

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

Teachers Addendum 1

- I. **The Concept of Spirituality** -- 1 Corinthians 2:15 -- **But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.**

An Addendum to What is Spirituality – 1 Corinthians 2:15

The book of 1 Corinthians expresses Paul's heart for a **dis-unified church to become unified** (1:10). Thus far, Paul has humbled everyone including himself. He has said to the Corinthians, "Your message is foolish (1:18-25), you yourselves are foolish (1:26-31), and I am foolish (2:1-5)." Outside of that everyone and everything is just fine. Now in 2:6-16, Paul states that **the only way the Corinthians and you and I can live a wise life is by having the right perspective and power.** He will argue that *without the light of God's Spirit, we'll be in the dark.* Paul begins by addressing the right perspective in 2:6-9.

1. **True wisdom is cross-centered (2:6-9).** In order to be truly wise and to consistently exercise a wise perspective, we must have a proper view of wisdom. Throughout this overarching section (1:18-2:5), Paul has declared that **wisdom is found in "the word of the cross."** Thus, in 2:6-9, Paul can write, "Yet we do speak *wisdom* among those who are mature; a *wisdom*, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's *wisdom* in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the *wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written, 'THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.'"

If you are a Bible student it is worth underlining the word "wisdom." is repeated five times in the first three verses

The word "wisdom" (sophia) -- In the tradition of Proverbs this [wisdom] denotes habits of judgment applicable to life. It concerns the formation of a Christian mind, which issues in a right action...Paul associates the use of the term at Corinth with what amounts to a self-centered, at times childish, attempt to manipulate things to one's own advantage. True wisdom from God, however, is sought by those who are sufficiently adult (teleios) to exercise it responsibly for the good of all."

The apostles ("we") speak the message of the cross to those who are "mature." **The "mature" are those believers who recognize and embrace God's wisdom in the cross.** Since Paul does not divulge who among them is "mature," **the readers must decide for themselves whether they qualify or not.**

This same principle applies to us today. Are you a mature Christian? If so, how have you arrived at that conclusion?

Paul argues that we are only mature if we have the right perspective on the cross.

- Is the cross your solution to church conflict?
- Is it the means of unity?
- Then you are mature.
- Is the cross your solution to your marriage and family difficulties?
- Is it the means of reconciliation?
- Then you are mature.
- Is the cross your solution to work conflict?
- Is it the means of getting along with your boss and coworkers?
- Then you are mature.
- We never move on from the cross of Christ—only into a more profound understanding of the cross.

Although in the next chapter (3:1-4) Paul will discuss those who are immature and fleshly in their Christian walk, his expectation is that all Christians will live according to the right perspective. We cannot make excuses for ourselves and assume that maturity belongs to the spiritually elite. **God's heart for you is that you press on to a cross-centered life.** Will you refuse to settle for stale Christianity?

In these four verses, Paul will tell us three aspects of God's wisdom:

The wisdom of God is eternal (2:6). The wisdom that Paul declares is “not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away.” It is not like the wisdom that may come from Oprah, Dr. Phil, or influential political officials. The wisdom they utter is here today and gone tomorrow. However, God's wisdom is eternal. Isaiah the prophet said it best, “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” ([Isa 40:8](#)). Since God's wisdom revealed through His Word is eternal, how can we not invest in it?

The wisdom of God is beneficial (2:7). Paul informs us that God's wisdom is a “mystery.” **The word “mystery” refers to truth that God had not revealed previously.**

“mystery” --“It does not signify a puzzle which man finds difficult to solve. It signifies a secret which man is wholly unable to penetrate. But it is a secret which God has now revealed

The message of the cross is a further unfolding of God's plan and purpose beyond what He had revealed and what people had known previously. Paul makes this clear when he writes that the cross is “the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory.” This stresses the plan and sovereignty of God. It also demonstrates that God has our good in mind—our glorification.

