

Paul continues the thought he started in the first chapter where he stressed that salvation cannot be attained through human wisdom or ability. He states that his preaching depended on the power of God and not on his own ability to speak or impress them with his intelligence. Paul's desire was that the Corinthians would base their faith upon the power of God, which was expressed through Christ's work on the cross.

## 1 Corinthians 2

1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

**“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency [superiority] of speech or of wisdom [intelligence], declaring unto you the testimony of God”** – In the prior verses in chapter 1, Paul has been explaining that God does not depend on human wisdom in order to provide salvation. Now Paul reminds the Corinthians that when he brought the gospel to them, he did not try to impress them with superior speaking ability or intellect.

**“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified”** – The crucifixion was something that the Greeks (Gentiles) considered to be foolishness (1 Cor. 1:23 “*But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness*”). However, Paul grounded his message on the simple premise that Jesus Christ was crucified in order to redeem us from our sins.

3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

**“And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling”** – When Paul came to Corinth, he may have been physically weak from the abuse that he had suffered for preaching the gospel. His fear and trembling was likely not for his own safety but for the spiritual well-being of the Corinthians. He was afraid that they, being Greeks, would put their trust in wisdom instead of the cross of Christ.

**“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power [dunamis: miraculous power]”** – Paul did not attempt to impress them with flattering words or human wisdom. Instead, he depended on the power of the Holy Spirit to touch their hearts and give them the faith to believe the message of Christ crucified for their sins.

**“That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God”** – Paul wanted the Corinthian's faith to be based on the fact that it is the power of God through Jesus Christ that brings salvation. It does not come through man's intellect or wisdom.

6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

**“Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect [mature]”** – Paul is not negating the need for spiritual growth, because he says he does speak wisdom among the spiritually mature. The spiritually mature have learned to trust God instead of human wisdom and their maturity has enabled them to understand the more advanced spiritual truths.

**“yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought”** – Yet even among the spiritually mature, Paul did not use the wisdom of the world since such wisdom was not profitable for salvation.

**“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory”** – In the Bible, a “mystery” is a truth that God kept secret until the appropriate time when He saw fit to reveal it. The wisdom that Paul spoke among the spiritually mature was the truths of Jesus Christ that God had revealed once Christ came into the world. These are things that God had ordained before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20 [speaking of Christ] “*Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you*”). God planned long ago that Christ would die on the cross so that believers would be glorified as His children.

**“Which none of the princes [rulers; leaders] of this world [aion: age] knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”** – Neither the Jewish leaders or the Roman rulers understood Who Jesus was and that He fulfilled the scriptures predicting the coming Messiah. If they had, they would not have been so driven by their hatred to crucify the Son of God. The Jewish leaders believed themselves to be wise but their actions proved that they had no spiritual wisdom.

9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

Paul quotes Isa. 64:4 to illustrate that the things of God cannot be perceived or understood using human senses or human intellect (1 Cor. 2:14 “*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*”). However, God has revealed these things to “us” (those who have been born again) by His Spirit. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit enables us to understand the things of God because the Spirit “searcheth” (examines) the things of God and shows them to us. Paul's point is that the Corinthians shouldn't depend on the wisdom of men to understand these things because they can only be correctly comprehended through the Holy Spirit.

11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

To illustrate how the Spirit enables us to understand the things of God, Paul uses the idea that men understand the things of men because they possess the spirit of a man inside of him. Accordingly, the Spirit of God understands the things of God and only those who are indwelt by the Spirit can understand them.

12 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 to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit when they are born again because God wants us to comprehend the blessings that He has given to us as His children. Paul points out that the knowledge of these blessings from God were what he preached, not utilizing human wisdom to teach them but depending on the Holy Spirit to open their eyes to the truth. The Greek word translated "comparing" means "to interpret." Paul did not use human wisdom to explain spiritual topics but instead used spiritual wisdom to teach spiritual concepts.

**Verses 14-16:** Paul explains that the things of God are beyond our human ability to correctly comprehend and accept because we need the help of the Holy Spirit to understand them. The Holy Spirit gives believers discernment of the world but the world has no discernment concerning believers. No one is smart enough to advise God and yet he allows us to understand some of His thoughts.

### 1 Corinthians 3

1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even* as unto babes in Christ. 2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able *to bear it*, neither yet now are ye able.

The Corinthians considered themselves to be spiritually wise and mature, but Paul states that they were not as spiritually mature as they thought they were. The word "carnal" refers to things pertaining to the flesh, and Paul says that when he was with them he could not talk to them about advanced spiritual things because they were guided more by the flesh than by the Holy Spirit. They were like spiritual babies needing spiritual baby food when he was there and even now they could not handle more "adult" spiritual topics.

3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? 4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I *am* of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

**"For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"** – Paul points out the jealousy, strife and divisions within the church as evidence that the Corinthians were guided by their flesh. They are behaving like people who are not indwelt by the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

**"For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I *am* of Apollos; are ye not carnal?"** – Paul gets more specific by pointing out the divisions among them based on who was their favorite gospel minister. Such prideful behavior is a work of the flesh.

5 Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? 6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

**"Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?"** – Paul points out the irrelevance of Apollos and himself, since it was God Who gave each of them the opportunity to preach the gospel to the Corinthians.

**"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase"** – Paul was the first to bring the gospel to Corinth and Apollos came along later and ministered to them. However, neither Paul nor Apollos could have been of spiritual benefit if God hadn't been the One working in the hearts of the Corinthians.

**"So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase"** – Paul acknowledges that of the three (God, Apollos and Paul), God was the only One that mattered. God could have used anyone in place of Paul and Apollos.

8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. 9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building.

Paul states that he and Apollos are not competitors but are "playing for the same team." Each of them will be rewarded for their labor in the gospel ministry by God, with Whom they are cooperating. They are laboring on God's property, and in v. 10, Paul speaks of how that he has laid the foundation of the gospel with the Corinthians and others will come along and build upon it. However, those who build upon that foundation should be careful as to how they do so.

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

The only foundation that can bring salvation is the foundation of Jesus Christ. All other foundations will crumble and fail (Luke 6:47-49).

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

There are many preachers and teachers who claim that their teachings are built on Jesus Christ, but their doctrines are built upon worldly principles and ideas. On the day of God's judgment, all who have labored in the ministry will have their works tested and only those whose works are based on the truth of God's word will withstand the fire of God's judgment.

14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

The preachers and teachers whose works survive God's judgment (because it was based on Biblical truth) will be rewarded, while the rest will lose their reward. This judgment is not regarding salvation, but they will be empty handed without a reward.

**Verses 16-23:** Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are the temple of God and God will hold accountable those who harm His temple (gospel workers of vs. 10-15). Paul again tells them not to trust in wisdom or men, because they belong to Jesus Christ.