

## 1 Corinthians 2:1-16

### "Wisdom Revealed"

The message of the cross offends the wisdom of this world. It's foolishness to those who are perishing. The idea of a man being taken, tortured, nailed to a cross & left to die somehow being a means through which I can be saved simply makes no sense. You can do the math, it won't add up, the dots don't connect along the lines of worldly reasoning.

& God was well pleased to accomplish our salvation in a way that none would anticipate, in a way that no one could foresee. Because the wisdom of this world stands in opposition to God, it wars against God, it tries to find answers, draw conclusions & solve problems apart from God. So God will destroy the wisdom of the wise of this world & bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

But something happens when you hear the message of the cross, & you believe on the Lord J.C. – When you trust in the truth that Jesus didn't die for any sin of His own, but He shed His blood for you & for me... For w/out the shedding of blood there can be no remission (no elimination or taking away) of sin. God has said, *"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul."*<sup>1</sup> So Jesus poured out His life that we might find life through faith in Him. & That's exactly what happens when we believe w/our heart in His work on our behalf. We're taken from dead in sin, to alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. We become a new creation; old things pass away & all things are made new...

It's not about anything we *do*, it's about everything He's *done*. Jesus became *for us* wisdom from God (worldly wisdom won't lead us to God, *Jesus* is the way, we come to the Father through *Him*) & righteousness & sanctification & redemption—that as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."

### Vs 1-4

Paul is taking them back. He can sense that they're beginning to slide back into previous patterns of thinking, placing a premium on logical reasoning & worldly rationale. But he reminds them of the manner of his ministry when he was among them.

He says, "Look, if you remember right, when I came to you & spent a year & a half w/you, I didn't present myself as some sort of profound philosopher. I wasn't peddling a product as some sort of salesman, trying to talk you into something through my smooth speech & eloquent oratory." He reminds them that he came, simply as a *witness*.

<sup>1</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Le 17:11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Not to try & talk anyone into anything, but to declare the straight-forward truth of the gospel. He says (Vs 1) that he came (notice), “declaring to you the *testimony* of God.”

Who is the person who declares a “testimony”? That person is a *witness*. There you are in a court of law; they place you on the “witness” stand & you share your testimony. You testify to the truth of what you’ve heard, what you’ve seen & what you’ve experienced. That’s what Paul had done among them. He gave *testimony* to what God had done through the Person of J.C.

Might I add this is what God has called *you* to do as well. You’re not to try & convince anyone of anything, you don’t have to rationalize or justify what you believe. God has called you to share the truth of what His word says & what you’ve experienced... Too many times we convince ourselves that we can’t really share because we don’t know the bible well enough. **Or we might say something & get backed into an intellectual corner that we can’t work our way out of. So rather than take a chance, we choose to say nothing at all. Ladies & gentlemen, a witness doesn’t need to know everything, they’re only there to testify to their account. –**

Now that’s not to say we don’t need to study, we certainly do! But if you wait till you *know* it all to *say* anything at all, you’ll never say anything! I’m reminded of the blind man in Jn Ch 9 that Jesus healed... The religious leaders cornered him, trying to defame Jesus & said, **“Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner.’ He answered and said, ‘Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.”**<sup>2</sup> Wait, they said something that he didn’t know the answer to & he didn’t try to defend or make something up to sound smart? He said, “Hey, if He’s a sinner or not, I don’t know!” It’s ok to not know everything! You can say, “That’s a great question.” Or, “I haven’t considered that before, I don’t know.” “But here’s what I do know, I was blind, now I see. My life has been changed. I’ve been made free, I’ve been made whole. My soul has been healed & the One who did it for me was Jesus.” You’re a “witness”.

That’s not to say that Paul *couldn’t* argue persuasively or rationalize aggressively. But as it pertained to his ministry, he made a conscious decision to disregard that approach when presenting the gospel. He says in Vs 2, “For *I determined not to know* anything among you except...” He consciously decided to keep the focus on the message of the cross. He wasn’t salesman... You know, saying whatever needs said to seal the deal.

