

OUTLINE: 1 CORINTHIANS 2:1–16 ESV

1 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. 2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, 4 and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

① THE GOSPEL MUST BE AN “ALL-GOD-NONE-OF-US MESSAGE” TO REST THE PERSON’S FAITH IN THE SPIRIT AND POWER OF GOD, 2:1-5.

To communicate the gospel so that a person’s belief rests in the power of God, we must remove anything that would make the gospel of no effect in the receiver’s mind. (*See 1 Corinthians 1:17.*)

- Remove our lofty speech and wisdom, v1.
- Decide to know nothing “except Jesus Christ and him crucified,” v2.
- Remove any influence or effect that our physical, mental and emotional well-being and strength may have on the message, v3.
- Remove plausible words of wisdom, v4a.
- With everything removed “except Jesus Christ and him crucified” this is now the work of the Spirit of God, v4b.
- Those who receive an all-God-none-of-us gospel will not be resting their faith in the wisdom of people but in the power of God, v5.

6 Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. 7 But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. 8

None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”— 10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

② THE “ALL-GOD-NONE-OF-US GOSPEL MESSAGE” IS COMPREHENDED BY NO ONE EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF GOD, 2:6-11.

- We do impart wisdom, v6a.
- The wisdom we impart is only received and comprehended by the mature, v6a.
- Who are the mature? Not the spiritually elite, but those who live out the reality of the cross in their lives. Example: Forgiveness. The person who can’t (won’t) forgive is not living in the reality of the forgiveness brought to us by Christ crucified. This person has possibly been a Christian for many years, but their lack of forgiveness testifies to their spiritual immaturity.
- This wisdom is not the popular, or trending, wisdom of this age by those who rule, v6b.
- Note that this is also not the ruling elite of the religious sector of society who merely profess belief in and love for God. SEE—>cf. Isaiah 29:13-14.
- We impart the hidden wisdom of God which he decreed in eternity past for our future in his eternal glory, v7.
- The rulers of this age—the religious leaders of the Jews—did not understand the mystery of God—Christ crucified, v8.

- We only know the testimony of God as it is revealed to us by the Spirit of God, vv9-11.

Garland puts it this way, “The mystery is truth revealed by God, not truth discovered by human investigation and argument. Humans do not find this truth; it finds them.” [*Taylor, M. (2014). 1 Corinthians. (E. R. Clendenen, Ed.) (Vol. 28, p. 80). Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group.*]

***What has been inferred up to this point in the argument is now made explicit, namely, that one’s apprehension of the gospel as the wisdom of God comes only through divine revelation. Simply stated, the wisdom of God cannot be known unless God makes it known. [*Ibid. (Vol. 28, pp. 83–84).*]

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 us by God. 13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. 14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 15 The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. 16 “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

③ THE “ALL-GOD-NONE-OF-US GOSPEL MESSAGE” IS UNDERSTOOD AND ACCEPTED ONLY BY THE PERSON WHO RECEIVES THE SPIRIT OF GOD, 2:12-16.

- We must receive the Spirit who is from God to understand “the things freely given us” by God.
- Extremely important note: “The things freely given us” describes what is given to us through the grace of God. And, even, it seems, the phrase describes/includes a definition of grace itself.
- We do not understand “the things freely given

us” by God by receiving the spirit of the world, v12a.

- What does that mean? A person cannot grasp “the things freely given us” by God by this world’s methods. But those who operate in the realm of the spirit of the world still try to explain and define “the things freely given us.” These could be the “plausible words of wisdom” which the Apostle Paul distances himself from in verse four.
- We understand the things freely given us by God by receiving the Spirit who is from God, v12b.
- What does that mean? We understand the things freely given us by God by the instruction of the Spirit of God who now lives in the believer.
- We impart these truths, not in human terms, but in spiritual terms, v13.
- Again, not plausible words, not human efforts to make the concepts of God’s word more palatable in and to the human realm—the spirit of this world.

TWO VERY DIFFERENT WORLDS

THE REALM OF THE NATURAL PERSON—UNSAVED

THE REALM OF THE SPIRITUAL PERSON—SAVED

① The Natural Person (2:14):

- Does not accept “the things freely given us” by the Spirit of God.
- Is not able to understand “the things freely given us” because they are spiritual.
- Can see only one world—the natural realm, the sight realm—what can be seen, experienced or imagined.
- (2 Corinthians 4:17–18 ESV) For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.

For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

② The Spiritual Person (2:15-16):

- Examines all things.
- Has insight into both worlds—the natural and the spiritual.
- The spiritual person knows and lives within the reality that ultimately God is the judge, and so he is not given to the rejection and condemnation of those in the natural realm.
- Relevant Commentary: Here is some insight into the relevance of what first appears to be a very difficult text. The judgment of this world comes by the short-sightedness of not being able to see or live in view of eternity—the world that isn't seen. So those who live only in the natural realm base their judgments only on things they can comprehend—life on the horizontal plane, the seen world, the only world that makes sense to them.
- This is also relevant in the professing Christian community because many religious people bring “natural realm” principles to their interpretation and application of the Bible, e.g. works salvation, which is a prime example of the natural mind reshaping God's ways and thoughts of grace and salvation into something more plausible to the natural mind—transforming spiritual truth into truth that is palatable to the natural mind and which fits their one world perspective.
- Revisiting “plausible words”: The natural person tries to make sense of the things of God from a natural perspective, the way that seems right to him or her.
- (Proverbs 16:25 ESV) There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

- The way that fits the natural realm. The huge problem is that this person, religious or otherwise, is blind to what they are trying to explain, and it is impossible for this person to even receive these truths, let alone understand and explain them.
- Correctly understanding this phrase—“is himself to be judged by no one”—then helps us to decipher another seemingly enigmatic phrase—“For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” (v16a)
- Why is this difficult? Because the phrase speaks of the mind of the Lord but in this context closely follows the discussion of the spiritual person.
How can that be? This is how. When the spiritual person is living according to “the mind of the Lord” then “the mind of the Lord” is instructing him. So if the spiritual person is walking in obedience to the mind of the Lord, then any criticism would in effect be criticism of the Lord's instruction, i.e. they are judging God's way of living our lives.
Follow? If I am criticized for my life of obedience, then it is not me that the person is ultimately condemning but the way of the Lord. Which, by the way, the natural person—the judge in this case—is blind to the world and the way in which I live.
- And then the last piece falls into place. We have the mind of Christ. The spiritual person has the mind of Christ in contrast to the natural person having received the mind of the spirit of this world. It is impossible for the natural mind to comprehend the world that I live in as someone who lives in the Lord's instruction. We have principles for living that extend beyond Earth and beyond time.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him **freely** give us all things?

(Romans 8:28-32 NASB95)

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

(Ephesians 3:20 NLT)