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1 Corinthians 2:1-16
Now That's Wisdom!

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Let's get started. We have communion as well. I'd like to get through the chapter, 1 Corinthians 2, tonight.

Just a quick word of background: Paul came to Corinth on his second missionary journey all by himself. He had left Silas and Timothy and Luke in various places, but he had come here by himself discouraged and weary. Since he had come to Europe, many of the stops had been fruitful, but most of them had been interrupted almost immediately by persecution. There had been imprisonments and beatings and being chased out of town, and Paul came here and he was just...he'd had enough. It was such a hard time for him. And fearing it would repeat itself Paul, for the first time, admits to kind of backing down in his sharing of his faith.

He's overwhelmed by what he sees; this city of Corinth was an anything-goes kind of town. It was drowning in sin. It was a port city. It was on a major trade route. It was a perverse, idolatrous city. It had the largest temple of Venus in the world (Aphrodite in the Greek). Their very name – to “Corinthianize” – meant debauchery. So Paul was already alone and discouraged, but then he was face to face with this place. What-happened-in-Corinth-stayed-in-Corinth kind of thing. And Paul went to work making tents; that's what he did. He met some new Christian friends, Aquila and Priscilla. They would be helpful in the years to come. He stayed with them for a time.

But he only went out and shared the Scriptures on the Sabbath at the temple; it didn't really press things much, didn't seem to cause too much ripple, if you will. And it went on for quite some time until Silas and Timothy showed up, and he was moved by the Spirit to be bolder in his presentation. But doing that, he was sure he was certainly and almost quickly kicked out of the synagogue, told he wasn't welcome there, and the Lord opened a door next door to the place in the house of a fellow named Justus who was a believer, right next to the synagogue. Crispus, who was the leader of the synagogue, came to Jesus, which caused even more difficulty.

And Paul was sure that his days were numbered here as well. “They're going to come get me any day, you know. It's going to be another one of those beatings and get out of town and don't come back.” But then the Lord came to Paul at night in a vision. He said to him, according to Acts 18:9-11, “Paul, don't be afraid, and speak out, and don't keep silent. I'm with you. No one's going to attack you or hurt you. I have many people in this city.” And so then we read for a year and a half Paul stayed there, teaching the word of God among them without any kind of problems whatsoever.

He would then move on to Ephesus, eventually starting a church there. And while he was in Ephesus, Paul began to hear about this church that he had left behind and some of the troubles that they were facing being in this very difficult city. Somehow part of

this city had gotten into the church. First it was hearsay, but then it was friends and then ministry people from the church itself that began to bring Paul in Ephesus the bad news of worldliness and griping and pride, and it stirred his heart. He would write a letter that we don't have and two that we do have to the church to try to encourage them in their difficulties, you know, a church planted in the cesspool. That's hard, to be that church.

In chapter 1, Paul starts by saying to them, "I'm very hopeful even though I hear some terrible things because I know God started a work in you. I've seen the work of God's Spirit, I've seen God's faithfulness, I've seen the weak made strong. I know that this can be fixed. But you're going to have to go back to where you started." And Paul, with great faith and great love for the people, began to write this letter of encouragement and correction. It really is both letters....a letter to a very weak church on how things should be dealt with and gotten better, if you will. And he talked about their faith that had brought them to the Lord and how he had seen them grow. But then he started talking about the division that he found there in the church....he had heard about, I should say.....how fleshly and foolish they were – taking sides; one liked Paul, somebody else liked Apollos who had taken Paul's place. There was just....one liked Peter, and they began to rally around their favorite teacher rather than rallying around the Lord. And Paul said, in that first chapter, "How many scholars from the world's standards do you see sitting in the pews? How many smart folks by the world's account?" And he says, "I know you don't see many because God's grace is given through a simple message of faith and a childlike trust in God, and that usually doesn't bode well for those who want to be wise in the world." So very few worldly wise folks have come to Jesus; they consider the gospel foolishness and the cross as well.

So, Paul's preaching and his approach in Corinth that had birthed the church was very different; he had just stuck with the Scriptures. But now there were pet theologies and personal favoritism and divisions. But he said to them, in chapter 1, "You didn't come to Jesus like this, and neither will others come to Jesus watching you like this. The world has its wisdom. It works for the world. It doesn't work in God's kingdom. Don't bring worldly wisdom into God's kingdom. It won't work. We need God and His Word, and we need the Holy Spirit to teach it to us."

