LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

1 Corinthians 2

The natural and the spiritual man

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SERMON TRANSCRIPT

We're back with our study in 1 Corinthians, and we're in chapter 2. Just by a quick way of recapping what we've done and what we've seen so far, in chapter 1, the apostle Paul confronted the church in Corinth about their little popularity groups that they were forming, some around Paul himself, some around Peter, some around Apollos, and so forth. And he launches into a rather lengthy response to that sort of a thing. You know, if someone today were to confront a group of believers over the same sort of thing, you know, they probably would just say, you know, that kind of popularity stuff is based in carnality and worldly philosophies and just worldliness, so knock it off. And you know, that's kind of what the apostle Paul ends up doing.

In fact, if you turn ahead to chapter 3 and verse 1, you'll notice that Paul says, But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh. And then he tells them they're essentially immature. He calls them infants in Christ. Well, this is really what he's been leading up to this whole time. But you know, for the apostle Paul, it's always a teaching opportunity.

And so while he's leading up to essentially telling them that they're immature and they're acting in a very worldly and carnal way, he's using their circumstances and their attitudes to bring wisdom and understanding to their hearts about what it is, what are the differences between spirituality and carnality, worldliness and kingdom-mindedness. And really, that's what 1 Corinthians chapter 2 is all about. Paul is going to contrast the wisdom of the world, which of course, which is what's behind the worldly actions of people, and the wisdom of God, which is what is behind Christ-likeness. So let's get into the text here in chapter 2. We're going to take this in chunks, and we'll start with the first five verses.

It says, And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom, for I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling. And my speech and my message were not implausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that

your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Remember, it was Paul himself that some of these groups were forming around. And so rather than speaking for Apollos or Peter or anyone else at this point, he's speaking for himself.

And he's saying, you know, when I came to you, I didn't come in any sort of an impressive way. I didn't come with all kinds of fancy speech, which, by the way, was very popular among the Greeks. But that's not the way Paul came, and he's going to explain here why. But he tells them, when I was with you, I made up my mind to be very simple about my approach and what I was sharing with you. And I determined, frankly, to not get caught up in conversations that took us down all kinds of rabbit holes.

I made up my mind to talk about nothing but Jesus and Him crucified. And I kept it on that topic, even though some of you may have wanted to talk about other things. Now, the reason I'm kind of presenting these first five verses in that way is because I think that's it's an important reminder when we are talking to unbelievers, you know, it is a very common tactic of people when they are beginning to hear you talking about the gospel, maybe talking about Jesus, the Bible, the cross, to begin to ask questions or bring up topics that are going to deflect the conversation away from Jesus, away from the cross, and on to some, maybe some historical phenomenon or something in the history of the church that they want to talk about because they don't want to talk about Jesus. And I think that we can learn a great deal from what Paul is saying here. When you go to share Jesus, when you go to share the Bible with someone, and they try to deflect and get the conversation going in other directions or down this or that rabbit hole, I think it's important for us to just make up our mind going into it that we're going to keep it on Jesus.

We're going to keep it on what He did on the cross, which is what Paul means by Christ and Him crucified. Okay? So here's the point. When people ask you questions that go beyond what you're trying to accomplish, which is just to share Jesus, and they'll say something like, you know, well, what about the inquisitions that happened during this time period in history or something like that? It's okay for you to say, you know, I really don't know that much about that.

But let me tell you what I do know. And get it back. Get the conversation back onto Jesus and Him crucified. I just think this is really, really good witnessing advice. It's how Paul dealt with the Corinthians.

And many of them got saved as a result. Now, he goes on and he's going to make a point here. And the point he's going to make is we don't keep it in the simple areas of conversation. We do move on to places of maturity and mature thinking in Christ. But only after somebody gets saved, then we will.

We'll move on and we'll talk about some of those more mature things. And that's what he says in verse six and following. Read with me in your Bible. It says, yet among the mature, and that means among spiritually mature believers, we do impart wisdom, although it's not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.

