

# UNDERSTANDING THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT

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## 1 Corinthians 2

### Introduction

[From Joke]... UNANSWERED PRAYER?

A preacher's little boy inquired, "Daddy, I notice every Sunday morning when you first come out to preach, you sit up on the platform and bow your head. What are you doing?"

The father explained, "I'm asking the Lord to give me a good message."

The little boy responded, "Well, why doesn't he?"

On a more serious note, as we investigate the message of 1 Corinthians, we find that in the opening verses of chapter 2 Paul reinforces what he said in chapter 1 about the importance and the simplicity of the gospel message that he preached to the lost that he encountered in every city he visited. In all our efforts to reach the unsaved around us, we must never lose sight of the simple message of the cross.

[From Illy]... "BUT WE PREACH"

Inscribed on the cornerstone of a large, fashionable church was the text: "But we preach Christ crucified." As the years passed, vines grew up around it until all that was visible were the words, "But we preach." Ironically, that was exactly what had happened in the ministry of that church. It had come to the point where the pastor spoke only about social issues and no longer proclaimed the crucified, risen Savior.

Read vv. 1-5 – there are two things which stand out in these verses. One is the simplicity of the message. The other is the manner in which it is presented – see v. 1, 3-4 – not with cunning persuasiveness but with simplicity and clarity, and a demonstration of the Spirit of God.

There is something that I think is significant about Paul's coming to Corinth. I would like to go to the book of Acts for a few moments – Acts 17:16ff.

- Paul was in Athens – filled with philosophers – v. 21
- V. 18 – he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection
- He was brought to the Areopagus – they were looking for a new philosophy or idea

- Paul used a philosophical argument to present the truth about God and then introduced the idea of the resurrection of Jesus
- There was a mixed reaction to his message – v. 34 – only a few believers
- Then in chapter 18, Paul moved on to Corinth
- He joined himself to the household of Aquila and Priscilla and began reasoning with both Jews and Gentiles – v. 4
- He was violently opposed by the Jews and turned his attention to the Gentiles – v. 6
- The result of his preaching was many converts – v. 8
- He stayed for a year and a half, teaching the Word – v. 11

Why do I show you all this? Well, I want you to see the contrast. I cannot help but wonder if Paul, when he left Athens, felt like he had somehow failed. It appears that there were only a few converts there, and there is no record in the NT of a church being established there. Perhaps Paul felt that he had relied too much on philosophical thinking and human wisdom in his presentation to the Athenians.

So, in his letter to the Corinthians, he tells us that he has realized that the only message that matters is the message of the cross. He says – see vv. 1-2.

From that point on, the Apostle Paul was determined to not rely on human wisdom, or persuasive speech, or incredible eloquence, or philosophical arguments, but to preach the simple message of the crucified and risen Christ, in the power of the Spirit.

But there is something else that Paul brings out in the remainder of this chapter, and it deals with the nature of the message for those who are growing and maturing in their walk with God.

Two important things to realize:

1. There is a deeper message for the mature in Christ.
2. It is not something which can be understood by human wisdom.

### The Message to the Mature

v. 6 – what it is not – it is not the wisdom of this age, or of this world, or based on the wisdom of the rulers of this world.

v. 7 – it is God’s secret wisdom – the mess for those who are mature and growing is the message of God’s Word, the deep truths that are hidden in the Word of God.

vv. 12-13 – It is a spiritual message – it is spiritual truth which must be spiritually understood.

*Focus on the depth of truth there is in the Word of God – we must continually study it and mine the truths that are deep in the Scriptures.*

## Receiving the Message of the Spirit

The other aspect that is so important to realize is the fact that God’s marvelous truth is hidden from those who do not have the Spirit of God to reveal it to them.

v. 8 – the rulers of this age did not understand it – Why? The answer will become clear as we continue –

vv. 9-11 – No one can understand what God has in store for His saints – the human mind simply cannot comprehend, but He has revealed it by His Spirit.