The wisdom of God is supernatural (2:8-9). The Jewish and Roman rulers responsible for Jesus' death did not understand the purpose and significance of the cross, so they crucified "the Lord of glory." The phrase "Lord of glory" implies the divine fullness. It also ties in with the saints' glory (2:7). It is through union with Him that we will experience glory. Paul explains that the reason these authorities crucified Christ was because they lacked the supernatural wisdom of the Spirit. Paul then cites [Isa 64:4](#). This passage is not about heaven, although it's often used at funerals. It is clear in the context of [Isaiah 64](#) **that it means life, here and now**. God wants to reveal these things to us. He has done so out of love. Trusting Him for understanding and cultivating this love relationship with Him means that we will grow in greater and greater understanding of wisdom. Yet, *without the light of God's Spirit, we'll be in the dark.*

[Paul has just said that the right perspective is to recognize that true wisdom is cross-centered. He goes on to share with us the right power in 2:10-16.]

2. **True wisdom is Spirit-directed (2:10-16).** Paul will state that it is **HE- the Holy Spirit** who reveals deep things to Christians. **Therefore, if we want to grow to maturity in Christ we must rely upon the Holy Spirit's power.**

In 2:10-11 Paul writes, "**For to us [the apostles and mature Christians] God revealed them [deep thoughts] through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.**" The wonderful mysteries God has prepared for those who love **Him are not knowable only by a select group of Christians**. Any and every believer can understand and appreciate them because the indwelling Holy Spirit can enlighten us. **However, without the light of God's Spirit, we'll be in the dark.**

Paul informs us that the Holy Spirit searches the very depths of the heart and mind of God. He can do this because He is God—the third member of the God-Head. Paul's point is that the Holy Spirit functions within the Trinity the way our human spirit functions within us. Our spirit is the innermost part of our being. It's where our deepest, most private thoughts reside. To put it another way, no one knows you better than you! **The reason is that you live with you.** I don't care how well your spouse knows you or how long you have been married, **no one knows you like you do.**

No one knows your private thoughts and those deep internals struggles you keep hidden. Because we have a spirit, we are usually our own best interpreter. That's why when two people get into an argument, one of them will often say, "**Don't try to tell me what I mean. I know what I am saying!**"

Therefore, if you really want to know someone perfectly you would have to tune into his or her spirit.

The Holy Spirit is tuned in to the deepest thoughts of God. He has access to the innermost workings of the Godhead.

- Since this is true, are you dependent upon the Holy Spirit
- in your Bible study?
- In your prayer life,
- do you ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you God's wisdom so that you can pray effectively?
- In your marriage and family, is your prayer, Holy Spirit fill me so that I can be who you want me to be?

In 2:12-13, we learn that God is pleased to reveal His deep thoughts to us.

Paul writes, **“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”**

The moment you trusted in Jesus Christ you were given the Holy Spirit as a “pledge” of your salvation -- ([2 Cor 1:22](#); [5:5](#); [Eph 1:14](#)).

- One of God's purposes in giving you the Holy Spirit is so that you may know the things He has “freely given” to us.
- There is no charge attached to the Holy Spirit's ministry of illumination. It has been provided to every believer so we can get God's answers to life realities.
- We have the Spirit of God, who knows the innermost thoughts of God and can communicate these realities to us.
- This means we don't need more of the Spirit; the Spirit needs more of us.

In 2:14, Paul explains why some people do not respond to the Holy Spirit: “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”

- A “natural man” is a person who does not have a supernatural dimension—he or she is without the Holy Spirit.
- Their natural values are physical and material. A person like that cannot understand spiritual things.
- They are controlled by feelings, moods, urges, felt needs, desires...by natural reasoning, logical choices made on the basis of goals centering on this life—success, wealth, power, and pleasure.
- Such a person does not “accept” the things of God for they are foolishness to him.”

- **The term “accept”** literally means **“to welcome.”** It is a word that was used frequently of the practice of hospitality.
- Thus, I think 2:14 can best be translated, “The unbeliever does not *welcome* the things of God.”

Paul also states that the unbeliever cannot understand the things of God.

- There are two different words in Greek that are translated “to understand” in our English Bibles. **One means to understand intellectually, while the other is often used to mean understand experientially**, or “discern the true nature and importance of something.”
- **It is the *latter* (experientially)** word which is used here. Paul is not saying that an unbeliever cannot understand the facts of the Bible or that he cannot grasp basic theology or even that he cannot interpret Scripture correctly. Rather, **what he is saying is that he cannot know the things of God *experientially***—he can’t discern whether those things are true or good or valuable.

