

The preaching of Paul in Corinth (1 Cor. 2)

Part 1

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[00:00:01] I would like us to turn to the next chapter in 1 Corinthians chapter 2. 1 Corinthians chapter 2, beginning at verse 1.

My brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. In my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that comes to naught. [00:01:02] But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, I have not seen, nor have I heard, neither have I entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

For what man knows the things of a man, save the Spirit of man which is in him. Even so, the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God.

Now we have received, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given unto us of God. [00:02:01] Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

I thought I might take liberty of, in some sense, making a continuation of our Bible reading this afternoon.

In that, I think to appreciate the truth that's in Corinthians, as well as having the person of Christ before us, as we heard in chapter 1, we also need the other factor which is [00:03:07] the Word of God,

which is very necessary in the situation that the Corinthians found themselves. And more importantly, who lies behind the Word of God?

In other words, the Holy Spirit, another person in the Godhead.

But of course, he has come down, as we shall see, in a place of subjection in time. But it doesn't, of course, set aside the fact that he is the Eternal Spirit. Just because divine persons have appeared in a certain way in time, does not set aside the fact that they were in these persons eternally so.

And so the Apostle Paul begins, you see, these first five verses are a sort of rounding off [00:04:01] of chapter 1.

And in fact, our two Michaels, shall we say senior and junior in age, our two Michaels very wonderfully were led to bring before us how these verses link on with what we have in chapter 1.

The Apostle special, you see, he was right back, there had been this assembly where he had been in labor for 18 months, built up a great number there, a large assembly, and acquired a lot of gift, as we were reminded, a lot of gift there. And there they were, this large assembly.

And the Apostle is going to come back to remind them the way that he had come to them. Come to them, we read about it in chapter 18 of Acts. How he had come to them, this great and wealthy assembly.

He had of course just moved from the intellectual capital or center of the known world, Athens.

[00:05:09] Even although Rome held sway, Athens was still the intellectual capital of the world.

Just as America holds sway today, but they still send people over to Oxford. President Clinton, of course, went to Oxford. They still consider Oxford as the intellectual center of the universe.

It's a bit of a come down for them, but they do accept that. And so there Paul goes up there, this man picked up by the grace of God, we know.

Read about it in Acts 9, 23 and 26.

Pharisee of the Pharisees, wasn't he? He got his MA in his own country.

He'd gone up to Jerusalem to get his PhD, this great religious man. And he said, well, you know, I've been preaching the gutter gospel. [00:06:03] I've been preaching the gutter gospel. I've set aside my MA and my PhD, and I'm preaching the soul saving simple gospel.

But he says, oh, I'm going to Athens. Better watch, better watch. Intellectual capital of the world. I'd better dig up all my learning, mud up, get back into my old university textbooks, and meet these men as equals.

I'll quote philosophy and learning to them. All their learning, I'll meet them on their level.

So the unknown God, and he came out, he quoted the poets, didn't he? Aratus and Cleanthes, all

these poets. And as far as we read, there didn't seem to be very many converted.

Not many converted.

Graciously, there was a woman named Damaris. Damaris.

And, you know, in Athens, I understand and like to believe, that there was only two categories of women went about the streets. [00:07:02] There were those who were extremely wealthy, and had lots of servants so they could spend their time among the men disputing. And learnedly.

They were very wealthy.

The other women in the streets, of course, were the women of the streets. So we don't know which category Damaris lay in. But we know the grace of God, the gospel of the grace of God, can meet from the highest, can meet the queen on the throne, down to the woman in the gutter, and the man in the gutter. The glorious gospel of the grace of God. Young man, young brother, tell it out, tell it again. Yes, tell it again, that wonderful story. Of a full and free salvation, through faith in Jesus name.

Yes, I am not ashamed of the gospel.

Can you say that?

I'm not ashamed of the gospel. Anyway, Paul, he'd learned his lesson.

No more of that learning and that knowledge that's behind me now. That's the flesh, that's the old man. I'm depending on Christ.