None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, he's quoting Isaiah here, what God has prepared for those who love him. These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. All right, we're going to stop right there, even though we're in the middle of a verse, because this is what Paul is saying. When I first came to you, I kept the conversation on Christ and him crucified.

Didn't leave there. After you came to faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross, then we began to talk about issues or topics that are of a deeper maturity. And whether Paul got around to talking about those things with the Corinthians, we don't really know. We know that he did with other groups, and that's what he's saying here. Among the mature, now he's not ever really saying that the Corinthians reached a place of maturity, but among the typically mature, when I'm talking to mature believers, I do go on, Paul said, and I talk about mature topics.

And we get into what God has planned. We talk about God's redemptive program throughout history to bring about the purpose of his will. And those are the things that he says, I will talk about and I do talk about to people who are ready to hear them and so forth. And he says here again, in this first part of verse 10, these are things God has revealed to us through his spirit, meaning his Holy Spirit. In other words, what Paul is saying is we wouldn't know these things.

We couldn't know these things if they had not been imparted to us by the Holy Spirit. Now, the reason I stopped you in the middle of verse 10 is because it is there in the middle of that verse that Paul is now going to launch into a teaching moment. And since he has made mention of the Holy Spirit as the source of our wisdom and insight, he's now gonna talk about the Holy Spirit in relationship to the spiritual or spiritually mature person, okay? And he's gonna contrast that with immaturity, right? So let's keep reading now, middle of verse 10, Paul says, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

That's interesting, isn't it? The Spirit searches even the depths of God himself. Now, the Spirit is God, right? We know that from our understanding of what the New Testament teaches. And the Holy Spirit of God searches the mind of God and knows all things that are in the mind of God, all right?

That's important. Now he goes on to verse 11. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him. Now he's bringing the conversation to just everyday people. You and I are made up of a body, flesh, soul, and spirit, all right?

The body is what we can see in a mirror. The spirit is that which is imparted from God, which makes us a living animated being. And the soul is our mind, our will, our intellect, okay? And so he says, you know, these obviously all come together, but he says, who knows the thoughts of a person except the spirit of that person? And then he goes on, we're in the middle of verse 11.

So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the spirit of God. Paul is talking here about how incredibly necessary and important it is that we open our hearts to the communication of the Holy Spirit so that he might impart to us the things of God, which he freely knows because he of course is also God. Verse 12, now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God that we might understand the things freely given by God. This is where Paul contrasts the spirit of God and the things that were being taught by the spirit with the spirit of the world and the things we were taught by the world, like sectarian popularity groups centered around a single individual thinking, you know, I'm a fan of this guy and I'm gonna gather around him and so forth, which is, you know, what the Corinthians were doing. That's the spirit of the world.

That's the kind of stuff that we're taught by the world, right? We're not taught that by God. God doesn't want us to get into that sort of sectarian popularity group mentality. Verse 13, and we impart this, meaning spiritual wisdom, right? And we impart this in words, not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the spirit interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual, okay?

We impart spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. Here's the deal. Here's the point. It's very difficult to impart spiritual truths to those who are not spiritually mature. And that's what Paul is going to get into next.

He's going to refer to an unbeliever, right? Who he's going to call a natural person. In other words, they are governed completely by nature. They're not governed in any way by the Holy Spirit because they don't have the Holy Spirit, right? And so he says in verse 14, the natural person, I think it's the NIV that renders this phrase, the man without the spirit, which is really a good rendering.

It's more of an interpretation, but it's a fair interpretation. But Paul says here, the natural person does not accept the things of the spirit of God. In other words, the things that are taught by the spirit of God. He goes on to say, for they are folly to him. That of course means they're foolish.

They sound foolish to him. And he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned, all right? So this is a very important statement that Paul's making. The natural man, meaning the man who has not yet saved. He's not yet born again.

He doesn't have the Holy Spirit living in him. He can't understand the deeper things of the spirit. He can't get it. He can't comprehend it because the spirit isn't communicating those things to him. Paul's already made the point.

