

1Cor. 2:1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

“brethren” – a reminder that Paul is writing to fellow believers, people whom he considers part of his family, people he cares about.

Paul is reminding the Corinthians that he didn’t come to them using flowery language and a great philosophical presentation. He simply came sharing the “testimony of God,” what God had revealed to him through his encounter with Jesus, God’s Son.

1Cor. 2:2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

I think Paul is making a statement here that he had purposed in his heart to focus his ministry to the Corinthians on teaching them the gospel of Jesus Christ. He was proclaiming Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection in order to provide the gift of salvation for each and every one of them.

1Cor. 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

1Cor. 15:4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

Eph. 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

He emphasized the love of God in sending His only Son as a sacrifice as the only acceptable atonement for sin.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

He emphasized that Jesus came willingly in obedience to His Father’s will and for “the joy that was set before Him.”

Gal. 1:3 Grace *be* to you and peace from God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ,

Gal. 1:4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

Heb. 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

I believe that *joy* is reference to pleasing His Father through obedience to His will and the anticipation of restored fellowship with His creation.

1Cor. 2:3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

I would tend to think that the weakness Paul is referencing here is a reference to the fact that he is not depending on his own oratorical skills, abundance of knowledge or philosophical prowess. I think this ties in with the fear and trembling. There is a verse in Philippians that helps explain his mindset.

Phil. 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

He is in awe of the God that he serves. Paul was keenly aware of the importance of his message. He was burdened that he proclaim the message clearly and convincingly because the eternal future of those to whom he preached depended upon their response to that message.

That thought is always on my mind as I try to be in a position to hear the Holy Spirit as I journal through the scripture. I am so eager to share the truth of God's word, and yet so fearful of misrepresenting His truth. The scripture is clear regarding the higher level of accountability for those who presume to teach His truth.

James 3:1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. (The word for masters means "instructors, teachers.")

The NIV states it more clearly:

James 3:1 ¶ Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

That is why I am so careful to present my thoughts about the scripture as just that—my thoughts and understanding always subject to change through the enlightenment of the Spirit.

1Cor. 2:4 And my speech and my preaching *was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:*

The first part of verse 4 is a statement emphasizing the truth of verse 1. Paul did not preach in order to impress men with his vocabulary and his brilliance of knowledge and logic. Paul's preaching was a result of submission to and empowerment from the Holy Spirit of God; he was simply the instrument through whom the Spirit was sharing God's truth.

1Cor. 2:5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Why did Paul make such a point to emphasize the truth of verses 1 and 4? Because he wanted the Corinthians to place their faith in the power of the message, the gospel of Jesus Christ—not in the messenger. It is faith in Jesus that saves, not faith in the man that gives us the message of salvation.

It is so much in our nature to follow what we can see; it's easy for the audience to become focused on the messenger. I think so many who claim to be preachers of the gospel today encourage people to place their faith in them (the messenger) and/or in self. Pride is a powerful thing. The desire for recognition and power/influence has overtaken many a messenger that started out in the power of the Spirit and became deceived into believing in the power of self. You have to make a conscious effort to constantly guard against allowing yourself as the messenger becoming the motivation behind the message you deliver and the way you present the message. It takes conscious, continual effort to keep the audience focused on the message and the person of Jesus.

1Cor. 2:6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

It would seem to me that the *wisdom* being referenced here is a reference to Jesus Christ and the gospel—"the wisdom of God" (cf 1:23-24, 30). Who are the *perfect*? Most translations use the word "mature," but I think the word "complete" is a better choice. Not everyone to whom they were preaching in the church at Corinth was spiritually mature, but they were all complete (filled up, perfect) as a new creation in Christ. Paul makes it clear in the next phrase that the *wisdom* they are proclaiming is not the wisdom of this world according to any man, no matter how honored he might be among men. The wisdom of this world will be proven useless and foolish when men come to an understanding of God and the wonderful workings of His wisdom.