Well beginning here in chapter 2 and going through the end, really, of chapter 4, Paul will go after the issues of division from a lot of different viewpoints or vantage points, directions, all with the idea that he wants to have this solved and the people grow up. Following the last five or six verses where Paul, last week, said, "If you're going to glory, glory in the Lord, there aren't many mighty and powerful men in the church; there're just the weak and the shameful and those who put to shame the mighty."

But beginning in chapter 2, Paul then begins to speak about his method of ministry, his mindset, his outlook as he begins, and the message that he used. So three m's, if you will, set on display for these divisive Corinthians who God had used the message to save them. I think this chapter's one of my favorites because the lesson is very simple: if you can trust God's Word to save, you're prepared to go out tonight and share it. You

may not be glib and speak well in public, but if you trust the Scriptures and will just share God's Word, it's the power of God unto salvation. It's those who believe it and hear it and embrace it that will find life.

This church had become a highbrow kind of church, and a lot of times they were looking at Paul almost like a teenager would look at his parents; they're too simplistic, they lack a bit of charm, they don't have the wit and charisma to make them proud to be in his camp. They didn't value his status, his intellect, his humble faith. They just....he wasn't that kind of guy that they could rally around behind him. In chapter 1:17 he had said, "I didn't come to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ be made of no effect." He'll say the same thing here in a little bit, in verse 13, that, really, God's Word is what gives life and brings life to those who hear it.

So here's what he writes in the first couple of verses of chapter 2. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." God's Word accomplishes God's work and not the way of man's wisdom or presentation. You know, this emerging church today is so dependent upon presentation. Paul could have cared less. He wasn't interested in the messenger; he was interested in the message. They had commented – and he would mention it in 2 Corinthians 10:10 – of Paul's time with them, but when he was with us, "his letters," they said, "are certainly weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech is contemptible." Somehow that didn't impress these Corinthians. He didn't come across as some well-spoken gentleman, and they were looking for something to rally behind. You know, when Moses was called to the ministry, he said to the LORD, "I am not very eloquent" and tried to use that as an excuse not to go (Exodus 4:10-11). When Jeremiah, when he was young (chapter 1:5-8 of Jeremiah), was called by the LORD into ministry, he used the same excuse, "I'm a young guy. I really don't know what to say. They're not going to listen to me." And both of them were told by the LORD that He would speak through them, that they would just be vessels. Good enough for Paul. "I can be a vessel to deliver God's Word as long as you're not depending on me to sell it to somebody, to convince somebody, just to step up and really make the argument. If I can just deliver the message....if I can be a post office worker or a letter carrier, I can do that." And so Paul, here in verse 1, says (as you end chapter 1 into chapter 2), "I have come to you simply preaching, and God has worked wonders."

His method, in verse 1, "I don't come with the excellency of speech or of wisdom to give you God's testimony. I have no reliance at all on fancy words or lofty thoughts or polished sermons that are worthy of review. I don't have many witty stories or dynamic wordplay. There's nothing in my delivery that will attract you to me. I won't impress you

with my words. I'm bringing to you a simple message because I'm interested that you hear the message, not be distracted by the messenger."

How often do you suppose, like the Corinthians, we find our confidence in and pleasure from the delivery rather than the content of a message? Rather than saying, "That's exactly what the Lord would say," we say, "Oh, he's such a good singer, I can't wait to get his new record." Or, "He's so funny. I love listening to him." None of that helps. It's the content, isn't it? Not the delivery. How often do we....and I've heard people say, "Oh, man, I wish he'd get saved. The Lord could use a guy like that." "Why?" "Well, he's so dynamic, he's so persuasive, he's so funny, he's so relatable." None of that matters! It's God's Word that brings life, and Paul was sure of it. And the Corinthian church was gripped by the exterior, the presentation. Presenting the gospel in the simplest forms, without sensationalizing it or drawing attention to oneself or depending upon the human skills of oration or delivery, was Paul's determination. He said, "I won't do it." He could have trusted in them. I mean, everything you read about Paul, he was one smart guy. He could run circles around most of the apostles....you know, a bunch of fishermen. This guy went to....you know, he got his doctorate in everything. But it wasn't his confidence. So it's good that it's coming from Paul because he had it to depend upon, but he would not.

