raised a spiritual body.

Look over in James 3:15, the only other two times this form of the word is used, and look what it says. "This wisdom," he says, "is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, (which is the word there *psuchikos*) and demonic." Not in too good a company.

Now look over in Jude 19. I would say 1:19 but there is only one chapter in Jude. In Jude 19 Jude uses it. I want to show you how he uses this word, then we will go back to our text. Only four times can I find that form of the word used outside of 1 Corinthians 2. Jude 19 reads, "These are the ones who cause divisions, worldlyminded." He is talking about false teachers, but that is the word right there. I don't know why they translated it "worldlyminded." Then it says, "devoid of the Spirit." Now, obviously not too good a company again.

Now let's go back to 1 Corinthians 2:14. Let's look at the strong things that he says about the natural man. There are two things that he says that I think makes a distinction here that it is a lost man. First of all, he says that the natural man will not accept the things of the Spirit of God. He says, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him." Now, the word "not" means not in any way, shape or form. The word "accept" is the word *dechomai*, which means to eagerly receive something. It is a deponent verb in the present active sense. In other words, it is a lifestyle, a continuous thing. The soulish man without the Spirit of God does not in any way, shape or form receive with eagerness the things of the Spirit of God.

When the gospel is preached or taught, what does that do to him? Well, first of all, it clashes with his own perverted ideas and his own perverted thoughts. It condemns them and works to root them out. Therefore, he does not receive it. Why would he? It would change everything and he doesn't want to be changed. Therefore, he does not receive it. They are foolishness to him.

We have seen this phrase before. Go back to 1:18. It is foolishness to him. You are talking about an individual here. It is foolishness not to his natural part, it is foolishness to him as a person. 1Cor 2:18 reads, "For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." That is pretty clear. 1Cor 2:23 says, "but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness." So the natural man thinks the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness. We have already seen before that these are lost people.

Secondly, he says the natural man cannot accept the things of the Spirit. He cannot accept them because he cannot understand them. Look at the verse. It says, "and he cannot understand them." Why can't he? He says, "because they are spiritually appraised." The word for "can" really is *dunamis*. He has no ability within himself. The word "not" is not in any way, shape or form.

The word for "understand" is *ginosko*. He cannot sit down and study it and come up with an understanding of it. A lost man can come to church until he falls over in the floor and he cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God. He cannot. Why? Because they are spiritually appraised. The word "appraised" is the word *anakrino*. *Krino* is to judge something with a standard. You have a standard by which you judge something. The lost man has no standard by which he can judge. Therefore, not only will he not accept them, his natural part cannot even understand them.

Why? It is because the Spirit of God does not live in him. Then Paul gives the comparison in 1Cor 2:15. He says, "But he who is spiritual appraises all things." You know, this helps a little bit to understand the world. Have you ever wondered why sinners sin? Some people come to me and say, "I know a man who hates God. Man, listen to what he is doing," as if they are surprised. Why would you be surprised when a sinner sins? That is all he can do. He does not accept the things of Spirit of God and he cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God, so what is he going to do but just be what he is. He is going to sin.

But in 1Cor 2:15 we read, "But he who is spiritual appraises all things." The word for "spiritual" is *pneumatikos*. It means pertaining to the spirit. It is those people who have the Spirit of God living in them who have been made new creatures in Christ by His Spirit coming to live in them, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, enjoying His influences, His grace, His gifts. These are the spiritual ones.

Is the natural man of chapter 2 just a particular side of a believer? Is Paul talking about someone not letting the Spirit of God show them these things? If you are not going to appraise the things by the Spirit of God, then you are going to be natural and you can't accept the mature things that Paul has taught. The people who believe that compare it to chapter 3, which we haven't gotten to yet, and the babe in Christ who can only receive milk and couldn't receive meat. They ask, "Could that be that person?"

Well, there may be a case there. But I don't see the context saying that at all. If you just stay in the context, that is not what he is saying. The word *psuchikos* is not even used in chapter 3. There it uses the word *sarkikos*, and that is different. *Psuchikos* seems to be the person who is devoid of the Spirit of God. *Sarkikos* seems to be a person who is fleshly minded but has the Spirit of God. There is a huge difference there; at least I see a huge difference. So that is where I stand on it in case anybody wonders where I am. If I am wrong, just pray for me. But that is just the way I see it. I am going to be honest with you.

"But he who is spiritual appraises all things." You know, it is interesting to me that the one who appraises all things has a discernment. There is a grid through which he looks at things. He can understand the things of God because there is a grid through which he can see them.

Years ago, when some of the music changed a little bit, my children came to me and said, "Daddy, can we go to one of these concerts?" Well, the mistake that I had made was seeing the record jacket of one of them. They all came out in these leotard tights and had guitars and flashing lights and smoke bombs. I am thinking, "Boy, the apostle Paul could have really used that, you know, when he was on Mars Hill. That would have helped his message." I am thinking, "I don't like this stuff."

