

# 1 CORINTHIANS 2

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*Be Intentional*  
Philippians 2:12-13  
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# 1 CORINTHIANS 2

THIS CHAPTER CONTINUES PAUL'S DISCUSSION OF THE GOSPEL AND THE WISDOM OF MEN. THERE WERE CHRISTIANS AT CORINTH WHO ADMIRERD THE PHILOSOPHIES OF MEN (PERHAPS THE ORATORY OF APOLLOS ENCOURAGED THIS), AND THEY THOUGHT THAT THE CHURCH WOULD BE BETTER OFF TO USE MAN'S WISDOM AND PHILOSOPHY TO WIN CONVERTS RATHER THAN THE SIMPLE AND DESPISED MESSAGE OF THE CROSS.

## I. THE TWO MESSAGES PAUL PREACHED (2:1–8)

### A. *THE GOSPEL.*

WHEN PAUL CAME TO CORINTH, IT WAS FROM A SEEMING DEFEAT AT ATHENS (ACTS 17:32–34) WHERE HE ADDRESSED THE GREEK PHILOSOPHERS BUT WON FEW CONVERTS. THIS EXPERIENCE, PLUS HIS CONVICTION THAT ONLY THE PLAIN GOSPEL IS THE POWER OF GOD, LED PAUL TO MINISTER IN CORINTH IN FEAR AND TREMBLING. HE DID NOT USE THE ENTICING (PERSUASIVE) WORDS OF THE ORATOR OR PHILOSOPHER; HE SIMPLY PREACHED IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT. HE WAS ANXIOUS THAT THE BELIEVERS PUT THEIR FAITH IN GOD AND NOT IN PEOPLE. IT IS SAD WHEN PASTORS OR EVANGELISTS MAKE CONVERTS TO THEMSELVES AND FAIL TO TEACH PEOPLE HOW TO WALK WITH CHRIST ALONE. HOW SAD WHEN CHRISTIANS HAVE TO LEAN ON OTHER BELIEVERS AND NEVER LEARN TO WALK ON THEIR OWN. IN CHAPTER 3 PAUL CALLS THESE CHRISTIANS "BABES IN CHRIST" (3:1–4).

### B. *THE MYSTERY.*

BUT PAUL DID NOT STOP WITH A MERE DECLARATION OF THE GOSPEL, AS IMPORTANT AS THAT IS. HE ALSO TAUGHT A DEEP WISDOM OF GOD TO THOSE WHO WERE MORE MATURE IN THE FAITH. SAD TO SAY, THERE WERE FEW OF THESE IN CORINTH! THESE PEOPLE HAD THEIR EYES ON HUMAN LEADERS, WERE COMPARING MEN, AND WERE FAILING TO GROW IN THE WORD. IT IS NECESSARY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH FOR THE PASTOR AND TEACHERS TO DECLARE THE GOSPEL TO THE LOST, BUT IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT THAT THEY TEACH GOD'S WISDOM TO THOSE WHO ARE MATURING IN THE FAITH. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO BUILD A STRONG CHURCH ON THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL ALONE; THERE MUST BE THE TEACHING OF THE PLAN AND "MYSTERY" OF GOD. (A MYSTERY IS A TRUTH HIDDEN IN THE AGES PAST REVEALED BY THE SPIRIT TO THOSE WHO BELONG TO GOD'S FAMILY. IT IS A "FAMILY SECRET" KNOWN ONLY TO THE INITIATED, NOT THE OUTSIDERS.) OF COURSE, THE MYSTERY THAT PAUL TAUGHT AT CORINTH WAS THE PROGRAM OF GOD FOR THE PRESENT AGE AS OUTLINED IN EPHESIANS 2–3: THAT JEW AND GENTILE ARE "ONE IN CHRIST" THROUGH FAITH, AND MAKE UP THE ONE BODY WHICH IS THE CHURCH. THIS MYSTERY, OR HIDDEN WISDOM OF GOD, COULD NEVER BE KNOWN BY THE "RULERS OF THIS WORLD," BECAUSE IT IS UNDERSTOOD ONLY THROUGH THE PROMPTING OF THE SPIRIT. MANY PROFESSED CHRISTIANS DO NOT REALLY UNDERSTAND GOD'S PURPOSE FOR THIS AGE! THIS IS WHY OUR CHURCHES ARE STILL CLUTTERED WITH OT "ANTIQUES" THAT DO NOT BELONG TO THIS AGE.

