

# CHAPTER 2

The apostle proceeds with his argument in this chapter, and,

- I.** Reminds the Corinthians of the plain manner wherein he delivered the gospel to them (v. 1-5). But yet,
- II.** Shows them that he had communicated to them a treasure of the truest and highest wisdom, such as exceeded all the attainments of learned men, such as could never have entered into the heart of man if it had not been revealed, nor can be received and improved to salvation but by the light and influence of that Spirit who revealed it (v. 6 to the end).

## ~~411~~ 1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5

### THE CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL

In this passage the apostle pursues his design, and reminds the Corinthians how he acted when he first preached the gospel among them.

**I.** As to the matter or subject he tell us (v. 2), *He determined to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ and him crucified* — to make a show of no other knowledge than this, to preach nothing, to discover the knowledge of nothing, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Note, Christ, in his person and offices, is the sum and substance of the gospel, and ought to be the great subject of a gospel minister's preaching. His business is to display the banner of the cross, and invite people under it. Any one that heard Paul preach found him to harp so continually on this string that he would say he knew nothing but Christ and him crucified. Whatever other knowledge he had, this was the only knowledge he discovered, and showed himself concerned to propagate among his hearers.

**II.** The manner wherein he preached Christ is here also observable.

**1.** Negatively. *He came not among them with excellency of speech or wisdom*, v. 1. *His speech and preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom*, v. 4. He did not affect to appear a fine orator or a deep philosopher; nor did he insinuate himself into their minds, by a flourish of

words, or a pompous show of deep reason and extraordinary science and skill. He did not set himself to captivate the ear by fine turns and eloquent expressions, nor to please and entertain the fancy with lofty flights of sublime notions. Neither his speech, nor the wisdom he taught, savoured of human skill: he learnt both in another school. Divine wisdom needed not to be set off with such human ornaments.

**2.** Positively. He came among them *declaring the testimony of God*, v. 1. He published a divine revelation, and gave in sufficient vouchers for the authority of it, both by its consonancy to ancient predictions and by present miraculous operations; and there he left the matter. Ornaments of speech and philosophical skill and argument could add no weight to what came recommended by such authority. *He was also among them in weakness and fear, and in much trembling; and yet his speech and preaching were in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*, v. 3, 4. His enemies in the church of Corinth spoke very contemptuously of him: *His bodily presence, say they, is weak, and his speech contemptible*, <sup>400</sup>2 Corinthians 10:10. Possibly he had a little body, and a low voice; but, though he had not so good an elocution as some, it is plain that he was no mean speaker. The men of Lystra looked on him to be the heathen god Mercury, come down to them in the form of a man, because he was the chief speaker, <sup>444</sup>Acts 14:12. Nor did he want courage nor resolution to go through his work; he was *in nothing terrified by his adversaries*. Yet he was no boaster. He did not proudly vaunt himself, like his opposers. He acted in his office with much modesty, concern, and care. He behaved with great humility among them; not as one grown vain with the honour and authority conferred on him, but as one concerned to approve himself faithful, and fearful of himself, lest he should mismanage in his trust. Observe, None know the fear and trembling of faithful ministers, who are zealous over souls with a godly jealousy; and a deep sense of their own weakness is the occasion of this fear and trembling. They know how insufficient they are, and are therefore fearful for themselves. But, though Paul managed with this modesty and concern, yet he spoke with authority: *In the demonstration of the Spirit and of power*. He preached the truths of Christ in their native dress, with plainness of speech. He laid down the doctrine as the Spirit delivered it; and left the Spirit, by his external operation in signs and miracles, and his internal influences on the hearts of men, to demonstrate the truth of it, and procure its reception.

**III.** Here is the end mentioned for which he preached Christ crucified in this manner: *That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but the power of God* (v. 5) — that they might not be drawn by human motives, nor overcome by mere human arguments, lest it should be said that either rhetoric or logic had made them Christians. But, when nothing but Christ crucified was plainly preached, the success must be founded, not on human wisdom, but divine evidence and operation. The gospel was so preached that God might appear and be glorified in all.

