

1 Corinthians 2

Read verses 1-5

When I gave my first presentation before the Senior Vice President at Owens Corning, a co-worker gave me the advice, “If you can’t dazzle him with your brilliance, baffle him with you BS.” Fortunately, I had enough brilliance to dazzle him. This is what the world and the people of Corinth thought. Paul in this part of the letter has been saying the opposite. When he was in Corinth, he didn’t come to dazzle or baffle them. In verse 1, Paul tells them that he “*did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.*”

Where have we seen someone try to get out of a calling of God, saying something similar? When God told Moses to go back to Exodus and speak on God’s behalf. Exodus 4:10 says, *Moses said to the Lord, “Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.”*

“Paul was certainly a man who could reason and debate persuasively, but he didn’t use that approach in preaching the gospel. He made a conscious decision (*I determined*) to put the emphasis on Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Paul was an ambassador, not a salesman.” (Guzik)

Paul tells them in verse 2 that he told them about “Christ and Him crucified” which was all he knew. If they accepted the Gospel message, it was by the power of God and not the speaker. In verse 3 through 5, Paul humbles himself even further by saying that during his time with them, he did so with fear and trembling. He was not persuasive. Paul lets them and us know that as believers, we need to get back to the true foundation of our faith, and that is praising Christ above all others. Paul outlined three ways for us to do this.

We must remember that the world rejects the truth of the gospel and that worldly “wisdom” is in error. We won’t have trouble with arrogance if we remember who and what we were before God saved us. We can act humbly by emulating Paul’s simplicity in his preaching.

When Jesus gave us the Beatitudes in Matthew, the first Beatitude is “*Blessed are the Poor in Spirit*”. Poor in spirit isn’t saying that you are depressed. It is recognizing that without Jesus, you have nothing of spiritual value. It should bring about humility on your part and a realization that you need Jesus more than ever.

“Many people use slick, entertaining, or even deceptive means to “lure” people into the church, and justify it by saying, “we’re drawing them in and then winning them to Jesus.” But the principle stands: what you draw them *with* is what you draw them *to*.” (Guzik)

Read verses 6-8

In chapter 1 of 1 Corinthians, Paul spent his time explaining that the world will see the Gospel message as foolish or not wise. In verses 6 and 7, he is trying to correct any misconceptions that

he created in the minds of the Corinthians. He says in verse 7, that the wisdom of the Gospel is mystery, the hidden wisdom (NASB).

Paul says that God predestined the wisdom of the Gospel before the world began. He is saying that God knew from the beginning of time that His creation would fall into sin and we would need a savior. Nothing that has happened in human history has taken God by surprise.

In verse 8, Paul says that if man, specifically rulers, had understood that Jesus was the Messiah, they would not have put Him to death. God needed the rulers not to know or understand that Jesus was the Messiah so that Jesus could be sacrificed to take away the sin of the world.

Read verses 9-12

Paul quotes Isaiah 64:4 in order to emphasize the point, (NLT) *“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.”*

In our study of “Satan”, I said a number of times that part of the purpose of the Holy Spirit is as a helper (John 14:16 NASB) to perfect the communication between God and His people. In verses 10 and 11, Paul is saying if the Holy Spirit can take what we pray and make it understandable to God, the Holy Spirit can make what God says understandable to us. We can understand what God asks of us or we can know His will for us.

“Paul argues from the Greek philosophic premise that *like is known only by like*. You can *guess* what your dog is thinking, but you really can’t know unless he was to tell you. Even so, we could *guess* what God is thinking, and about His wisdom, but we would never know unless He told us.” (Guzik)

In verse 12, Paul explains that as believers we have the Spirit of God living in us and not the spirit of the world. We can know *“the wonderful things God has freely given us.”* (NLT)

Read verses 13-16

In verse 13, Paul explains that before we had the Holy Spirit living in us or as natural men, we were of the world and valued human wisdom. Anything relating to God and the Holy Spirit made no sense to us or them.

Theologians say that there are three different types of “man”.

1. *The Natural Man*: He is born into the human family and lives in his natural state without being a child of God. (1 John 4:3)
2. *The Spiritual Man*: He is one that is born again into God’s family and lives in a Spiritual state. (Galatians 3:26)

3. *The Carnal Man*: He is one that is born again into God's family, but lives and behaves as a man in a natural state living according to his carnal or fleshly desires. (see Romans 7:14-25)

<https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/bible-definitions-natural-man-spiritual-man-carnal-man/>

Once we accept Jesus as Lord of our lives and gained the power and understanding of the Holy Spirit, we “can understand what the Spirit means.” (v. 14 NLT)

In verse 16, Paul quotes Isaiah 40:13, “*Who can know the Lord's thoughts? Who knows enough to teach him?*” Isaiah was referring to Yahweh or God the Father which is translated as Lord. Paul doesn't have any problem translating it to say the mind of Christ because Jesus and God the Father are one. In John 10:30, Jesus says “*I and the Father are one.*”)

“Having explained that wisdom is for the mature and comes from the Spirit of God, Paul turned his attention to the kind of people who are able to receive the revelation of truth by God's Spirit. The truth of Christ revealed by the Spirit of God comes only to those who depend on the teaching of the Spirit. Because wisdom comes only by dependence on the Spirit, those who do not have the Spirit cannot judge the wisdom of those who do. More importantly for Paul's argument, even those who have the Spirit can resist his illumination and disqualify their own judgments. Thus, even though the believers in Corinth had the Spirit, those among them who pursued human wisdom instead of God's wisdom had no authority to quarrel or to divide the church. (Pratt, Richard L., Jr.. Holman New Testament Commentary)