<sup>2</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Jn 9:24–25]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“Will this car get good gas mileage?” “It’ll get *great* gas mileage.” “Do you think it’ll make a good, reliable vehicle for a long time to come?” “Oh, this vehicle is guaranteed not to rust, bust, collect dust, chip, crack or peel!” If you need to hear it, he’ll be glad to say it to get you to buy in on what he’s selling... Paul was not that way.

He was an ambassador, not a salesman. An ambassador doesn’t have to persuade you through smooth talk. He says, “I have a message from my King. This is it.” He doesn’t cater to what his audience *wants* to hear. He delivers the message & he’s done. Whether or not you choose to accept it, is entirely up to you. You can either enjoy the benefits of believing or suffer the detriment of not believing; but no one is here to “talk you into” anything.

& This was important to Paul. He was making a distinction for them so that they could clearly decide. – You see; in the ancient world, entertainment wasn’t the same as it is today. Today, you might go to movie, you might go to a sporting event, you might catch a concert... whatever. In the ancient world, one very prevalent form of entertainment was to listen to someone give a speech. – & When you’ve heard enough speeches, (as w/anything else) you begin to develop sort of a “score card” mentality. **You hold up a number in your mind when the speaker is done...** “What a great delivery, what powerful oratory, he really turned that point eloquently!” & They gave great value to mannerisms, presentation, eloquence & all the rest... Paul says, “Listen, I’m cutting through all of that. Couldn’t care less about *any* of that. I’m here to deliver a message.” “For I determined not to know anything among you except J.C. & Him crucified.”

Because *that* message is *everything*. Nothing else matters until we settle on that point. That you need to *know* J.C. & believe in the efficiency of the cross to wash away your sins & make you right in the sight of God. When Paul wrote to the Philippians of the excellence of the knowledge of J.C., he said, ***“that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”***<sup>3</sup> J.C. & Him crucified.

This was his passion & his priority amongst the Corinthians. Just as he wrote in his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the, ***“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”***<sup>4</sup> J.C. & Him crucified. Everything hinges on this one thing. **Vs 3** – It’s very revealing isn’t it. When he stepped up to share his message, it’s not like he was brimming w/confidence. He was human just like you & me... He was nervous, intimidated even...

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Php 3:10–11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (2 Co 5:21). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He says, “My preaching wasn’t w/persuasive words of human wisdom.” Again, it wasn’t that he wasn’t studied up, or prepared to be in the pulpit. It’s that he wasn’t relying on his own capacity or ability to convince anyone of anything. That wasn’t his purpose.

He wanted it to be clear. When someone’s life was transformed, it wasn’t due to the art of human persuasion, it was a *demonstration* of the Spirit & power of God! The fact of the matter is that his simplicity & his timidity served to emphasize the efficiency of the message.

### Vs 5

Paul was careful to ensure the fact that when someone’s life was changed, that no one could say, “Of course they’re following what he says, he’s the kind of guy who could sell ice to an Eskimo!” You know, “He’s a smooth talker. A real charmer.” A piper of sorts... No. It would be crystal clear. A life changed would be nothing short of a demonstration of the Spirit & of power.

That way no one’s faith would rest upon the wisdom of men (that is, an explanation), but upon the power of God (a demonstration). We need to understand that there is a vast difference between a *response* & a *result*. It’s not too difficult for a good speaker to yield a *response* from a crowd. Tell a touching story, a funny anecdote or two, woo them through a little entertainment & a charismatic personality. People will *respond* to you. But that’s not in any way indicative of getting *results* for the kingdom of God.

Let me put it to you this way. If I can talk you *into* something, then someone else can talk you *out* of that same thing. But if you experience the power of God in transforming your life... no one can convince you that what God did for you isn’t real. You experienced the forgiveness, the grace, the love & new life of God personally & that has changed you *profoundly/permanently*, there’s no going back. You’ll never be the same.

