

## 1 Corinthians 2

**How did Paul NOT come to the Corinthians (v. 1)?** He reminded them of his ministry among them, i.e. he *"did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom"* as he proclaimed the Gospel (*"the testimony about God"*). He did not want his persona/who he was to distract from the message. He was not at all interested in showing off as an orator. Paul always sought to glorify God and not himself. He was a picture of humility.

**What was the focal point of Paul's message (v. 2)?** As far as his preaching went, Paul only spoke about *"Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."* This was his regular practice (Galatians 3:1). He left all other knowledge aside (*"...resolved to know nothing while I was with you except..."*). *"Jesus Christ"* refers to His Person, while *"Him crucified"* refers to His work.<sup>1</sup>

**What was Paul's state in coming to them (v. 3)?** Knowing the spiritual vacuum and the moral decadence he would face when entering Corinth, he came with a sense of personal inadequacy – weakness, fear and trembling -- which was exactly where God wanted him. That way the power on display would clearly be of God and not of Paul and there would be no confusion about who got the glory. He himself was a great example of how God uses the weak to confound the mighty.<sup>2</sup>

**How did Paul characterize his message and his preaching (v. 4)?** Paul's preaching was a "demonstration," not a performance. Conviction of sin and conversion to God come as a result of the Holy Spirit's "power," not the "wisdom" of the preacher. Conviction does not come as a result of man's persuasive arguments. It comes as the Holy Spirit opens blind eyes when Christians proclaim the gospel.<sup>3</sup>

**What was the end result Paul desired (v. 5)?** Paul knew that there was the utmost danger that his hearers might be focused on his words or on his personality rather than on God and His power. Conscious of his own inability to bless or to save, he determined that he would lead men to trust in God alone rather than in the wisdom of men. All who proclaim the gospel message or teach the word of God should make this their constant aim.<sup>4</sup>

**How did Paul define his message (v. 6)?** His message was tailored for the mature believer who would be able to understand the real depths of the gospel. The unbeliever is incapable of understanding. There is a dramatic difference between godly wisdom and secular wisdom (the wisdom of this age). And the standard is set by *"the rulers of this age"* for what unbelieving people consider to be true, particularly those who were responsible for Jesus' crucifixion (v. 8). In Paul's day, the climate of public opinion dominated secular wisdom.

**What was the content of Paul's message (v. 7)?** The "wisdom" that Paul proclaimed was a "hidden" wisdom that God had not previously revealed. This message was unknown ("a mystery") before Christ came. It was essentially the fullness of the Gospel. At the heart of this wisdom is the plan of salvation intended for our glory and determined before time began (Ephesians 1:4). It includes such wonderful truths as the fact that *now* Jews and Gentiles are made one in Christ and we will share together in Christ's glory (Romans 8:17).

The Gospel displays the most profound philosophy which has ever been presented to the intellect of man. It comes directly from the mind and heart of God. It is so subtle, so mysterious, it so far surpasses the most exalted creations of human reason, that it cannot be understood or appreciated by men unless they are aided by the Spirit of God.<sup>5</sup>

**Who are the "rulers of this age" and how did they respond to Paul's message (v. 8)?** They are probably the same intellectual trend-setters Paul mentioned in v. 6. They demonstrated their ignorance of divine wisdom when they crucified the Lord of glory. If they had understood the central place that Jesus Christ occupied in God's plan, *"they would not have crucified"* Him (Luke 23:34).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1751). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Corinthians, 2019 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>). p. 43

<sup>4</sup> MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1752). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Corinthians, 2019 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>). p. 44

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 46

**What point is Paul making by quoting Isaiah (v. 9)?** There is no way of understanding available to man through his natural senses (eyes, ears, or mind) which can give him any idea of the wonderful things that "*God has prepared for those who love him.*" Paul is referring to the way of salvation which God has prepared for us by the life and death and resurrection and saving power of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup> Human reasoning, scientific investigations or philosophical inquiries are totally inadequate to find the truth of God.

**How then can we discover the wonderful mysteries of God (v. 10)?** Only as the indwelling Holy Spirit reveals them to us. Any Christian can understand and appreciate the very best that God has revealed, because every believer possesses the spiritual organ of perception, namely: the Holy Spirit.

**What does Paul have to say about knowing the thoughts of man and God (v. 11)?** No one knows what a man is thinking except the man himself. No one else can possibly find out what he's thinking unless he chooses to make it known. Even then, in order to understand a man, a person must have the spirit of a man. An animal could not fully understand our thinking. So it is with God. The only way one can understand the things of God is through the indwelling Holy Spirit of God who reveals them to us (v. 16b).

**What have we received (and not received) and why (v. 12)?** All believers have received "*the Spirit who is from God,*" i.e., the Holy Spirit (12:13; Romans 8:9). He helps us understand the mind ("thoughts," v. 11) of God and the things "*God has freely given us.*" This Spirit is vastly different from "*the spirit of the world.*" Unbelievers cannot understand the things of God (as believers can) (v. 14). Apart from "*the Spirit who is from God,*" the apostles could never have understood the divine truths which Paul is speaking about and which are preserved for us in the New Testament.<sup>8</sup>

**How do we (believers) speak (v. 13)?** We speak spiritual truths using the words that the Holy Spirit has helped us to understand and express. We did not choose "*words taught us by human wisdom*" i.e. the words of worldly wisdom.

**What are the limitations of "the man without the Spirit" (v. 14)?** The man without the Spirit or "the worldly or natural man" is any person who does not possess the Holy Spirit, namely: unbelievers. Every human being is a natural man until he or she trusts in Christ and receives the Spirit. This type of person is spiritually dead, without God. He cannot accept or understand all that God has revealed, because he does not possess the indwelling Spirit of God, who enables believers to understand spiritual matters. The natural person can, of course, understand the gospel and experience salvation but only when the Holy Spirit illuminates his or her understanding (John 6:44, 65).

Just like human ears cannot hear high-frequency radio waves and deaf men are unable to judge music contests and blind men cannot enjoy beautiful scenery.....the unsaved are *unable to understand* the language of spiritual truth. They need an interpreter. That is a ministry that only the Holy Spirit can perform.

Like a deaf critic of Bach or a blind critic of Michelangelo is the unregenerate critic of God's Word.<sup>9</sup>

**In contrast to v. 14, how does Paul describe the spiritual man (v. 15)?** The spiritual man is a Christian, a person who possesses the Holy Spirit. He is able to appraise and make judgments regarding "all (spiritual) things." In other words, the spiritual person is able to discern spiritual truth that a "natural" person cannot. The spiritual person's judge is ultimately God, not other unconverted people.<sup>10</sup>

**What does Isaiah marvel at with his rhetorical question (v. 16)?** The prophet marveled at the mind of God. Who can fully understand what God understands ("*For who has known the mind of the Lord*")? Certainly no one can. On the other hand, mature believers can understand, at least partially, because they have the Spirit of God in them, and He controls them. Consequently, the mature Christian has "*the mind of Christ.*" That is, he/she views life to some extent as Jesus did, because that person understands things from God's perspective.

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<sup>7</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Corinthians, 2019 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 48

<sup>8</sup> MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1753). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>9</sup> Lowery, D. K. (1985). 1 Corinthians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 510). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>10</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Corinthians, 2019 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 52