[00:08:01] And he says, I didn't come with extensive word, wisdom, announcing to you, what was he announcing? The greatest thing that could be announced, dear saint of God, the testimony of God.

Do you realize that's what we've got to commit today? That has been given to us today, the testimony of God.

Do you feel the weight of it?

The testimony of God.

The sons of Kohath, remember, tells you in Numbers 8, isn't it?

The sons of Merari, they got carts to carry the stuff. And the sons of Gershom did.

The sons of Kohath, they bore it on their shoulders. The full weight of the testimony.

Saint of God, are we identified in that real, full way, with our testimony today? The testimony of God.

The great God. The God that created the universe.

[00:09:03] All these mighty stars, that great God.

Testimony of God.

And all that's involved in it.

Where do we take our stand in relation to that? Well, this is what Paul was announcing, the testimony of God. Of course, men have to come into it. Men and women come into it through the glorious gospel. Forgiven, forgiven.

And he came there and he said, I did not judge it well to know anything among you, anything among you, save Jesus Christ.

And as we were reminded this afternoon, very often we finish there.

We say, oh yes, just present Christ.

Well, I'm not saying that disparagingly, save Jesus Christ. And then it says, and him.

And Mr. Darby puts it in italics.

Because it's his spiritual judgment that it's got to be stressed, stressed. And him, in what way?

[00:10:01] Glorified?

Or crucified?

That's how we come to the gospel, isn't it? We speak of a man who went to Calvary. All the way to Calvary, he went for me.

It's the man that we preach in the gospel. Yes. Preach this glorious one, Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

The end of man, the end of the flesh.

It's not only, dear friend, that he's given his precious blood for you, but man, after the first order, is gone forever.

Gone forever.

As the dear old brother used to say to me when I came into the meetings in Kikenzi, and I'm sure it's been repeated all over, one thing that was impossible for God to do, several things, but one thing that was impossible, God could not mend the old man.

[00:11:01] Could not mend the old man. So what's he done with him? He's ended him. The end comes off, and he's ended the old man. And the Christ crucified is the end of the flesh of the old man.

And that's the way that the Apostle Paul came in in the gospel. What a message to bring these dear puffed up saints, puffed up with their knowledge. If you read in chapter 8, knowledge puffs up, love builds up, edifies.

His name puffed up.

Wouldn't that should have brought them down, shouldn't it? Down, down, down at the cross.

Jesus Christ and him crucified.

He says, I was with you in weakness, fear, and in much trembling. Yes, he came in to that great company, that wealthy company, that company priding themselves in their knowledge. Came in there, weakness, fear, much trembling. My word and my preaching, not in persuasive words of wisdom. [00:12:03] He learned his lesson at Athens. Not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

The blessed Spirit of God moved mightily there, didn't it? Souls were saved, gathered out. For that 18 months, many, many gathered out. There was a true demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Set aside anything of our natural attainments or learning, or anything like that, come in, in that lowly way, of Jesus Christ, that glorious person, and in this way of him crucified.

And that's what set forth. He says that your faith might not stand in men's wisdom, but in God's power, the power of God. And that's what it will be. It's built not upon the learning of men, the knowledge of men, our attainments, or anything like that. But it's built upon a simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who went to Calvary's cross.

That faith, dear friend, [00:13:02] it doesn't stand in the wisdom of men, but in God's power. I remember when I was at school at Preston Lodge. Is it still going, Johnny? Still going, is it?

Well, the headmaster there, you know, he used to say, you know, because he used to think these people from Pope's Seat were a bit strange, you know. And he said, you know, he says, still nonetheless, he said, they're men of faith. And he says, that's what speaks to me, the man of faith. He says, I look around at all the religious people, he says, the man of faith. He says, that's what I have to bow down before, the man of faith, to see their total commitment, the man who lives by faith. He says, that your faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

So the Apostle Paul, you see, he's dealt with that aspect, the gospel.