IN CHAPTERS 1 AND 2, PAUL HAS CONTRASTED THE WISDOM OF THIS WORLD WITH THE WISDOM OF GOD:

**WISDOM OF THIS WORLD**

1. A WISDOM OF WORDS (1:17; 2:4)
2. MAN'S WORDS (2:4)
3. THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD (2:12)
4. FOOLISHNESS TO GOD (1:20)
5. THE PHILOSOPHER (1:20)
6. IGNORANCE (1:21)
7. LEADS TO CONDEMNATION (1:18)

**WISDOM OF GOD**

1. A WISDOM OF POWER, NOT WORDS ALONE (2:4–5)
2. THE SPIRIT'S WORDS (2:13)
3. THE SPIRIT OF GOD (2:12)
4. FOOLISHNESS TO MEN (2:14)
5. THE PREACHER (1:31; 2:4)
6. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (2:12)
7. LEADS TO GLORY (1:18; 2:7)

**II. THE TWO SPIRITS IN THE WORLD TODAY (2:9–13)**

*A. THE SPIRIT OF THIS WORLD (2:12).*

SATAN IS CERTAINLY THE ENERGIZING SPIRIT IN THE WORLD TODAY (EPH. 2:1–3). HE HAS GIVEN LOST MEN A “WISDOM” THAT INFLATES THEIR EGOS AND BLINDS THEIR MINDS; HE HAS LED THEM AWAY FROM THE SIMPLE TRUTHS OF THE WORD OF GOD. THE GREAT CENTERS OF LEARNING TODAY DO NOT WANT THE BIBLE; THEY REJECT THE DEITY OF CHRIST AND THE NEED FOR SALVATION THROUGH THE CROSS. THIS IGNORANCE LED MEN TO CRUCIFY CHRIST—AND MEN (EVEN “LEARNED” MEN) HAVE BEEN CRUCIFYING HIM EVER SINCE.

*B. THE SPIRIT OF GOD.*

WE MUST NEVER FORGET THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE ONE WHO TEACHES US THE THINGS OF GOD. IN V. 9, PAUL REFERS TO ISA. 64:4 AND STATES THAT GOD HAS PREPARED WONDERFUL THINGS FOR HIS CHILDREN HERE AND NOW.

GOD HAS PREPARED THESE BLESSINGS FOR US TODAY! HOW DOES GOD REVEAL THESE BLESSINGS TO US? THROUGH HIS SPIRIT (V. 10). JUST AS A MAN'S SPIRIT WITHIN HIM UNDERSTANDS WHAT OUTSIDERS NEVER KNOW, SO THE SPIRIT OF GOD UNDERSTANDS THE HEART AND MIND OF GOD AND REVEALS THESE TRUTHS TO US THROUGH THE WORD. GOD WANTS HIS CHILDREN TO BE “IN THE KNOW” AND NOT IN THE DARK. THIS IS WHY HE HAS GIVEN US THE WORD OF GOD AND THE SPIRIT TO TEACH US.

NOTE THAT THE SPIRIT TEACHES US IN WORDS (V. 13). HERE WE HAVE THE VERBAL INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE—THE VERY WORDS GIVEN BY THE SPIRIT. “COMPARING SPIRITUAL THINGS WITH SPIRITUAL” (V. 13) MAY ALSO BE TRANSLATED, “COMBINING SPIRITUAL THINGS WITH SPIRITUAL

WORDS" OR "EXPLAINING SPIRITUAL THINGS TO SPIRITUAL PEOPLE." IN EITHER CASE, THE TRUTH IS CLEARLY GIVEN THAT THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD, GIVEN BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD. WE EITHER TRUST GOD'S WORD, TAUGHT BY GOD'S SPIRIT, OR THE WORDS OF MEN.