It's only through the spirit that we can understand those things. So here's the point. You can't expect your unsaved neighbor, friends, coworkers, family members to understand things that are only taught through the spirit. You can't expect them to understand those things. So stop teaching those things to unbelievers.

You're wasting your time. You can talk about the cross. You can talk about Jesus. And if I were you, I would not stray from those topics until they get saved. Once they get saved, the spiritual light bulb comes on.

And now they're able to be taught by the spirit. And suddenly they start catching on. Oh, they say, I get it now. They start realizing what's really happening, right? Because the spirit is imparting those truths to them.

Notice he goes on in verse 15, and he says, the spiritual person. Now he's talking about the believer, all right? But not just a believer. A believer who is growing and maturing in the spirit. The spiritual person judges all things.

What does he mean by that? Does he mean the spiritual person becomes judgmental? No, no, no, not at all. When he says the spiritual person judges all things, he's saying that now that the Holy Spirit is living within the mature believer, the spirit is helping that believer to make proper judgments about all things. They see things as they really truly are now because the Holy Spirit is helping them to see things as they truly are.

And so the spiritually mature person is able to make judgments and say, it's not wise for me to go into this gathering of people there because they're all unbelievers and they're full of worldliness, and I'm just gonna be dragged down in my walk with the Lord. And that's not smart, so I'm not going to go there. That's a judgment. That's making a judgment. It's not being judgmental.

It's making a proper judgment. And that's what he means when he says the spiritual person judges all things. They are now able to make good, rational judgments because God is helping them to make those judgments, right? But he goes on to say in the middle of verse 15, but is himself to be judged by no one. What does he mean by that?

Does he mean I can do whatever I want and you can't judge me? No, now he's contrasting the judgments that are made by the spiritual person by the judgments that are made by the worldly person. The worldly person is unable to comment even on the determination and the judgments that the spiritually mature person is making because they can't. They can't even understand what the spiritually mature person is thinking because the spiritually mature person is thinking according to the spirit. And they're trying to make sense of it from the world's perspective and they can't.

And that's why he says he himself is to be judged by no one, right? Verse 16, for who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? The unspiritual person cannot understand the mind of the Lord. And that's what he's saying. As believers, we have the mind of Christ.

That's how he ends the chapter. But we have the mind of Christ. So you can see here in 1 Corinthians 2, Paul is using all of this language of the work of the spirit in the life of the believer versus worldliness. in the life of an unbeliever and contrasting those two things. The point of all of this is that he is going to continue on to convince the Corinthians that they have not really matured in their faith and in their Christian walk.

They're like babes, they're children. They're thinking like spiritual infants rather than spiritually mature. And he's going to confront them throughout the course of this letter on a good many things that they're doing wrong. It doesn't mean they're not believers. It doesn't mean that they don't have the Holy Spirit.

They have the Holy Spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit is even being manifest among them. We're going to see that in the later chapters but they're still being governed by the world and by worldly thinking. And so you can see from this, really this entire study, that it is very possible for someone to be a born-again Christian and yet a carnal Christian, a baby, immature, making poor decisions, doing things poorly, badly, because they're not truly yielding and growing in their knowledge of God and His Word. So those are some important reminders that we get from this chapter. It's a very insightful chapter and I know that we've got some good discussion questions coming your way about this chapter.

So let's go ahead now and close in prayer. Father, we thank You so much for 1 Corinthians 2. Very insightful, very needful. And Lord, we want to grow. We want to mature.

We don't want to be governed as believers by something other than You. We don't want to be led by the world and influenced by the world. We want to instead have the mind of Christ so that our influences come from You and that we walk according to the Spirit and not according to the world. And so, Father, we pray that You would help us to mature. And we know that that happens as we dig deeper into Your Word every day.

So help us, Lord, open our understanding, guide us through Your Spirit, and help us to grow in maturity in our walk with You. We thank You. We praise You. We worship You in the authority that is ours in Jesus our Lord. Amen.