One day I was praying about it and God just put on my heart, "Wait a minute, if you are teaching your kids the Word, they ought to have the ability to appraise all things by His Spirit." So I backed off this legalistic kick that you can't ever do anything like that. So I said, "Listen, I am going to let you go. Help yourself." My son looked at me and said, "Well, are you sure?" I said, "Help yourself." He said, "Well, man, alright." But I said, "But the key is this, when you come back, you have to sit down and talk to me and tell me what was biblical and what wasn't." I knew my children and I knew they knew the Word.

It was so much fun. They came back and my son said, "Man, this was great. This was good." I said, "What made it good?" "Listen to the message of it." He would go through the message. He had written it down and he showed me the message of it. I said, "Did the method kill it?" He said, "No, sir, Daddy. It came through loud and clear." I said, "Okay, what did you not like about it?" He said, "Those guys who started that thing." He said, "Man, they were off the wall." I said, "What do you mean they were off the wall? Their method?" "No, Daddy, they didn't have a message." He said, "You could take Jesus out of it and put it in Nashville and nobody would ever know the difference."

Bingo! A spiritual man appraises all things by the Spirit of God. You see, that is the difference in the natural man and the spiritual man. The natural man doesn't accept them and a natural man can't even understand the things of the Spirit of God. But yet, we do have the ability to do that.

In 1Cor 2:16 Paul says, "For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him?" In other words, when you look out at all these human teachers and all these people who have this guru language and speak and they say they have got a message from God, who among those people could ever say that he could instruct God with anything? Instruct God. He couldn't do that. Oh, the arrogance of people who do that. But then he turns right around and says, "But." This is what also makes me think he is changing

gear. That is a transitional word. "But we have the mind of Christ." To me, again that makes a distinction between the natural man and the spiritual man, having the mind of Christ.

You say, "Wait a minute, wait a minute. You mean to tell me that I have the mind of Christ?" Yeah, but now hold it. Settle down. You are not God, and you are not Christ. But you have the ability to tap into His mind. How? Because the Spirit of God lives in you. Remember the "we". "We have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God that we might know the things freely given to us from God." Who is the Spirit of God? He is the one who probes the deep things of God. And if he probes the deep things of God, He is the teacher of God, the giver of the wisdom of God and we have Him living in us. We have the mind of Christ. Now we can appraise all things by His Word, taught by His Spirit.

Boy, what a difference in a natural man and a spiritual man. He said, "But we have the mind of Christ." The word means the ability to understand the things of God. Look over in 1Cor 6:19, in case you are wondering, how can we have this mind of Christ? I love this particular verse. "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" I think Paul is trying to show them. "Guys, listen, we are teaching you a wisdom that came from God. It didn't come from us. Don't attach yourself to us. We didn't go into the temple of Apollo and have all this stuff happen. We just got saved, and God put His Spirit in us and set us apart and called us and made us apostles. We came and preached to you, and you received Christ because of the message we got from Him and gave to you. When you received Christ, you got the same thing we have. We don't have any more or less than what you have. You have the same ability to understand what we understand. Don't attach yourself to us and to men. Attach yourself to the one who lives in you, whose Spirit will reveal to you and uncover to you the marvelous things of God."

### **Conclusion**

Well, God's wisdom cannot be dethroned by mere man. God's wisdom cannot be discovered by mere man. It cannot be delivered by mere man. And it cannot be discerned by mere man. No man and no spirit of this world can take credit for God's wisdom. It is a product of the Spirit of God who only lives in the hearts and lives of believers, giving them and all of us the mind of Christ, the ability to judge everything, to appraise everything through the grid of His Word and His Wisdom. That is the spiritual man.

He is going to show us a babe in Christ in chapter 3. If you want to hold to the fact that a natural man is a believer just in his natural part, that is fine, but I don't see that in the context at all. I see him drawing a distinct line right down through the middle of those who will not and cannot and those who have the mind of Christ. That also sets up 1Cor 3 because the Corinthians were not utilizing what they had and lived as if they were totally ignorant of all of this truth.

I have one of these little beepers I carry around with me. Mine has a little thing on the bottom that if you hit it wrong, the battery falls out. It is incredible how many people can't get in touch with you when the battery has fallen out. People tell me, "I have called you and called you and called you and left a message." I have been wearing it every day, but without the battery in it, I cannot receive the messages people are trying to give to me. When you put the battery in it, it is amazing how it works! But you have to have the right thing in it to make it go off.

You have to have the Spirit of God living in you, friend, or number one, you will not receive and you cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God because His wisdom is not something that you learn in a classroom. It is in the classroom of being on your knees in His Word before God with a surrendered heart. God will reveal to you. Yes, He will, just like He did to Peter or anybody else. I mean, there is no corner on this. But the key is, you don't have to go to some preacher to get it. If you are a Christian, the Spirit of God lives in you, and you can go to the Word of God. He is your teacher. He gives you the wisdom you need to know.

Thank God there are preachers in the body of Christ. I have a job because of that. We come along side and encourage and equip. But we also must help you to stand on your own two feet, listening to God through His Word and walking with integrity towards God.

We have that battery in us. We have the Spirit of God living in us and we appraise all things by that grid that He gives to us. In the light of the context of Corinth, I believe it will perhaps become clearer and clearer why Paul is making this differentiation of attaching yourself to men.