He now comes to another matter, in verse 6. [00:14:01] But, but, we, that's him and those with him, we speak wisdom among the perfect, among the perfect. Of course, for the sake of the young, we'll remind them, this is not sinless perfection. No, this is those who are mature, who've graduated in the things of God. But of course, here, I think in its first bearing, it's talking about every believer. In the same, you should see that John says, ye are of God, little children, and ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye have the Spirit of God. So we're absolutely capacitated and fitted. But of course, he uses this word mature, you see, because he's going to use it later on, in a slightly different aspect, to contrast with those who are immature. In other words, the carnal people. And later on, remember, in chapter 14, he says, in malice, ye children, in understanding, remain, [00:15:02] remain, mature, understanding.

He says, we speak wisdom among the perfect. And of course, wisdom, not of this world. Wisdom here, I should mention, of course, is what we would use today as knowledge, knowledge. Today, wisdom has a slightly different meaning, but he's speaking about knowledge here. Knowledge is not

of this world, not this world, and not even the knowledge of the rulers of this world, who come to naught, nothing. Now this one, this phrase, we'll notice several times in Corinthians, it's one of the key words in Corinthians, things which come to naught.

We didn't really expatiate upon it in chapter 1, but it's there, you see, God will bring to nothing, bring to naught, things that are. And so often, the Apostle Paul speaks of things being completely destroyed and brought to naught, and the wisdom of the rulers of this world comes to naught. He says, but we speak God's wisdom, [00:16:02] God's wisdom in mystery.

We speak God's wisdom in mystery.

And now, it says that hidden wisdom, but you know, really, the mystery was hidden. It's no longer a mystery to the believer, is it? Mystery was hidden, and this is the fullness of what Paul speaks. He doesn't, of course, elaborate it here in the Corinthians. No, the mystery is set out fully in the Ephesians, isn't it?

Not in the Corinthians.

The mystery is set out in the Ephesians, and he's saying that's what we speak, the mystery. But of course, you're carnal.

You're arguing, and you're following this one, you're following that one, you're not ready to take it in. You can't take in these wonderful great truths that are in Ephesians.

You need children's stuff, Sunday school stuff, that's what you need. You don't need Ephesians. You're not ready for Ephesian truth. [00:17:02] You're carnal. You're following this man, following that one. You're relying on the flesh to get through. And in that condition, you can't grasp these blessed truths of mystery. He said that this mystery was predetermined before God, before the ages, for our glory.

Isn't that wonderful? Think of it, for our glory. But of course, supremely, it's the glory of Christ, isn't it? God introduced this earth, the sphere, that the glory of Christ, his beloved eternal son might be displayed, fully displayed. Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that wonderful? Platform, it's been said. This earth is just but a platform for the display of the wonderful glory of God centered in his beloved eternal son.

That wonderful mystery.

Christ, the head over all things to be assembled, which is his body, the fullness of him, that fills all in all.

[00:18:01] Wonderful, precious mystery there in Ephesians, he developed there. And then, of course, we have the other side of it in Colossians.

There, we are not in Christ, it's Christ in you, the hope of glory. Wonderful and blessed, these truths. Get a hold of them, get into them. And these saints, of course, they could never get near these. And dear saint of God, let us think in a practical way. Are we missing out from an understanding and enjoyment of the divine things of God? Because we're allowing the flesh to control our thoughts and

ways and walk.

I'm not saying this thing tritely, dear saint of God, I'm saying it even to myself.

Am I missing a blessing?

Because there's too much of the old man and the carnality in my heart and mind.

This wisdom, none of the princes of this world age knew.

Then this phrase in brackets, [00:19:02] for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Oh, we enjoyed this afternoon the references to the Lord. I think, you know, this is probably the supreme most blessed one, the Lord.

Oh, can we get higher than the Lord?

In his lordship, I'm talking about his lordship, of glory, the Lord of glory.

You know, I think it's purposefully put as the Lord of glory. He's the Lord of what is glorious.