The phrase "this world" implies that there is another world, another age to come. For the wisdom of man to be proven of no value, another age is coming in which the wisdom of God will be revealed in such a way as to put the wisdom of this age to shame. I believe this is referencing the coming reign of the Messiah extending on into eternity.

1Cor. 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:*

1Cor. 2:8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

What is Paul referencing by the wisdom of God?

1Cor. 1:23-24 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and **the wisdom of God.**

1Kings 3:28 And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the **wisdom of God** was in him, to do judgment.

Luke 11:49 Therefore also said the **wisdom of God**, I will send them prophets and apostles, and *some* of them they shall slay and persecute:

Eph. 3:9-11 And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold **wisdom of God**, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

We know from the first chapter that the wisdom of God references the crucified Christ. The verse from 1Kings tells us that the wisdom of God references judgment. In Luke the phrase is referencing the truth of God as proclaimed by His prophets and apostles. The passage in Ephesians explains how the mystery of God's wisdom is revealed through His provision for and workings through the church, the body of Christ.

- God gave His Son, the Christ, as the sacrifice for our sins upon the cross.
- Jesus took our judgment.
- He had proclaimed this truth through His prophets in the age of the law and in the age of grace through His apostles.

- The message/truth proclaimed by the prophets and the apostles is revealed in God's *manifold* workings in and through the church. "Manifold" means exhibited at varying times in varying ways.

"Christ crucified" was in God's plan for mankind before the world was ever created. God was not surprised by man's disobedience; He made a provision for us before He ever made us. Talk about a mystery!

The message of the crucified Christ and the resulting gift of salvation by faith for all who would believe was not understood before the time of Jesus. This mystery though declared by the prophets was not revealed until Jesus was resurrected from the grave and the Holy Spirit came in power upon the "church."

Paul then states that if the princes of this world (the ruling powers at that time, both of government and religion) had *known* the message, they would not have crucified the Lord.

"know" = To perceive or apprehend clearly and certainly; to understand; To be convinced of the truth of."

In other words, had they truly recognized Jesus as the Son of God, they would have accepted Him as King and Lord as identified in the Psalms:

Psa. 24:8 Who *is* this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

1Cor. 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

"as it is written" – Where?

Is. 64:4 For since the beginning of the world *men* have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, *what* he hath prepared for him that **waiteth** for him.

Man in his sinful condition has no concept of the depth of true love. The love of God is so amazing and so beyond our understanding. Notice that as Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah, he changes the word "waiteth" to "love." That tells me that the two are interconnected since the same Spirit breathed the words to both men. Love involves waiting and endurance. The root word for *waiteth* includes the idea of carving and entrenchment. That seems to be referencing a strong commitment, fortifying oneself to stay the course no matter what. This ties in with the truth of love presented in 1 Corinthians 13:

1Cor. 13:4 Charity suffereth long....

The words *charity* and *love* are the same in the Greek—agape/agapao. It's a choice to patiently endure even when the going gets really tough and we don't understand why God is allowing certain things to happen in our life.

It's interesting that He didn't say that we couldn't even imagine what God has prepared for those that do not love Him. Man has proven throughout history, that he can imagine the most depraved, evil acts toward one another. We should have no problem comprehending God's just judgment of sin in the lake of fire,

since we have no problem with accepting unjust judgment of the most wicked sorts against one another.

Just as God knew that man would reject Him, rebel against Him—God knew that some men would turn to Him in faith and accept Him as Lord. So, God has prepared things especially for those that love Him.

1Cor. 2:10 But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

O how many times I've applied the previous verse to the joys to come that are associated with "heaven." I'm sure there is truth to that application, but this verse makes it clear that God has revealed the things that He has prepared for us through His Spirit even now.

What are the deep things of God? The only verse I could find that seemed to give a clue was in Psalms:

Psa. 92:5 O LORD, how great are thy works! *and* thy thoughts are very deep.