## ✠ 1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-16

### **SPIRITUAL THINGS SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED**

In this part of the chapter the apostle shows them that though he had not come to them with the excellency of human wisdom, with any of the boasted knowledge and literature of the Jews or Greeks, yet he had communicated to them a treasure of the truest and the highest wisdom: *We speak wisdom among those who are perfect* (v. 6), among those who are well instructed in Christianity, and come to some maturity in the things of God. Those that receive the doctrine as divine, and, having been illuminated by the Holy Spirit, have looked well into it, discover true wisdom in it. They not only understand the plain history of Christ, and him crucified, but discern the deep and admirable designs of the divine wisdom therein. Though what we preach is foolishness to the world, it is wisdom to them. They are made wise by it, and can discern wisdom in it. Note, Those who are wise themselves are the only proper judges of what is wisdom; *not indeed the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, but the wisdom of God in a mystery* (v. 6, 7); not worldly wisdom, but divine; not such as the men of this world could have discovered, nor such as worldly men, under the direction of pride, and passion, and appetite, and worldly interest, and destitute of the Spirit of God, can receive. Note, How different is the judgment of God from that of the world! *He seeth not as man seeth.* The wisdom he teaches is of a quite different kind from what passes under that notion in the world. It is not the wisdom of politicians, nor philosophers, nor rabbis (see v. 6), not such as they teach nor such as they relish; *but the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom of God* — what he had a long time kept to himself, and concealed from the world, and the depth of which, now it is revealed, none

but himself can fathom. *It is the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, though now made manifest to the saints* (<sup>506</sup>Colossians 1:26), hid in a manner entirely from the heathen world, and made mysterious to the Jews, by being wrapped up in dark types and distant prophecies, but revealed and made known to us by the Spirit of God. Note, See the privilege of those who enjoy the gospel revelation: to them types are unveiled, mysteries made plain, prophecies interpreted, and the secret counsels of God published and laid open. The wisdom of God in a mystery is now made manifest to the saints. Now, concerning this wisdom, observe,

**I.** The rise and origin of it: *It was ordained of God, before the world, to our glory*, v. 7. It was ordained of God; he had determined long ago to reveal and make it known, from many ages past, from the beginning, nay, from eternity; and that to our glory, *the glory of us*, either us apostles or us Christians. It was a great honour put upon the apostles, to be entrusted with the revelation of this wisdom. It was a great and honourable privilege for Christians to have this glorious wisdom discovered to them. And the wisdom of God discovered to them. And the wisdom of God discovered in the gospel, the divine wisdom taught by the gospel, prepares for our everlasting glory and happiness in the world to come. The counsels of God concerning our redemption are dated from eternity, and designed for the glory and happiness of the saints. And what deep wisdom was in these counsels! Note, The wisdom of God is both employed and displayed for the honour of the saints — employed from eternity, and displayed in time, to make them glorious both here and hereafter, in time and to eternity. What honour does he put on his saints!

**II.** The ignorance of the great men of the world about it: *Which none of the princes of this world knew* (v. 8), the principal men in authority and power, or in wisdom and learning. The Roman governor, and the guides and rulers of the Jewish church and nation, seem to be the persons here chiefly meant. These were the princes of this world, or this age, who, had they known this true and heavenly wisdom, would not have crucified the Lord of glory. This Pilate and the Jewish rulers literally did when our Redeemer was crucified upon the sentence of the one and the clamorous demands of the other. Observe, Jesus Christ is the Lord of Glory, a title much too great for any creature to bear: and the reason why he was hated was because he was not known. Had his crucifiers known him, known

who and what he was, they would have withheld their impious hands, and not have taken and slain him. This he pleaded with his Father for their pardon: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,* <sup>4234</sup>Luke 23:34. Note, There are many things which people would not do if they knew the wisdom of God in the great work of redemption. They act as they do because they are blind or heedless. They know not the truth, or will not attend to it.

**III.** It is such wisdom as could not have been discovered without a revelation, according to what the prophet Isaiah says (<sup>2564</sup>Isaiah 64:4), *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those that love him — for him that waiteth for him,* that waiteth for his mercy, so the Septuagint. It was a testimony of love to God in the Jewish believers to live in expectation of the accomplishment of evangelical promises. Waiting upon God is an evidence of love to him. *Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him,* <sup>2589</sup>Isaiah 25:9. Observe, There are things which God hath prepared for those that love him, and wait for him. There are such things prepared in a future life for them, things which sense cannot discover, no present information can convey to our ears, nor can yet enter our hearts. *Life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel,* <sup>5110</sup>2 Timothy 1:10. But the apostle speaks here of the subject-matter of the divine revelation under the gospel. These are such as eye hath not seen nor ear heard. Observe, The great truths of the gospel are things lying out of the sphere of human discovery: *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard them, nor have they entered into the heart of man.* Were they objects of sense, could they be discovered by an eye of reason, and communicated by the ear to the mind, as matters of common human knowledge may, there had been no need of a revelation. But, lying out of the sphere of nature, we cannot discover them but by the light of revelation. And therefore we must take them as they lie in the scriptures, and as God has been pleased to reveal them.

