

# 1 Corinthians

## Gospel-Centered Living in a Sin-Centered World

### Section 1: Unity and the Gospel

#### The Power of God's Spirit

#### *1 Corinthians 2:6-16*

#### Introduction

**ILLUS:** “Spiritual but not religious” Paul seeks to show us just the opposite – they are actually religious and not spiritual because they are seeking spiritual things in worldly ways. You can't be spiritual without the Spirit of God – and without Him they have no hope of understanding spiritual realities.

**ILLUS: Matthew 13:13–17 (NKJV) — 13** Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. **14** And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: ‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; **15** For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.’ **16** But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; **17** for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

**ILLUS:** Patterson debate with head of Duke Divinity.

Paul continues his reasoning behind the fact that there really is no room for disunity in the church. So far his arguments have been because of The Power of God's Wisdom (that His foolishness is wiser than the wisdom of man), because of the The Power of God's Call (that He did not call many wise, mighty, or noble), because of The Power of God's Message (it did come with the wisdom of men, excellence of speech, or persuasive words), and, we will see this morning, because of The Power of the God's Spirit.

Paul had introduced us to this power in verse 4 ...

**1 Corinthians 2:4 (NKJV) — 4** And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

And now, he moves beyond introduction to the demonstration of The Power of God's Spirit.

**NOTE:** The Spirit is mentioned more in this section than in all of chapter 12 (spiritual gifts) and two times more than in chapter 14 (tongues in church meetings)

“Long before [Paul] talks about the gifts, which he knows are an area of disagreement and division among the Corinthians, he looks to redefine their concept of the spirit's activity in the shape of Christian spirituality. He wants them to see that the heart of the spirits work is to bring the revelation of Jesus to the church revelation which, if taken

on board, will lead the Corinthians away from division and pride and towards humility and unity.” (Wilson, 29)

In short, Paul is telling us that it is impossible for us to know or understand the wisdom of God unless He makes it known, and He makes it known through the power of His Spirit.

## The Power of God’s Spirit Hidden (6-9)

V.6

However – indicates that there is a turn in the text directly related but different from the preceding passage.

“We speak wisdom” - “Paul, Apollos, Cephas.”

Having noted that his message is considered “foolishness” to the Greeks and “a stumbling block” to the Jews ... and realizing that some might then come to the conclusion that for one to follow Christ would mean to check their intellect at the door.

Paul emphasizes that the message of the cross is nonetheless full of wisdom.

As a result, there was no reason for the people to divide because the preachers were preaching the same message!

And those who are spiritually “mature”  
(setting the stage for chapter 3) would  
recognize this fact.

The problem is that it is not the wisdom “of this  
age”

**ILLUS:** What is considered wise in “this age”  
has an expiration date!

“The wisdom spoken of in this verse it  
neither empirical fact-finding nor intuitive  
common sense, but insight – perception ...  
Paul calls it ‘God’s wisdom.’” (Swindoll, 48)

Or of the “rulers of this world”

At the cross wisdom and rulers collided. The  
wisdom of the Greco/Romans and the Jews  
with that of God in Jesus Christ.

Both of which are “coming to nothing”

This does not mean there is no value to the  
intellectual or leadership capability God has  
given to mankind.

But such is limited to “this age” and  
ultimately will come to nothing.

“This is obviously true historically, in that all  
rulers die, all worldly wisdom moves on,  
and so forth. It is also true eternally: viewed  
from the perspective of eternity, the

insights and influencers of this age are breathtakingly short lived.” (Wilson, 28)

V.7

“the wisdom of God in a mystery”

“God’s mystery is not a riddle that men can solve but rather a secret that the human mind by itself is wholly unable to penetrate.” (Taylor, 89)

He defines it as “hidden”

It is that which remains unknown until God chooses to reveal it.

**ILLUS:** Sacrificial System, Office of High Priest, Passover and Lamb

“ordained before the ages”

“Though all of this boggles our minds, we must accept the Bible truth of divine election and predestination.” (Wiersbe, 574)

**Acts 4:27–28 (NKJV) — 27** “For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together **28** to do whatever Your hand and Your

purpose determined before to be done.

“As far as the Father is concerned, I was saved when He chose me in Christ before the foundation of the world ... As far as the Son is concerned, I was saved when He died for me on the cross ... as far as the Spirit is concerned, it was (date of salvation) ... when the Holy Spirit applied the Word to my heart, I believed, and God saved me.”  
(Wiersbe, 575)

“for our glory”

**Romans 8:18 — 18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

V.8

This wisdom is “unknown to the rulers of this age”

The proof of their ignorance is in the fact that they crucified Jesus.

Yet, to show that the “foolish” things of God are wiser than the wisdom of men ...