### **III. THE TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE IN THE WORLD TODAY (2:14–16)**

#### *A. THE NATURAL MAN.*

THIS MAN IS THE UNSAVED MAN, THE MAN WHO BELONGS TO THE WORLD AND IS HAPPY IN IT. HE CANNOT RECEIVE THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT (THE WORD) BECAUSE HE DOES NOT HAVE SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT; HE DOES NOT HAVE THE SPIRIT DWELLING WITHIN HIS MIND AND BODY. IN FACT THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT ARE FOOLISHNESS TO HIM! IN 1:23, PAUL STATES THAT THE GREEKS THOUGHT THE GOSPEL WAS FOOLISHNESS. THE GREEKS WERE GREAT PHILOSOPHERS, BUT THEIR PHILOSOPHY COULD NOT EXPLAIN A GOD WHO DIED ON A CROSS, OR, FOR THAT MATTER, A GOD WHO EVEN CARES ABOUT PEOPLE. THEIR GODS WERE NOT INTERESTED IN THE PROBLEMS OF MORTALS, AND THE GREEK ATTITUDE TOWARD THE HUMAN BODY WAS SUCH THAT THEY COULD NOT CONCEIVE OF GOD COMING IN HUMAN FLESH.

#### *B. THE SPIRITUAL MAN.*

THIS MAN IS THE BELIEVER WHO IS CONTROLLED BY THE SPIRIT. (IN THE NEXT CHAPTER, PAUL WILL DEAL WITH THE CHRISTIAN CONTROLLED BY THE FLESH—THE CARNAL MAN.) THE SPIRITUAL MAN IS A MAN OF DISCERNMENT AND IS ABLE TO JUDGE AND EVALUATE THINGS WITH GOD'S INSIGHTS. THIS IS TRUE WISDOM. THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF KNOWLEDGE, BUT THEY LACK SPIRITUAL WISDOM. WE COULD PARAPHRASE V. 15 LIKE THIS: "THE SPIRITUAL PERSON UNDERSTANDS THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT AND HAS WISDOM, BUT THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD CANNOT UNDERSTAND THE SPIRITUAL PERSON." WE ARE A PUZZLE TO THE UNBELIEVER!

THE SPIRITUAL PERSON HAS THE MIND OF CHRIST (SEE PHIL. 2). THIS MEANS THAT THE SPIRIT, THROUGH THE WORD, HELPS THE BELIEVER THINK AS JESUS THINKS. IT IS AN AMAZING THING TO SAY THAT HUMAN BEINGS POSSESS THE VERY MIND OF GOD! DOWN THROUGH THE YEARS, SPIRITUAL CHRISTIANS HAVE PREDICTED THINGS THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD SAID COULD NEVER HAPPEN, BUT THESE EVENTS CAME TO PASS. THE SPIRITUALLY MINDED SAINT UNDERSTANDS MORE ABOUT THE AFFAIRS OF THIS WORLD FROM HIS BIBLE THAN THE LEADERS OF THE WORLD UNDERSTAND FROM THEIR HUMAN PERSPECTIVE.

IN THESE TWO CHAPTERS, PAUL HAS BEEN EMPHASIZING THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL AND THE WARNING THAT WE MUST NOT MIX IT WITH HUMAN WISDOM OR HUMAN PHILOSOPHY. IN THE NEXT TWO CHAPTERS, HE WILL DEAL WITH THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL AND SHOW THAT WE MUST TAKE OUR EYES OFF OF PEOPLE AND KEEP THEM ON CHRIST ALONE.