He's in control of everything that's glorious. But also it can be looked at as an adjective. He is a glorious Lord, the glorious Lord.

Glory, the supreme one, Lord of glory.

And if they'd known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

So they knew nothing of it. They missed it completely. Now, in the wonderful grace of God, remember the Lord Jesus Christ said, I thank thee, Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes. [00:20:03] And here we have in this verse an echo of that, don't we?

Cornelius has written, things which I have not seen, nor here heard, shall not come into the heart of man.

God has prepared for them that life.

Oh, isn't that precious?

Do you love God?

We don't get that expression very often. I think it's only thrice. I think in the New Testament, Michael, we no doubt correct him and say four times. It's either three or four times. Them that love God.

Love God.

Very important to set these out. And here we have one.

Them that love God.

I has not seen.

Isn't it Zophar, Job's three friends?

Zophar, oh no, sorry, Eliphaz.

He used to say, didn't he? [00:21:01] He says, as I have seen. As I have seen, didn't he? As I have seen.

He laid on what he'd seen, what he'd observed. Observation, as Mr. F.B. Hole used to say. Observation, didn't he? Observation.

And then the other one here is, ear has not heard.

And build that, the shoe height. Have you listened to what's been said of old? You see?

That's tradition, as Mr. Hole used to speak about. You see, tradition.

And then Zophar, isn't it? The Nehemiathite.

He reasoned things out.

He said to him, canst thou by search and find out God? And so on it goes.

In chapter 9, I think it is there. There's Job's three friends, you see. And Mr. Hole has well summed them up, hasn't he?

As observation, tradition, and intuition.

That was his words for it. But that's all set aside. These things of our natural ways, set aside.

[00:22:04] And how has God, how has God made them known? Been revealed, revealed, revealed to us.

God has revealed them to us. And how has it been done? By His Spirit, the Spirit of God.

A person of the Godhead, a Godhead person, has come and revealed these wonderful, this wonderful blessed truth. And the Spirit, of course, can do it. Because He is God. God alone can reveal God.

And reveal the things of God. The Spirit of God is not an influence. He is a person, a person of the Godhead. And He does it.

Because He searches all things, even the very depths of God.

The very depths of God.

Unfathomable depths.

And God, the Holy Spirit, brings them out in revelation. Revelation.

That's how these things are made known. Revelation.

And the Apostle amplifies that by saying, [00:23:02] in the natural way, who of men has known the things of a man, except the spirit of a man which is in him? Thus also, the things of God knows no one except the Spirit of God.

I think that is pretty well self-evident. The Spirit of God alone can bring out what is of God. And then, He says in verse 12, we have received, not the spirit of the world. No, we haven't, have we? We have not received the spirit of the world. We have received the spirit which is of God.

God's Spirit. We may know the things which have been freely given to us by God. Isn't that wonderful and blessed, dear saint of God? We are not left at our own charges. We've got the Spirit of God within us. That we might know things. Know it.

Understand them. In the sense of an objective knowledge. In the first instance, that we might know these things.

And that we might know them.

[00:24:02] They are set before us. And there is no excuse, because we have the Spirit of God indwelling us. And the Spirit has been freely given.

The things have been freely given to us by God. There's no holding back. Think of the wonderful wealth of it. Think of the wealth of God. It's all poured out for you and I, dear saint of God. Get into these things, freely given to us by God. And now, He then brings it down to Himself and the other apostles, which also we speak.

Things, He said, which also we speak. Not in words, taught by human wisdom. Keeps on this point.

There's nothing in natural wisdom and learning that these Corinthians were relying on. No. It's words, taught by the Spirit of God. Words, taught by the Spirit of God.

The very words that are in these scriptures, dear saint of God, have been given by the Spirit of God.

These very words, given by the Spirit of God.

[00:25:03] And it says here in the authorized version, comparing spiritual things by spiritual means.

That isn't really the force of it.

Though obviously, we can compare spiritual things in various ways. But the idea of it is that it's communicating them. Passing them on.