In checking the Greek for "searcheth," it seems that the better translation would be "the Spirit utters/speaks." The Holy Spirit was given as our teacher and comforter.

John 14:26 But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things....

1John 5:7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: **and these three are one.**

As God, the Holy Ghost shares with us the depths of God's thoughts as we grow in faith and in the love of Christ. Accepting the revelation of the Christ and His gift of salvation is just a beginning in understanding the thoughts/heart of God. God wants to reveal Himself in full to the believer. He wants to fill us up with Himself.

Eph. 3:17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

Eph. 3:18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

Eph. 3:19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

1Cor. 2:11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

The "spirit" is the rational part of our being—our mind, our thoughts. Paul is simply saying that just as the spirit of a man knows the thoughts of the man—the Spirit of God knows the thoughts of God. Contrary to popular opinion, we cannot read another person's mind. We can make astute observations and educated guesses, just as Satan can, but the only one who can read our thoughts is God. Man can only understand the thoughts of God when they are revealed to him by the Spirit of God.

1Cor. 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

“we” = believers

Before becoming believers we lived according to the “spirit of the world,” the spirit of disobedience.

Eph. 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

As believers, we are a new creation indwelt by the Spirit of God.

2Cor. 5:17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

1Cor. 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

Through the teaching of the Spirit we are now able to **know** (see verse 8) the things God chooses to reveal to us. As we saw in John 14:26 and Ephesians 3 above, God wants to teach us **all** things and fill us with His fullness.

1Cor. 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Paul is representing himself as one who is teaching the truth taught by the Holy Spirit. He is not teaching according to the wisdom of man. He is teaching the truth taught him by the Holy Ghost. I think in common language we could say that Paul was comparing apples with apples and not apples with oranges. When it comes to spiritual things, things pertaining to the nature of God, we must be taught according to His Spirit, the utterance of His thoughts. The only comparisons we can truly make are using scripture to compare with other scripture—comparing the Word of God to the Word of God to learn God’s truth.

1Cor. 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

Now Paul goes back to the argument he was making in chapter 1. The natural man depends on his senses, his own thinking/logic. God’s wisdom is foolishness to him (cf 1:18, 21, 23). The only way God’s wisdom and thinking can be understood/discerned is through revelation from the Spirit of God. How can we develop that discernment? Through the study and application of the utterances of the Spirit, the “word of righteousness.”

Heb. 5:13 For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

Heb. 5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

1Cor. 2:15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

“judgeth” = to scrutinize, i.e. (by implication) investigate, interrogate, determine:—ask, question, discern, examine, judge, search.

In looking at the Greek, I like the term “moreover” rather than “but.” I was having a hard time making the connection until I keyed upon the word “discern.” I think Paul is saying that those of us who are new creatures and are taught according to the Spirit have the ability to discern with truth and understanding. When the natural man tries to discern or understand the spiritual man, he can’t understand him.

Discernment involves recognizing a difference. The natural man is dependent on his senses, his own limited abilities, and doesn’t recognize that there is a difference in that understanding and spiritual enlightenment from God through His Spirit. He always tries to explain God and the things of God from man’s limited understanding and man’s limited knowledge base.

1Cor. 2:16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

I can’t help but think of Job and portions of Isaiah when I read this verse. Some of my favorite scriptures are Job 38-42 and Isaiah 40→ when God is speaking about Himself. God is very clear in His word that we haven’t a clue regarding Who He is. We can teach Him nothing. He simply IS—the source of all that can be known or understood.

The only way we can have a mind of spiritual understanding is through Christ. As believers, we possess the mind of Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit. We all know that we can possess something without using it or benefiting from it. We have to put forth effort and energy to study and meditate on God’s word and apply it to our lives to benefit from it. The Holy Spirit can reveal truth to us, but it benefits us nothing if we don’t put that truth to use in our lives.