

Message #10

I Corinthians 2:14-16

The Bible bears witness to the fact that there is a sense in which we are equal. For example, when Paul was in Athens speaking on Mars Hill, he said, “He (God) made from one every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth...Being then the offspring of God” (Acts 17:26, 29).

However, there is also a sense in which we ARE NOT equal.

As we come to this section, Paul wanted the Corinthians to realize they were NOT all equal in spirituality. Our governmental constitution may give us equality in our citizenship, but our Biblical constitution does NOT give us equality in our spirituality.

A PERSON’S ABILITY TO GRASP SPIRITUAL TRUTH IS DETERMINED BY GOD’S SPIRITUAL CLASSIFICATION OF THE PERSON.

One may be brilliant in intellectual accomplishment. One may be radiant in philosophical logic. One may be sparkling in academic achievement and be lacking in spiritual development. Spirituality is a grant from God.

CLASSIFICATION #1 – The man who is natural . 2:14

The natural man is one who has had a natural birth, but not a spiritual birth. The term refers to one whose horizons are very limited to this life. He is comprised of a body, a soul and a spirit (I Thess. 5:23). He has a world-consciousness, self-consciousness and a God-consciousness. He is a man who does natural man-type things: he works, he plays, he rests, he thinks and, in one way or another, he worships. He has a unique personality with natural talents and abilities.

The natural man governs himself by his own natural reasoning and logic. However, there is one thing that characterizes ALL natural men: they have NEVER been born again and they WILL NOT see the Kingdom of God (John 3:3).

The natural man has NEVER had a spiritual birth and, as a result, as **verse 14** says, he “does not accept the things of the Spirit of God.” That verb “accept” means he does not continually accept and welcome the things of the Spirit of God.

Contextually, two of those things would be:

A. The message of the cross –1:18, 20, 23; 2:2, 8

B. The exposition of the Bible –1:21; 2:1, 4, 13

In other words, Paul is saying that the natural man does not continually accept or welcome the cross-message of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Bible.

To the natural man, Biblical exposition is foolishness and the message of Jesus Christ on the cross is moronic.

Reason #1 - The non-intellectual reason. **2:14b**

The natural man views the message of what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross as foolishness (i.e. 1:23). The natural man wants a more scholarly works method of salvation. He wants something more philosophical.

Reason #2 - The no-capacity reason. **2:14c**

It is not just that the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to him; it is that he doesn't have the capability to understand them. The words "cannot understand" are Greek words that mean the natural man has now power, no capability and no ability to understand the things of God. The Spirit of God is the one who allows one to understand spiritual truth, and since the natural man does not have the Spirit of God in him (i.e. Rom. 8:9), he DOES NOT have the capacity to understand spiritual truth.

CLASSIFICATION #2 – The man who is spiritual . **2:15-16**

The conjunction "but" which begins **verse 15** is a strong adversative conjunction. It describes one who is in sharp contrast to the natural man, the one classified as one who is spiritual.

The spiritual man is one who has had a natural birth and a spiritual birth. This type of person is one who has a normal, natural, physical life. He too has a body, soul and a spirit. He too has a world-consciousness, self-consciousness and a God-consciousness.

There are many things similar to that of the natural man; however, the ONE critical difference is that the spiritual man has been born again, and he is one who is studying and understanding the Bible and one who is growing and developing in his Christian life.

Quality #1 - The spiritual man has the ability to appraise all things. **2:15a**

What this means is that the spiritual man is one who has a supernatural ability to discern and understand the deep things of the Word of God. The word appraise speaks of a very careful examination, a very detailed investigation.

Quality #2 - The spiritual man is not appraised by other men. **2:15b**

No natural man or carnal man WILL EVER be able to discern the things the spiritual man can discern. Neither will reach the level of spiritual comprehension that this one can reach. It is clear from this context that Paul was certainly in a position to evaluate the spiritual condition of the Corinthians (3:1-2). It is also clear from the book that the Corinthians thought they were in a position to judge Paul (4:3).

That word "instruct" means that Paul had personally been taught and advised by Jesus Christ; he had the mind of Christ.

Paul was a man who totally gave his life to Jesus Christ, first for salvation and then for service. He was a spiritually-minded man and Jesus Christ had personally taught Paul; in fact, Paul states “we have the mind of Christ.”

Jesus Christ personally revealed things to Paul and to others like him (John 15:15). The Corinthians didn't have the mind of Christ for they were carnal (3:1), but Paul had the mind of Christ because he was spiritual.

A person's ability to grasp spiritual truth is determined by God's spiritual classification of the person. As God looks at us, how does He classify us? One natural? One carnal? One spiritual?