*(An aside)* – Do you love Him? Does it show in your action and your life – refer to John 14:15, 21, 23-24

v. 11 – the key to understanding the mind of God is to have the Spirit to open up the truth to us, to illumine our minds and hearts to receive the truth.

*Read through vv. 12-14*

[From Illy]... SEEING THE LIGHT

I read of a little boy who was born blind, but his condition could be corrected by delicate surgery. When at last the operation was performed, he was exposed to light little by little. Then one day his mother led him outdoors, and for the very first time he saw the sky. "Oh, mother!" he cried, "why didn't you tell me it was so beautiful?" Her heart overflowed with joy because her son was discovering a whole new world. She wept as she replied, "I tried to tell you, dear, but you couldn't understand me."

Never will a person begin to comprehend the beauty of the Savior until God gives light to his soul. Expecting the unconverted to grasp eternal truth is like asking one with no vision to appreciate the colors of a sunset.

A blind person can never understand the beauty which we see all around us. The person who is spiritually blind will never be able to comprehend the beauty and the wonder of the spiritual truth that is revealed in the Word of God.

That is why we cannot attempt to teach the deep spiritual truths of Scripture to those who have never received Christ. It will only confuse them. That is why Paul said, my message to you when I came to you was simply Christ and Him crucified. If you have never responded to that simple message and received Christ, you do not have the Spirit of God and will never be able to understand and appreciate the deep truths of the Word of God.

Re-emphasize v. 14

## Conclusion

[From Illy]... OPENED EYES

People who try to understand the Bible apart from the help of the Holy Spirit could be characterized by the words used in Psalm 115:5 to describe idols: "[They have] eyes, but do not see." The unsaved may appreciate the Bible for its literary beauty and its moral teachings, but they cannot grasp its spiritual meaning. Instead, they are puzzled by it. They don't understand why Christians love it or how they derive so much from its pages.

C. H. Spurgeon told a story about a lady who once said to an artist, "Why do you put such extravagant colors into your pictures? I never see anything like them in nature." The painter wisely responded, "Don't you wish you did, Madam?" Spurgeon then commented that in much the same way believers see many divine wonders that unbelievers cannot perceive.

[From Illy]... TUNED IN

Scripture says that to unbelievers, spiritual things are foolishness. Lost people make fun of the things of the Spirit because they can't comprehend them. An unsaved person just doesn't have the antenna that is needed to pick up the signal.

But what about Christians? A believer has the antenna, but he may still have technical problems receiving the signal. If he doesn't know what the problem is, he may waste a lot of time fiddling with the wrong thing trying to fix it.

Tony Evans says it's like the problem he had with his television not long ago. He kept adjusting the knobs on the set, but nothing seemed to help

the reception. He even got out the directions that came with the set, but he still couldn't get a good picture. It turned out that the problem wasn't with the set, but with the antenna. A storm had blown it out of place, and it needed to be redirected toward the signal.

When he did that, it helped a lot, but the picture still wasn't clear. The repairman Tony called told him that he had a second problem. Their house was located in a low spot, and there were lots of trees around. So the repairman added an extension to the antenna to get it up above the trees. Once he did that, the picture cleared up.

Dr. Evans makes this application: "It's easy to fiddle with the buttons in our lives, trying to get a clear picture of this thing called life. But that's starting in the wrong place. Until the antenna of your mind is turned toward the divine signal, messing with the other stuff in your life won't help. That signal is coming from a King who has a kingdom agenda for you, and when you get that signal straight life's picture will clear up."

If you have your antenna directed properly but you're still not getting the signal very clearly, maybe you have too many trees in the way. Everyday problems like family conflicts, job stress, money woes, and car repairs may be crowding God out. The answer is not to cut down the trees but to raise your antenna above them.

[What a Way to Live! by Tony Evans. Word Publishing, 1997. Pages 149-151.]

*Close by reading vv. 14-16 again...*