So Paul didn’t use the techniques taught by worldly wisdom... “However;” Paul would say, “let’s not get it twisted.”

### Vs 6-8

You see, just because Paul wouldn’t cater to the Corinthian love of human wisdom, doesn’t mean his message embodied no wisdom. In fact, there is a vast *wealth* of wisdom that he shared. But it was only accessible to those who had a heart to receive it... “among those who are mature.”

Now; who are the mature? Is he distinguishing between the saved & unsaved, or the spiritually immature Vs the mature believer?

I lean toward the latter but there's certainly application in either context. There are spiritual truths that only come alive to you in Christ. We spoke last week about the message of the cross, how it's foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it's both beautiful & brilliant. Wisdom beyond this world's ability to comprehend. It's the power of God unto salvation for all who believe.

Equally true is that salvation is just the beginning. Sanctification (growth in Christ) is to follow. But that doesn't always happen. Some people can be saved 25 yrs, but as it pertains to their spiritual growth & development, they're still babes! They've never really grown, they haven't really pursued a relationship w/Christ beyond salvation. It's like when Paul (whom I believe wrote Hebrews) wrote to them, *"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."*<sup>5</sup>

You see, there's a vast wealth of spiritual wisdom that awaits the child of God. But Paul is telling the Corinthians that so long as they're placing a premium on *human* wisdom, that's a tell. They aren't maturing as they should be. Baby's will eat anything, put anything in their mouth, baby Christians are that way as well. They'll try to feed on just about anything, they don't have the discernment, aren't mature enough to recognize what has substance, what's a solid diet Vs what's not healthy at all & perhaps even harmful.

Now; at the heart of this wisdom (w/regard to the context) is the message of the cross. God's plan of salvation from before the foundations of the world. Which none of the rulers of this age knew nor recognized, or else they wouldn't have crucified the Lord of glory. Again, who are the "rulers of this age"? Is it a reference to folks like Pilate, the religious leaders who incited the crowd to demand the crucifixion of Jesus? Or is it a reference to demonic entities? As Paul refers to them in Eph 6? There's probably room for debate, but the truth is it's applicable in either context.

Because had the political rulers known who Jesus was, they wouldn't have done what they did. & Had the demonic forces known that the cross wouldn't destroy Jesus, but would defeat *them* (Col 2:15) then they wouldn't have deceived Judas & incited the crowd.

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<sup>5</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Heb 5:12-14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But it was a “mystery”. Something completely unknowable apart from the revelation of God. The word “mystery” in your bible points to something completely unattainable through human intellect. The plan of God through the cross of J.C. (the message of the gospel) was something that no one saw coming. The age of the church, Jew & Gentile being one in Christ. The age of grace. The gift of the Holy Spirit. These are the things revealed through the gospel, these are the things that Paul preached.

### Vs 9-11

Allow me to take a brief moment & point out that the context surrounding Vs 9 is critical. It's a Vs that's often used to illustrate the glories that await us in heaven. & Though that's a fine *application* (because it's no doubt true) it's not the proper *interpretation* at all!

Paul is underscoring the point that the rulers of this age didn't recognize who Jesus was, nor did they understand God's plan through the cross. They didn't get it or they wouldn't have crucified Him. & He essentially says, “To use the language of scripture, ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’”

They didn't have the *Spirit* of God, so they didn't understand the *plan* of God. All that God had prepared for those who love Him. The forgiveness of sins, the hope of eternal life, a life led *in* the Spirit, empowered *by* the Spirit. These are things that the natural man (the unbeliever) never dreamed of...

### Vs 10a

You see? Spiritual truth is communicated by the Spirit of God. We can't receive spiritual revelation through natural means. It takes the *Spirit* of God to reveal to us the *things* of God. “God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.”