While many of the Corinthians applauded and took sides with the eloquence of Apollos, Paul would make his case for the wisdom and power of God's Word. So that was his method.

His mindset – and we'll skip verse 2 for a minute, I'll come back to it – is in verse 3. He said, "I'm aware of my weakness, terrified being here, afraid that someone's going to beat me up tomorrow – it's the way it's been everywhere we've gone." He arrived discouraged, much persecution, daily loneliness (might have gone on for months), and this has been his experience all throughout Europe. Even the lack of success in Athens, where he had just come from (Mars Hill - Acts 17), and now the horror here in Corinth. But since it was God's work, he would take the message of the gospel to the people knowing only Jesus crucified and delivering the message without any self-confidence, without any bravado. I think that, verse 3, the words that described his mindset were weakness, fear and trembling.

Now we know he was afraid because when Jesus came to appear to him (Acts 18:9-10), the first words out of the Lord's mouth to Paul were, "Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid." And we know Paul was weakened by a physical ailment; 2 Corinthians 12:7 talks about the thorn in the flesh that he's been suffering with. He'd been beaten up already several times. I'm sure he had the scars still with him. Both "fear" and "trembling" are Bible words that denote the recognition of someone's inability to act when confronted by God. "I can't do it. I'm out of gas. I'm out of steam. I don't have what it takes." And that little term "fear and trembling" is applied oftentimes in the Scriptures. The woman with the issue of blood came with fear and trembling (Luke 8:43-47) when the Lord called her, "Who touched Me?" Titus arrived in Corinth with fear and trembling (2 Corinthians 7:15), just worried whether they would receive him or not.

Paul told the Ephesians, in chapter 6:5, “You bondservants, obey your masters according to the flesh. Do it with fear and trembling,” or, if you will, knowing you can’t really be a witness unless the Lord works in your life. To the Philippians (2:12) Paul wrote, “You’ve always obeyed, but now not only in my presence also in my absence, work out your own salvation.....do it with fear and trembling.” Always the same application. Put yourself in a position where you realize you can’t pull this off. And that’s how Paul showed up in Corinth. He was broken. When Moses came before the people there at Mount Sinai, Paul mentions in Hebrews 12, it so terrified Moses that he said, “I’m exceedingly afraid and I’m trembling before the LORD.”

Pride was driving the factions in Corinth, so Paul spoke to them about coming to them without any worldly talents; no speech, no insights. He only had the Bible. “Here’s God’s Word.” He preached Jesus, aware that he was unable, and the task was too great. Unless the Lord worked, he was going to be wiped out. And his only encouragement was, “Don’t quit here. I’ll watch over you.”

The charlatans in Paul’s day, and often in ours, they always come with a program. They have an approach, they put on airs, they deliver messages in a way and in a manner that draws more attention to themselves than to Jesus. They’re often very arrogant and self-confident, and they declare what little trust they have in God’s Word because they don’t give it out very much. Paul’s only confidence showing up here was in God and His Word.

I want you to notice that this approach of Paul’s was not accidental; it was deliberate. Verse 2, “I determined not to know anything among you except this: Jesus and the cross.” Not that Paul wasn’t educated. He was. But he chose to focus on the simplicity of the gospel so that any response to his preaching would be to God’s glory and not to the wisdom or the awesome presentation of Paul. So that no one would say what they were saying in chapter 1, “I’m of Paul.” Paul didn’t want any of that. You know, human eloquence can move people easily. Vast audiences, historically, gathered in thousands to hear Hitler. He was mesmerizing to the people. They chanted, they cheered; it was almost like hypnosis. I mean, Shakespeare moved them. Mark Antony’s speech at Caesar’s funeral showed how brilliant Shakespeare was as a writer when he turned you from loving him to hating him in a few words. And if you’ve read the story, you just want to kill the guy. Preachers can certainly move people forward with man’s wisdom. But how do you know if the Lord has spoken to them or you have? Preachers can also hinder God’s work by relying on their own talents or their own showmanship rather than the work of God’s Spirit and the truth of God’s Word. Same thing is true for worship leaders and ushers and servants. Whom you serve is who is seen and honored. Who are you relying upon? I forget who the preacher was at one of our pastors’ conferences years ago that told the story of a little girl that was in church and there was a man who filled in for the usual preacher who was a tall guy; and because he was short, they got to see behind the pulpit this stained glass picture of Jesus. And the little girl said to her mom, “Who’s that man who’s standing there who usually hides Jesus from us?” And I think that’s how a lot of the preaching was going.