That's what it's doing. Passing them on.

Eugene will be quite interested to know that on this occasion, the NIV uses the correct word.

It brings out this idea of conveying and communicating. Some have tried to, you see, bring into this exposition. But that isn't quite what it's done. It's just saying simply, dear saint of God, here is God's word.

And that's how it's brought to you. The exposition and other things is a different matter. And that's not what's in this verse. [00:26:01] God, by his Holy Spirit of course, enables servants of God to expound the word of God. Praise be to God. For those that God raises up by his Spirit to do so. But it's just the simple communication of them. Simply the communication of them. The natural man, the unconverted man, doesn't receive these things in the Spirit of God. It's their folly to him. He laughs at them. As I did in my unconverted days. They were just something to be laughed at. Until God, in his wonderful grace, opened my eyes to see the loveliness of the Saviour. And he's been a precious hope to me ever since. And it's precious to wake in the morning with thoughts of his love, isn't it? Who's living for me in the glory of God. And to lay her head in the pillow, lasting at night, thinking of the blessed Saviour. Isn't it precious? Saint of God, is that your portion? Is he the one that you first thought in the morning? Or has the radio switched on just to hear how things are going? [00:27:01] Do you wake in the morning with thoughts of his love? Who's living for you in the glory of God. And as I've got a little bit older, I don't always sleep through the night. And it's precious to wake up sometimes in the middle of the night. He gives songs in the night.

Wasn't it J.B. Stoney? Not me, J.B. Stoney had a notebook by his bed when he wakened up. And the thoughts of the Lord were up and down. Precious and wonderful letters, isn't it? Anyway, the things of the Spirit, the folly to the natural man, because, you see, they're spiritually discerned, discerned, understood.

We pick them out and they're conveyed to us.

We grasp them in the power of the Spirit, the Word of God. Here we have, you see, on one hand, the revelation of God in verse 10, the discerning of these things at the end of verse 14, and in between, how does it happen? God, in his wonderful grace, communicates them, [00:28:02] that revelation by his precious Word, so that you and I may be a saint of God. We may not have much.

The enemies we've got is just that we're mightily altered. We've got a B.A., we're born again. There's no B.D., it's not born again, but doubtful, no, we're certain. There's no doubt about it. We're born again. But in his wonderful grace, we're able to get this precious Word of God and get an interest in the Word of God and the spiritual discernment.

The spiritual man, it's judgment in the sense of discernment, you see. It's the same word again. These three times we have it. It's discernment, picking them out, getting them teased out by the Spirit of God. That's what he does as we submit ourselves to the Spirit of God. We discern all things.

And of course, he, the spiritual man, is discerned of no one. Nobody can confuse him. [00:29:01] Nobody can reject him in any way. He's the spiritual man.

And the apostle then falls back on this quotation from Isaiah. Who has known the mind of the Lord,

and who shall instruct him? This great and wonderful statement there. Then he realizes, you see, that by the wonderful working of the grace of God, you and I, dear saint of God, it says we have the mind of Christ.

The mind of Christ. And it means the intelligent faculty. You see, we say normally, so-and-so hasn't got much knowledge, don't we? And it's that word here, you see. It's the intelligent faculty. And we've been, saint of God, we've been given that by the wonderful grace of God. The capacity to take these things in and enjoy them.

Isn't that wonderful? There's no need for us, you know, to go back on these things and just say, oh, they're beyond us. No. God in his wonderful grace has so worked in the power of the Spirit that this wonderful revelation has been communicated in this blessed way. [00:30:01] And we can discern and take them up. And we have the mind of God, which enables us to take these in. So dear saint of God, don't let us be afraid or worried. No. We have before us the lordship of Christ and the word of God made good in the power of the Spirit to enable us to go on and enjoy these blessed truths that will be getting opened up that the Lord leave here, leave us here in this week as we study this wonderful epistle of Corinthians. May it be so, for his name's sake.