**IV.** We here see by whom this wisdom is discovered to us: *God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit,* v. 10. The scripture is given by inspiration of God. *Holy men spoke of old as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,* <sup>612</sup>2 Peter 1:21. And the apostles spoke by inspiration of the same Spirit, as he taught them, and gave them utterance. Here is a proof of the divine authority of the holy scriptures. Paul wrote what he taught: and what he taught was revealed of God by his Spirit, *that Spirit that searches*

*all things, yea, the deep things of God, and knows the things of God, as the spirit of a man that is in him knows the things of a man, v. 11.* A double argument is drawn from these words in proof of the divinity of the Holy Ghost: —

**1.** Omniscience is attributed to him: *He searches all things, even the deep things of God.* He has exact knowledge of all things, and enters into the very depths of God, penetrates into his most secret counsels. Now who can have such a thorough knowledge of God but God?

**2.** This allusion seems to imply that the Holy Spirit is as much in God as a man's mind is in himself. Now the mind of the man is plainly essential to him. He cannot be without his mind. Now can God be without his Spirit. He is as much and as intimately one with God as the man's mind is with the man. The man knows his own mind because his mind is one with himself. The Spirit of God knows the things of God because he is one with God. And as no man can come at the knowledge of what is in another man's mind till he communicates and reveals it, so neither can we know the secret counsels and purposes of God till they are made known to us by his Holy Spirit. We cannot know them at all till he had proposed them objectively (as it is called) in the external revelation; we cannot know or believe them to salvation till he enlightens the faculty, opens the eye of the mind, and gives us such a knowledge and faith of them. And it was by this Spirit that the apostles had received the *wisdom of God in a mystery*, which they spoke. "*Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things freely given to us of God* (v. 12); not the spirit which is in the *wise men of the world* (v. 6), nor in the *rulers of the world* (v. 8), but the *Spirit which is of God*, or proceedeth from God. We have what we deliver in the name of God by inspiration from him; and it is by his gracious illumination and influence that *we know the things freely given to us of God* unto salvation" — that is, "the great privileges of the gospel, which are the free gift of God, distributions of mere and rich grace." Though these things are given to us, and the revelation of this gift is made to us, we cannot know them to any saving purpose till we have the Spirit. The apostles had the revelation of these things from the Spirit of God, and the saving impression of them from the same Spirit.

**V.** We see here in what manner this wisdom was taught or communicated: *Which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but*

*which the Holy Ghost teaches*, v. 13. They had received the wisdom they taught, not from the wise men of the world, but from the Spirit of God. Nor did they put a human dress on it, but plainly declared the doctrine of Christ, in terms also taught them by the Holy Spirit. He not only gave them the knowledge of these things, but gave them utterance. Observe, The truths of God need no garnishing by human skill or eloquence, but look best in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches. The Spirit of God knows much better how to speak of the things of God than the best critics, orators, or philosophers. *Comparing spiritual things with spiritual* — one part of revelation with another, the revelation of the gospel with that of the Jews, the discoveries of the New Testament with the types and prophecies of the Old. The comparing of matters of revelation with matters of science, things supernatural with things natural and common, is going by a wrong measure. Spiritual things, when brought together, will help to illustrate one another; but, if the principles of human art and science are to be made a test of revelation, we shall certainly judge amiss concerning it, and the things contained in it. Or, *adapting spiritual things to spiritual* — speaking of spiritual matters, matters of revelation, and the spiritual life, in language that is proper and plain. The language of the Spirit of God is the most proper to convey his meaning.