Paul's method was to stick with the Scriptures. His mindset was, "I don't have what it takes. I am here with fear and trembling." And his message was very straightforward, "I'm just going to talk to you about the cross."

When Paul had gone to Athens (which if you can, go read back in Acts 17), he had gone to Mars Hill where the prophets and the folks who talked a lot of religious talk sat, and Paul tried something that you really don't find Paul doing anyplace else; he talked to them about their idols, pointed out their grave to the unknown god, if you will, he quoted their poets, he pointed to their temples, he commented on their religious concerns. And it didn't go anywhere. And I think Paul walked away from Athens, and he headed for Corinth and said, "I'm just going to go back to the simplicity of the Scriptures. I tried meeting people on their turf. It didn't work." Because that doesn't work. God's Word works and always has. So he says, in verse 2, "No more. I'm not doing this anymore."

So we read, there in verse 4 and in verse 5, Paul saying, "I'm not relying on persuasive words that come with human wisdom. I'm not relying on me but rather on the demonstration and the power of the Spirit of God who is put on display and who can save." If human skills dominate your witnessing, not too many folks are going to come to the Lord. And if they come, they might very well not stay. Paul wanted to be sure that in this work of God that God had promised to be with him, that the folks there would trust only in God and rely upon Him. There're a lot of slick ways to bring people to Jesus, but the question is: are they really brought there? There's an old line in ministry and in evangelism that says this: what you draw them with is what you draw them to. If you lead them to Jesus, they'll stay there. But if you use anything else, oh, it may look good on the outside for a while, but it just won't last.

He says, in verse 6, "However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.'" Now Paul changes the pronoun from "I" to "we" to broaden the example, not just of himself but to his team and to the church as a whole. Paul chose what the world called a foolish method to bring forth a foolish message. They called it foolish in his method. They called it foolish in his message. (Do that three times fast. You won't do it.) (Laughing) And they were wrong twice!

To the Corinthians – Jews or Greeks – to embrace Paul and his message was to join a foolish man with a weak approach that had nothing in the world to be proud of. And Paul granted that the world would view him as weak and that his message would look foolish in appearance. That wasn't like that for those who knew the Lord; that was like that for those who are locked in the world and won't listen. So he says, in verse 6, "I can speak wisdom to the mature." Paul could speak with eloquence and explanation and biblical reasoning to the wise in faith but not to these Corinthians who thought they

were saved but they weren't very mature. In fact, in chapter 3, he will call them a bunch of babies. You know, a baby will put just about anything in its mouth. You gotta watch out. "Don't! Oh, no!" The Corinthians were just that way. Paul was being set aside by them as a simpleton for they saw no value in his ways and in his word, and yet Paul says, "The spiritual wise, they don't see it that way." In other words, those who love the Lord don't believe it to be so. But Paul told them that the wisdom of the gospel did not equate with the wisdom of the age. What is held as wise among the lost – even the wisest minds in the world – will never lead anyone to grasp the wisdom of God. I don't care how smart you are, how educated, how many doctorates you have, how many degrees you've earned. That won't get you saved. And Paul makes that comparison, that the wisdom of the gospel and the wisdom of the age is different.

The gospel leads to eternal life. What does he say here? "The wisdom of this age and the rulers of this age are coming to nothing." It gives you nothing in the end. In the book of Job, when the counsel of his friends gathered together in particular, you can read about man's wisdom, about how God confronts this man of God. Eliphaz, one of his buddies, came with these exotic experiences of dreams, "Oh, you know what you have. You have a dream. Here's how God works." He brought his whole theory with him. Bildad – and it brought little clever clichés – he was the proverbs guy. Zophar, who had his mind made up, explained to Job why he was suffering. So when even Job defended himself, in the book of Job, he uses the word "I" and "me" and "my" almost two hundred times to defend himself before the LORD. "I don't deserve this." And then you get to chapter 38, and he goes, "I guess maybe I did." He had to work through it. All words, no wisdom, until God spoke, and the rest were laid low.

