

T. Shane Martin
Green Run Baptist Church
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GENUINE SPIRITUALITY: A STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS

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**TAUGHT BY THE SPIRIT
1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-16**

INTRODUCTION

As we continue our series through first Corinthians, we must see chapter 2:6-16 in light of what Paul has already written. Early in this letter, Paul rebuked the Corinthians' false understanding of wisdom and he reminded them that true wisdom values the cross of Jesus above all else. False wisdom always rejects the cross as God's chosen means of salvation, but true wisdom embraces Christ as *the power of God and the wisdom of God* (1:24). Paul continues his discussion of the cross and the wisdom it produces. In this next section, Paul goes on to emphasize the world's blindness to the wisdom of the cross.

1. THE MOST IMMATURE CHRISTIAN HAS MORE WISDOM THAN THE MOST INFLUENTIAL UNBELIEVER (2:6-9)

When Paul speaks about the cross, he is not speaking foolishness (v6). His message only appears to be foolish to the world. Instead, when Paul preaches the gospel, the mature recognize the wisdom of a crucified Messiah. Paul contrasts the way that two different groups hear and understand his message. First of all, the *mature* refers to all believers, even the most immature believer. Secondly, *the rulers of this age* refers to the leading unbelieving authorities who shape the mindset of modern societies. Paul's point is that the most immature Christian has more wisdom than the most influential unbeliever. All wisdom not derived from God is quickly passing away even though it may be the most popular fad of the age.

Unbelievers cannot recognize true wisdom because God has hidden the truth from them (v7). God hides His truth from the prideful, self-absorbed and self-sufficient; but to the humble, He reveals His mysteries. The wisdom of the cross has been available to the world for centuries and it has been recorded in the Scriptures. But it has also been hidden from the world in the sense that man's heart is so hardened by sin and his mind so clouded by sin that he is unable to see what is right before him.

Paul illustrates this by pointing to *the rulers of this age* (v8) and their inability to grasp Christ's wisdom. Jesus came to reveal the wisdom of God and the most influential and well-educated leaders of the day absolutely dismissed His message as foolishness. But worse, not only did they not understand His message; they hated it. They hated Jesus' claims so much that they crucified Him. Human wisdom will always seek to do away with God. These leaders are not unique in their inability to grasp God's wisdom. No one can understand the gospel apart from God's enablement. To prove this point, Paul quotes Isaiah as he writes of man's helplessness to grasp true wisdom through reason and observation (v9). Instead, true wisdom must be revealed to man by God's Spirit and it is only available to those who love God.

Paul's point is clear; the Corinthians have no business being so enamored with ideas and philosophies which come from influential unbelievers when true wisdom is already theirs because of Christ.

2. THE CHRISTIAN'S WISDOM COMES FROM THE SPIRIT OF GOD (2:10-16)

Paul will now answer the question of how anyone comes out of spiritual darkness into spiritual light. Having explained and illustrated man's natural spiritual blindness which results from his pride and rebellion, Paul will now explain the role of God's Spirit in overcoming our blindness and rebellion.

(2.1) Through Revelation (2:10-11)

The point of verses 10-11 is that God reveals Himself to us through His Spirit. This makes sense because the Spirit alone knows the mind of God perfectly. Only one who knows the mind of God can reveal God's thoughts. This is why the Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, is uniquely qualified to reveal God to humanity.

(2.2) Through Inspiration (2:12-13)

God has revealed Himself to us through an inspired book, the Bible. God used many human writers, but the Spirit is the author of the Bible. Inspiration is what God used to transmit to us the special revelation contained in the Bible. The point Paul makes to the Corinthians is that his words are not the result of human wisdom, rather he preaches and writes what God gave him. Certainly the Holy Spirit used words which were familiar to Paul and those words were perfectly suited to communicate the spiritual ideas which needed to be communicated. In short, Paul's words were God's words.

(2.3) Through Illumination (2:14-16)

Illumination refers to the Spirit's work of enabling us to understand and love what has been revealed to us through inspired writings. I do not mean to imply that we will understand everything that has been revealed in Scripture, but we will be given a deep understanding and love for the revelation of God so that we may live to glorify God in all things. Without such illumination, *the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God. In fact, they are foolishness to him* (v14).

With this illuminating power of the Spirit, believers are able to appraise wisdom and foolishness. The Spirit equips the believer to discern what is wise and what is foolish, but without the Spirit, the unbeliever cannot rightly judge the believer and his wisdom. Verse 16 reminds us that the world misunderstood Christ and His ways even though the world had no ability to rightly appraise Christ. And because we have the mind of Christ, the world will treat us in a similar manner as it did our Lord.

CONCLUSION

Again Paul had defined true spirituality for the Corinthians who profoundly misunderstood what spirituality was. True spirituality concerns how one understands and appropriates the cross of Jesus Christ. The wisdom of the cross stands in direct contradiction to the wisdom of the world. True wisdom is only found as the Spirit guides us into the message of the cross. We must ask the Spirit to do this for us.