**VI.** We have an account how this wisdom is received.

**1.** *The natural man receiveth not the things of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*, v. 14. *The natural man, the animal man.* Either,

**(1.)** The man under the power of corruption, and never yet illuminated by the Spirit of God, such as Jude calls *sensual, not having the Spirit*, v. 19. Men unsanctified receive not the things of God. The understanding, through the corruption of nature by the fall, and through the confirmation of this disorder by customary sin, is utterly unapt to receive the rays of divine light; it is prejudiced against them. The truths of God are foolishness to such a mind. The man looks on them as trifling and impertinent things, not worth his minding. *The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not*, <sup><4015></sup>John 1:5. Not that the natural faculty of discerning is lost, but evil inclinations and wicked principles render the man unwilling to enter into the mind of God, in the spiritual matters of his kingdom, and yield to their force and power. It is the quickening beams of the Spirit of truth and holiness that must help the

mind to discern their excellency, and to so thorough a conviction of their truth as heartily to receive and embrace them. Thus the natural man, the man destitute of the Spirit of God, cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. Or,

**(2.)** The natural man, that is, the wise man of the world (~~401B~~ 1 Corinthians 1:19, 20), the wise man after the flesh, or according to the flesh (v. 26), one who hath the wisdom of the world, man's wisdom (~~401B~~ 1 Corinthians 2:4-6), a man, as some of the ancients, that would learn all truth by his own ratiocinations, receive nothing by faith, nor own any need of supernatural assistance. This was very much the character of the pretenders to philosophy and the Grecian learning and wisdom in that day. Such a man receives not the things of the Spirit of God. Revelation is not with him a principle of science; he looks upon it as delirium and dotage, the extravagant thought of some deluded dreamer. It is no way to wisdom among the famous masters of the world; and for that reason he can have no knowledge of things revealed, because they are only spiritually discerned, or made known by the revelation of the Spirit, which is a principle of science or knowledge that he will not admit.

**2.** *But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged, or discerned, of no man,* v. 15. Either,

**(1.)** He who is sanctified and made spiritually-minded (~~406B~~ Romans 8:6) judgeth all things, or discerneth all things — he is capable of judging about matters of human wisdom, and has also a relish and savour of divine truths; he sees divine wisdom, and experiences divine power, in gospel revelations and mysteries, which the carnal and unsanctified mind looks upon as weakness and folly, as things destitute of all power and not worthy any regard. It is the sanctified mind that must discern the real beauties of holiness; but, by the refinement of its facilities, they do not lose their power of discerning and judging about common and natural things. The spiritual man may judge of all things, natural and supernatural, human and divine, the deductions of reason and the discoveries of revelation. But he himself is judged or discerned of NO MAN. God's saints are his hidden ones, ~~488B~~ Psalm 83:3. *Their life is hid with Christ in God,* ~~508B~~ Colossians 3:3. The carnal man knows no more of a spiritual man than he does of other spiritual things. He is a stranger to the principles, pleasures, and actings, of the divine life. The spiritual man does not lie open to his observation. Or,



(2.) *He that is spiritual* (who has had divine revelations made to him, receives them as such, and founds his faith and religion upon them) can judge both of common things and things divine; he can discern what is, and what is not, the doctrine of the gospel and of salvation, and whether a man preaches the truths of God or not. He does not lose the power of reasoning, nor renounce the principles of it, by founding his faith and religion on revelation. But *he himself is judged of no man* — can be judged, so as to be confuted, by no man; nor can any man who is not spiritual, not under a divine *afflatus* himself (see ~~14:37~~ 1 Corinthians 14:37), or not founding his faith on a divine revelation, discern or judge whether what he speaks be true or divine, or not. In short, he who founds all his knowledge upon principles of science, and the mere light of reason, can never be a judge of the truth or falsehood of what is received by revelation. *For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him* (v. 16), that is, the *spiritual man*? Who can enter so far into the mind of God as to instruct him who has the Spirit of God, and is under his inspiration? He only is the person to whom God immediately communicates the knowledge of his will. And who can inform or instruct him in the mind of God who is so immediately under the conduct of his own Spirit? Very few have known any thing of the mind of God by a natural power. *But*, adds the apostle, *we have the mind of Christ*; and the mind of Christ is the mind of God. He is God, and the principal messenger and prophet of God. And the apostles were empowered by his Spirit to make known his mind to us. And in the holy scriptures the mind of Christ, and the mind of God in Christ, are fully revealed to us. Observe, It is the great privilege of Christians that they have the mind of Christ revealed to them by his Spirit.