Paul says, in verse 7, about the gospel: it's the mystery of God. It's hidden, but it's eternal. The world's counsel, by the way, is dependent upon empirical information: what you can see, touch, analyze. The wisdom of God can't be seen with the naked eye, and yet it surpasses man's understanding. We have a difficulty, don't we? I mentioned to you before a mystery in the New Testament – anyway, when that word is used – is usually something which God has mentioned but it needs to be fully revealed before we can grab ahold of it; and a mystery is still that which is beyond human comprehension. So that's the gospel, isn't it? Paul saw himself and the other apostles as stewards of the mystery of God; he'll say that in chapter 4. And the method of mystery that God has chosen, He chose before the ages for His glory. God chose the way to save man. It was going to be by faith and the preaching of the cross of His Son. That was it. Had the rulers, verses 8 and 9, of the world known that and fathomed it, they would have never crucified the Lord of glory; they would have embraced Him, they would have bowed down before Him. But worldly wisdom can't fathom it. It's out of reach.

In fact, this verse in verse 9 is a quote out of Isaiah 64:4 written 700 years earlier. And Paul's point is God hasn't changed. The wisdom of God is beyond man's reach or worldly wisdom. Notice verse 9, that the head and the heart can't come to terms with this: man is dead in sin, in heart and in head, and if he's going to come to know the Lord at all, God is going to have to speak to him and make Himself known because else it's a

mystery that is hidden. Man has extraordinary power. I'm always amazed at the things we have come up with – the intellectual power, the medical advances and all. Yet none of what we have been able to accomplish gets us any closer to the Lord. That requires His Word which hasn't changed at all.

So Paul goes on and he says, in verse 10, "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Worldly wisdom is very limited, temporal. Worldly wisdom cannot understand God's plan. Know that. Even when you go out to share with people, any kind of presentation that you rely on is not going to get the message through. The Holy Spirit and the Word of God gets the message through. So the most simple presentation will work. God will use it because that's His power unto salvation. It's important that we grab hold of that. God reveals the truth to the apostles who wrote it down by inspiration, who passed it along by the Spirit who now preaches the Word of God to us, who accept what God saying, and then He causes His Spirit to be moved into my life; I now begin to have the mind of Christ, and I begin to understand spiritual things. It's His process. It's the only way it works.

How can a man know a God that he can't see and whose provisions are beyond human thought? And the answer is: the Spirit of God speaks to the heart, makes known the will and the plan of God, and then if we will hear it, we will enter into a relationship with God where we are born again and we have the heart of God because we have His Spirit living within us to reveal who God is, what He wants.

Jesus said, in John 14:25-26, "I've spoken these things while I'm present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He'll teach you all these things, and He'll bring to your remembrance everything that I've told you." He said, in chapter 16:12-15 of John, "I've got things I'd love to teach you, but you're not ready to bear them now. However, when the Spirit of truth has come, He'll guide you into all truth. He won't speak of Himself, but whatever He hears from Me, He'll speak; He'll show you the things to come. And He will glorify Me. He will take what is Mine, and He'll declare it to you." He'll declare it to you.

So Paul was very confident that if the Word of God would just go out simply, he would get out of the way, God's Spirit would open eyes, and it wouldn't be the wisdom of the world that would be dependent upon but the work of God's Spirit. And that really is the answer for all of us – that God speaks to the hearts of men.

Verse 10 and verse 11 – man is a spirit living in a body, God is a Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the One who moves into our hearts who, first of all, convicts us of our sins and then, in the wisdom of God, shows us the cross. Those are spiritual truths that you

cannot learn by learning or study that you'll learn because God comes to reveal them to you. Paul tells us that this is what man cannot discover on his own so God comes to reveal them to you. So, in verse 12 and in verse 13, by the teaching ministry of Paul, the apostles, God breathes spiritual truth in the Scriptures set before us. So you go out tomorrow and you share God's Word, and the Holy Spirit takes those words, and He bears them upon a heart of an individual, and they are powerful enough to divide between the marrow and the bone (Hebrews 4:12); it gets as deep as it can get. And it can reach the heart of the lost. They're the keys that break the darkness of sin.