**Romans 1:22 (NKJV) — 22** Professing to be wise, they became fools,

“Even through the spiritual ignorance of the unbelieving political powers, God brought to light the profound mystery of the gospel.” (Swindoll, 49)

V.9

This is not a direct quote but a compilation of verses from Isaiah

“This verse is often used at funerals and applied to heaven, but the basic application is to the Christian’s life today.” (Wiersbe, 575)

Notice though the application is limited to “those who love Him.”

## The Power of God’s Spirit Revealed (10-12)

v. 10-11

“To us” is actually in the emphatic position meaning it is more properly read “For to us, God has revealed these things through His Spirit.”

“Revealing a mystery and discovering a mystery are two different things ... What God Himself reveals in His own time cannot be discovered through observation, investigation, direct intuition, or human logic.” (Swindoll, 49)

**ILLUS:** What a CAT Scan, MRI, Echocardiogram, Blood work, etc. can show does not reveal the

thoughts, desires, will, and cannot “know” the person.

This is Paul’s exact point in verse 11.

If that is the case, how in the world could anyone know God? Through The Power of God’s Spirit!

“A man’s innermost thoughts can be known only by the spirit of the man himself. Just so, God’s can be known only to God Himself.” (Phillips, 61)

It was not that Paul, Apollos, or Cephas were super intelligent, super spiritual, or had great insight. They were not wise enough to understand the wisdom of God. God revealed it to each of them through His Spirit.

**Ephesians 3:8–10a (NKJV) — 8** To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, **9** and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; **10a** to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church

Because the Spirit knows the deep (hidden, mysterious) things of God.

V.12

But now we have received the Spirit of God, which is fundamentally different from the Spirit of the



world. This is how we come to “know” that which God has freely given to us

“Freely given” Charisthenta – Charismata – grace gifts

This sets the stage for a distinction between the leaders and the members in the church. A distinction that existed but should not have.

## The Power of God’s Spirit Discerned (13-16)

V. 13

It is the Holy Spirit who teaches us the wisdom of God

**John 14:26 (NKJV) — 26** But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

These are the things we are to “speak” in words given by the Spirit.

**2 Peter 1:21 (NKJV) — 21** for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

**2 Timothy 3:16 (NKJV) — 16** All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness

“We are not speaking words taught by human wisdom, but we are speaking words taught by the Holy Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to spiritual men.” (Patterson, 50)

V.14

Again, here we see the distinction between the “natural” and “spiritual” man. The natural man does not receive or know the things of the Spirit because they must have the Spirit to do so.

**ILLUS:** Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch

**Acts 8:30–31a, 35 (NKJV) — 30** So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” **31a** And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” ... **35** Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

**ILLUS:** The Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day knew and memorized the Scripture, but they didn’t know it!

**John 5:37–39 (NKJV) — 37** And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. **38** But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. **39**

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.

Oh sure ... “an unbeliever may [read] the words superficially, but to embrace them, love them, believe them, and live them – that requires the miraculous illuminating work of the Spirit.”  
(Swindoll, 51)

**ILLUS:** Psalmist

**Psalm 119:18 (NKJV) — 18** Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.

“He did not need the Lord’s help to read His Word, but he knew he needed His help to understand it.”  
(MacArthur, 64)

Just as the physically blind cannot see the sun, the spiritually blind cannot see the Son.” (MacArthur, 64)

V.15

However, those with the Spirit can discern (same term although translated judge).

Yet, unless one has the Spirit, they cannot discern (or understand) him.

“To put it plainly, unbelievers will never quite ‘get’ their believing friends and family members. They won’t understand why they choose to live the way

they do, why they sacrifice worldly pursuits, give selflessly, or serve faithfully.” (Swindoll, 51)

“They may accurately evaluate our faults ... But they cannot accurately evaluate our faith.” (MacArthur, 65)

“The spiritual man does not need to expect natural men to understand or applaud him in his spiritual endeavors.” (Patterson, 51)

V.16

Referencing

**Isaiah 40:13 (NKJV) — 13** Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has taught Him?

Paul concludes this section with a summary of The Power of God’s Spirit

The answer is “no one” but the Spirit – but through the Power of the Spirit, as believers, He gives to us the mind of Christ.

**Philippians 2:5 (NKJV) — 5** Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus

“To have the mind of Christ means to look at life from the Savior’s point of view, having His values and desires in mind. It means to think God’s thoughts and not think as the world thinks.” (Wiersbe, 577)

“Let the philosophers of Greece and the Jews ... jeer and mock. They cannot really judge the message of Paul, who has the mind of Christ, because they do not have the Spirit of God and cannot judge spiritual truths.” (Mare, 203)

## Conclusion