The best way I know to illustrate Paul’s point here is with the concept of radio waves. There are many, many radio waves in this room. But we can’t hear them because we don’t have receivers to pick them up. Our ears are not tuned to those frequencies. The same thing is true in the spiritual realm. The unbeliever doesn’t have the spiritual receiver, the Holy Spirit, to enable him to appreciate God’s truth. He is like a deaf critic of Bach or a blind critic of Michelangelo.

- Therefore, we should not get angry when unbelievers act like unbelievers.
- How else are they supposed to act?
- The deaf cannot hear, the blind cannot see, the lame cannot walk,
- the dead cannot move, and **the natural man cannot understand the things of God.**

How sad it is that many Christians criticize unbelievers for sinning when sinning is merely a part of their job description.

Yet, we allow believers to live any old kind of life without any rebuke, discipline, or accountability.

There seems to be a terrible double standard. We should not become angry, irritated, or impatient with unbelievers. On the contrary, we should have a great empathy and love for them. While we should also have love and empathy for believers, we must stop letting believers live like unbelievers.

We’ve got it all backwards. We need to understand that the only reason we ourselves aren’t still living as natural men and women is that God miraculously entered our lives. It is a gift of grace that we can now see reality. So we have nothing to be proud of; we’re not superior to natural men and women, just saved. That’s the only difference.

Paul gives a contrasting perspective in 2:15: **“But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.”** We hear the term “spiritual” being used a lot today, and often very carelessly. People call themselves “spiritual” because they are seeking ultimate answers, whether in the mystical or in New Age philosophy or in Eastern religion or even in their inner self. But **the NT uses the term “spiritual” to describe someone who is related to the Spirit of God.**

- Spiritual persons are those Christians in whom the Spirit has really become the fundamental power of life ([Gal 6:1](#)). **Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.**
- Paul is describing people who consistently obey the teaching of the Holy Spirit. As a result of that consistency, **they have great potential for being used of God by the power of the Holy Spirit.** Verse 15 says, “He who is spiritual appraises all things...”
- **The verb “appraise” means to appraise the worth of something.**
- In the art world, there are certain people who are fulltime art appraisers. They can look at a painting and say, “That’s a forgery. It’s worthless.” Or “That’s worth \$5,000 at auction.” Or “That’s a Rembrandt. It will fetch at least \$7 million.” These appraisers are well paid because they have the ability to spot the real value of a painting. Paul says that because we have the Holy Spirit, we can properly appraise the real value of things.
- **Contextually, this phrase doesn’t really mean “all things;” it means “all spiritual things.”**
- **There is another clause that follows immediately in 2:15: “...yet he himself is appraised by no man.”** This phrase has been terribly misunderstood by some Christians. Some have suggested that this verse teaches that the Christian should not be judged by anyone. Yet, later in this very letter Paul will command believers to judge the flagrantly disobedient in their midst (5:3-5), to evaluate those who claim to bring words from the Lord (14:29), and to examine themselves to see if they are behaving appropriately enough to take the Lord’s Supper (11:27-32). **Here, therefore, he is thinking primarily of being unjustly evaluated by non-Christians** (or by Christians employing worldly standards), who have no authority to criticize believers for their misbehavior, since they themselves do not accept the standards they employ in making their judgments.

Paul closes out this section in 2:16 with these dramatic words: **“For WHO HAS KNOWN³THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.”** Here Paul quotes [Isa 40:13](#) to remind us that we can’t know the mind of God apart from the Holy Spirit.

For *without the light of God’s Spirit, we’ll be in the dark*. Opportunely, Paul writes that “we have the mind of Christ.” Going back to [1 Cor 1:10](#), Paul urges us to be of the same mind. This means to share the mind of Christ, which is focused on unity and community life (see [John 17](#)).

In his epistle to the Philippians, Paul urged his readers to adopt the mind of Christ ([Phil 2:5](#)). He then spoke of the death of Christ. To have the mind of Christ is to participate in the pattern of the cross. **God’s heart is that we put to death our selfish ambitions and humble ourselves before one another.**

Paul has declared that true wisdom is cross-centered and Spirit-directed. It is available to you today if you will merely adopt the right perspective and the right power.