And if you believe that – if you believe that's the process (and certainly Paul believed it) - then you should be able to preach to anyone. "Well, I don't know what to say." Just share what you know. If you depend upon God's Word, life will come. If you depend on presentation and articulation and drama and demeanor, that doesn't save anyone. The Word of God opens people's eyes. Know that to be so. And I think the problem for the church is we've stopped sharing the simple Word of God. So the way of salvation is shown by the Spirit through the Word of God spoken and delivered first by Jesus, then the apostles, and today by those saved and sharing their faith. There's simply no other method God has chosen to reach the world. There's no other method. "Here's My Word. Here's My Spirit."

Verse 14, "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For 'who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ." This spiritual insight depends upon one thing: do you have the Holy Spirit living in you or not? Are you born again or not? As the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to know by revelation and write by inspiration God's Word, like the Old Testament prophets were able to prophesy in things they knew nothing about, and the New Testament saints were able to learn and grow and reach the lost, so can we. Once you get saved, you have everything you need to be a vessel that God can use. "I'm not very smart." Yeah, that's good. That way your smartness won't get in the way. Without the work of the Spirit, people are going to stay in the dark. Yet judging the things of God is foolish and weak, Paul puts everyone into two categories: the haves and have-nots of the Spirit. Now this all started with the division of, "I am of Paul," and, "I'm of Apollos," and Paul said, "Wait a minute, man. I didn't baptize any of you. I didn't die for you. In fact, I showed up just terrified to be there. I needed the Lord to show up to get me even speaking at all. But I was determined to do this thing. I'm sticking with the Scriptures. I'm relying on God's Spirit. It may seem foolishness to you and to the world; it's not foolishness to the saints." And it certainly isn't foolish when it's the only method God will use. Even the foolish things of the world are confounded by the wisdom of God.

Verse 14, the natural man doesn't understand these spiritual things. Why? He's not indwelt by the Spirit. These have not the Spirit. Deep things of God, verse 10, are lost on him. The Word of God has no impact upon him. In fact, verse 13, he sees the gospel as foolishness. My dad.....we had pretty good years of fighting about getting

saved. He spent a lot of money sending me to Catholic school. He was so mad at me when I got saved, and I quit going to mass. I would say, "It's not in the Bible," and my dad goes, "You disappoint me so." And then I'd tell him the gospel, and he said, "Well, that's stupid," and then he'd use Charlie Manson as an example. "So you mean to tell me if Manson repents and goes to Jesus, He'll forgive him? But I live a good life and I don't receive Christ, I'm going to Hell?" and I go, "Yep, that's right." And he'd go, "You're an idiot!" (Laughing) One. Thank you. I'm using the idiot word too much. I'm getting harassment by the staff. But he really thought that was crazy, like that was crazy. Until he got saved. Then it wasn't crazy at all.

So it may seem foolish, verse 13, to the natural man, but it's the only way of life. The only hope we have to know these things is to hear the gospel, listen to the Holy Spirit speaking to our hearts, and then respond to Jesus by faith. When that occurs, you get saved, the Holy Spirit moves within to be...you're now going to be a house for the Lord, a heart where He can dwell. And God begins to then, within your heart, begins to establish these things in you. On Easter evening, it was the Lord who met with the 120 in the upper room, and one of the first things He did after calming them down was He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Spirit." And the next thing you read was, "they understood the Scriptures." That's what all of us need. Nothing else is needed. He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. When? When He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." That needs to happen in the lives of people today.

Verse 10 and verse 11, man is a spirit living in a body. Now we have God's Spirit in us to speak to our hearts. Verse 15, notice, "he that is spiritual." Now that doesn't refer to mature because if there's one thing that the Corinthian church was not, it was mature. They were floundering. But rather it means he has a spiritual life, the spirit of God dwells in him. That was true of these Corinthians. They were far from spiritual at the moment, but this one thing they could judge or appraise – they were aware of spiritual truths. They had come to hear and know the Word of God. They had a capacity to listen to the Scriptures.

No wonder you get persecuted in the world or misunderstood sometimes. The world looks at you and your love for Jesus and your trust in His Word, and they see you as weak and foolish. They don't get it.