“For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” In other words, we can't really know the heart of God apart from the Spirit of God. He says, “Just as no one really knows what's happening in your heart apart from you (your spirit). No one can really know what's happening in the heart of God apart from Him (His Spirit).”

### Vs 12

Justification, redemption, righteousness by faith, all these things freely given to us through the cross of J.C. & When you believe on the Lord J.C. God gives you His Spirit, His Holy Spirit comes to live inside you, *revealing* to you these things, *assuring* you of these things. You have been “sealed” by the Spirit for the day of redemption.

### Vs 13

This word “comparing” could also be translated, “interpreting” or “explaining”. The idea seems to be that the Holy Spirit teaches (or interprets/explains, makes known) spiritual wisdom to those who are spiritual people. The Holy Spirit doesn’t make known spiritual truth to the natural man, but will share the deep things of God (as discovered through the gospel) to spiritual people (those who’ve been born again as by the Spirit of God). Notice Vs 14.

### Vs 14-16

Now; we know that there are only 2 types of people in this world. Saved or unsaved. Yet of the 2 types there are 3 categories. The natural man (the unredeemed, unregenerate), the natural man lives life on the basic plain of materialism. Driven by the appetites of the flesh, searching for power, for pleasure, fame, fortune... you get the idea. It’s where we start in life, it’s the life we inherited from Adam (ruled by our sin nature).

Having said that, I don’t want you to think there’s anything inherently wrong or sinful in the “natural” life. Meaning, God isn’t displeased when we go to work rather than pray all day. Or sleep rather than read the bible all night. He created us to live in this world. But life on this level is void of spiritual insight. Spiritual things seem foolish to the natural man. Why waste time on “spiritual” things? You could be out having fun, making money...

Truth be told, even if he *wanted* to know them he couldn’t because they’re spiritually discerned (or examined, evaluated). You have to have a “spiritual” nature to properly evaluate spiritual things. Just as you can’t properly evaluate things that require sight w/out eyes, or sound w/out ears, you can’t judge things that are spiritual apart from the Holy Spirit...

That’s another category. The “spiritual” man. The transition from the natural man to the *spiritual* man takes place when we’re “born again” of the Spirit. You’ve gone from being a “natural” man, to a “spiritual” man. There’s a 3<sup>rd</sup> category that Paul will speak of in another study. The “Carnal” man. This is basically a man who has a spiritual nature (he’s been born again) but still reasons like he/she did when they were an unbeliever.

But when Paul says that the spiritual man judges all things, yet he himself is right judged by no one. He doesn’t mean that a believer shouldn’t be called to account when they do something wrong. He’s saying that the believer can right understand the position of an unbeliever, but an unbeliever can’t accurately understand the believer. He doesn’t have “the mind of Christ”.

But as a *child* of God, the *Spirit* of God has given *you* the mind of Christ. However, we have a choice to make, to resist it, or walk in it. Let me encourage you as our time comes to close today, *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”*<sup>6</sup> Let’s allow the Spirit of God, to have His way in our heart & in our mind. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Doing nothing through selfish ambition or conceit, looking out not for the things of self, but the things of others. That God might be glorified in our lives...

### Prayer Points:

God its’ so easy to place our own needs, even our own wants before the needs of others. Help us that we not *resist* the mind of Christ, but that we *receive* it. Learning to crucify the flesh & walk in the Spirit. & We pray more & more for the demonstration of the Spirit & of power. People turning *to* You, believing *in* You, being born again to the increase of Your kingdom. Use our lives

Perhaps that’s you here today. Something is resonating in you & it may not make sense to you, but you know that today is the day of salvation for you. You have no idea the good things that God has prepared for you, but you can. Give your life to J.C. Turn from your sin & trust in Him today. I’m not promising you a primrose, problem free path. I’m promising you the forgiveness of sin, the hope of eternal life by grace through faith in J.C.