I took my wife to a play this weekend up in Hollywood, and we went to dinner on Hollywood Boulevard (which is kind of a mess these days). But we ran into a 45-year-old Hispanic man who had grown up in the streets, but he had recently given his life to the Lord, and he was out there with his dog and a bullhorn just reading the Scriptures to people. And I stopped and I said to him, "Well done, brother. This is good. God's gonna use you." And he told the story of a guy getting off the bus there and running at him with a knife. I said, "What did you do?" He said, "I just prayed." I go, "Well, that's good. Start with that!" (Laughing) He said the guy just kind of stopped. There was a policeman came by at the right time. But he's been out there for the last six months on almost Hollywood and Sunset – almost – just sharing the gospel. I said, "Is this your

confidence?" He said, "God's Word will bring life." I was really proud of this guy. He had really long hair and braided.....he just looked like a little biker dude, you know, or something, but he loved the Lord, man, and he was convinced. I thought this is our generation of Pauls that we need. He's going to stand on the corner and preach.

Verse 16 is a quote out of Isaiah 40:13. It's a quote that talks about the natural man's ignorance of spiritual things and his ignorance in thinking he can somehow instruct the LORD. In fact, if you go to Isaiah 40, the LORD there is the word Jehovah. Notice that Paul has no trouble putting Christ in that place. Jesus is Jehovah. Jesus is God. "We have the mind of Christ." We have the outpouring of the Spirit. You can dig as you go to read your Bible and get treasures and riches and find jewels that will thrill your heart. He'll direct you. But look, Pastor Chuck used to say this, "We are just simply sharing the Word of God, simply." And that's really this chapter: Go out and share God's Word simply. Trust in it. Trust in the work of God's Spirit. What a blow to the pride of the Corinthians and what a lesson to us as we go out to share the Lord, that you can have confidence in the Word, and you can expect criticism and rejection and an unwillingness to listen to the voice of the Spirit. But that's not your job. Your job is to go, "Here it is. Here's God's Word." Don't take it personally when people don't want to listen to you. They don't want to listen to Him! You're just delivering the message. I never blame the postman for my tax bill. I wish he wouldn't come to the house that day, but he does. "This is for you." "Thanks so much. Get out!" (Laughing) It's not his fault. So you bring God's Word to people. It's not your fault they don't want to hear it.

Paul refused to know anything but Jesus, verse 2, and him crucified. And so he preached with fear and trembling, confident in the Word and in the work of God's Spirit, and a whole church was born in the cesspool of Asia Minor. Paul would later share, in 2 Corinthians 12:9, that he had learned God's power was made perfect in weakness. Remember, he wrote that there about, "My grace is sufficient for you, My strength is made perfect in weakness." And Paul said, "Then I'm so happy I have infirmities to boast about, that the power of Christ would be upon me. I take pleasure in my infirmities and reproaches and needs and persecutions and distress, for when I'm weak, then I'm strong." Why did he say that? Because he learned that the power was in God's Word and by His Spirit. That you should learn. Know that! Nothing wrong with just saying to people, "Here's what Scripture turned my life around" and reading it to them. You think you're not doing enough, you're doing plenty. Deliver God's Word.

Paul didn't want men trusting in him but in the Lord, and his method emphasized the message not the messenger. It was sufficient to save the Corinthians. It would be sufficient to secure them in their walks as well. Know this: true wisdom always flows from God to man, not the other way around. You'll never reach God from here. But God can reach you here, from there. And no one, I think, could appreciate that more than Paul. He was the religious man, wise in the world, and dead wrong. And eventually he would say to the Corinthians "Everything I ever gained I count but dung for the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I just want to know Him. I just want to know Him."

So, take this to heart. Paul's argument is: just stick with the Scriptures. I would say know verse 2, and you'll know the whole chapter. "I'm determined that I'm not going to know anything among you except Jesus Christ. I showed up with nothing. I was terrified. The Lord encouraged me. I relied upon the wisdom not of the world but of the Lord. I relied upon His Spirit to speak through me. The world may think it's foolish, but the spiritual men do not. We have His Spirit, we have His mind because He dwells within us." You're ready to go! Every one of you God would use you if you'd be willing.

Shall we pray?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson

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