

1 Corinthians 2

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Tape #8137
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Open your Bibles to the second chapter of First Corinthians, as Paul begins the subject that he started in chapter one, the subject of the cross of Jesus Christ. To the Greeks, foolishness, to the Jews a stumbling block, but unto us, it's the power of God's salvation, to the world, foolishness.

I was reading of Dr. Ironside, who was speaking at an outdoor meeting. There was a man in the crowd, well dressed, distinguished looking, who came up to Dr. Ironside, as soon as he had finished talking, and he handed him his card. Dr. Ironside recognized the name on the card. It was a man who was well known for his agnosticism. In fact, he was going around and lecturing on his agnosticism and ridiculing the Bible. On the back of the card, there was a challenge for Dr. Ironside to come the following Saturday night and debate him in an open forum. He announced the place where he would meet him and debate him on agnosticism versus faith in God. So Dr. Ironside stepped again to the podium, there were several hundred people there. He read to them the card and the challenge to come and debate the man concerning agnosticism and faith in God. He said I would like to accept the challenge to come and debate, on this condition: that this man will bring with him one person, one man whose life has been destroyed by alcohol and by wild living, who had really come to the end of the road of his life, but went to hear one of the lectures by this man on agnosticism and as the result of the lecture, found that his life was changed and now he is living a worthwhile life. If he will bring one woman whose life was destroyed by prostitution and by drugs and all, who went to one of his lectures, heard him talk about his agnosticism and it transformed her life and now she is living a very wonderful, clean life. And I promise to bring a hundred men whose lives have been transformed by the message that I preach. I will bring a hundred women whose lives have been transformed. And the fellow standing there just sort of shrugged his hand and walked away, knowing that he couldn't produce one who had been helped by the agnosticism, the wisdom of the world! It doesn't change lives. It doesn't lift the fallen.

It is interesting, of course, that Paul is writing to the Corinthians. At that time, Athens was the cultural center of the world. And there were the philosophers that would gather there at the Areopagus. Greece was known for its philosophers and for the worldly wisdom. Paul is writing to Corinth about the wisdom of this world and how by the world in its wisdom, knew not God. But God chose by the foolishness of preaching to bring man to the understanding of His saving power and His saving grace.

So Paul writing now to the Corinthians here in chapter two, carrying on the very thought from chapter one, concerning the cross, the preaching of the cross, the power of God to salvation, versus and contrasted with the wisdom of the world, which by its wisdom could not know God. *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.* What is the testimony of God? That He so loved the world, that He gave His only Begotten Son, who died on the cross, bearing the sins of the world. That God had laid on Him the iniquities of us all, in order that through His death for us, we might receive the gift of eternal life and might know what it is to live in fellowship with God. That it is possible to know God, it's possible to live in fellowship with God because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. So Paul said I preach the simple gospel. I wasn't there with great oratory. You didn't walk away saying, my, what a marvelous speaker.

Nor did I try to entice you with the wisdom of man, demonstrating wisdom or whatever, but I just declared to you the testimony of God. ²*For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.* The simple, simple, message of salvation, that's all I was concerned with, to share with you the simple message of redemption through Jesus Christ. I was determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The message of the cross, to the Jew a stumbling block, to the Greek, foolishness, but to those that are saved, the power of God to salvation!

³*I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.* He didn't come with great, dynamic power

and all. He said I was there in weakness. I was there in fear and in much trembling. It's interesting that you can sort of understand Paul's attitude at this point. You see, everywhere he had gone, up to this point, ended with riots. His message created a real uproar among the people. In Lystra they stoned him and thought they had killed him. They drug him out of the city. They thought he was dead. In Philippi he was thrown in prison. In Thessalonica he was brought before the judges. They had to rush him out of Berea because of the stir that had been created there. In Athens he was sort of scorned. So I imagine by the time he got to Corinth, he would be in trembling and in fear and in weakness. But you remember as Paul was there in Corinth and as was usually the case he was brought before the judge by Sosthenes, the chief of the synagogue and how that the judge dismissed the case. But then the Lord spoke to Paul and said, don't be afraid. Now the Lord doesn't say to you don't be afraid unless you are afraid. The Lord said I have many people in this city and so Paul stayed there for a year and a half teaching them the Word of God, but not as a dynamic orator. Not persuading them with the power of oratory and speech, but declaring a simple message that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. He was buried and He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

⁴*And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,* ⁵*that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.* Because Paul said, I did not want your faith to stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. Faith that is based in the wisdom of man, can be a shallow faith because someone can come along with greater deductive powers and persuade you away. If you can be persuaded into, then you can be persuaded away from. He said, I wanted your faith, he said, to be established in the power of God. That is the experiencing of God's power in your life, just like with Dr. Ironside. I will present a life that has been transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, a life that had gone to the bottom, a life for which there was no hope. Yet now a productive life because of this power of God and the transformation by the Spirit of God, which is able to take a person who has gone to the bottom and to restore them, to deliver them from the powers of darkness. It is the power of God unto salvation, the preaching of the cross. He wanted them to be establishing God's power, the transforming power of the cross of Jesus Christ.

⁶*However, he said, 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.* Paul really didn't have much respect for the wisdom of the world. The princes of the world or the rulers of the world, he said, that wisdom comes to nothing. I think that history pretty much proves that point. The wisdom of man, look how the wisdom of Lenin was embraced by the Soviet Union. Look what it did for them. The wisdom of the world, it comes to nothing.

⁷*But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery,* Now, here we have the contrast between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God. Paul, in the previous chapter said, for after that in the wisdom of God, the world, by wisdom knew not God. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save those that believe, the wisdom of the world versus the wisdom of God, the wisdom of the world that comes to nothing, the wisdom of God which he calls a mystery.

Now in the New Testament, the usage of the word, mystery, it isn't like Columbo, solving a mystery of a crime, where you wonder, who done it, you know? They always are throwing you off by putting suspicious kinds of characters there. Or quite often you know who it is, and you know that he sort of knows and he zeroes in and destroys all of their alibis and comes up with that one clue that seals the case.

The mystery in the New Testament usage of the word, is not something that is hidden. It is something that it is now revealed that has been hidden. Now the cross of Christ was a mystery, though God spoke of it in the Old Testament. Over and over, God spoke of the Messiah, suffering, being despised and rejected, and dying. Now the Jews did not understand that, but now through Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection, this mystery is now revealed. So in the New Testament, the word mystery, is something that was hidden from man until, now, the revelation by the actual death of Christ, the mystery of the cross is now revealed.

So we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery. That is, the death of Jesus Christ. We now can see the Old Testament Scriptures that refer to His death. It's now clear what the Scriptures were saying concerning the Messiah, though they seemed to be contradictory because it talked about His glorious Eternal reign, His

power, the world and its transformation when the Messiah comes. But it also spoke of His suffering and His death, His hands and feet being pierced, His garments being parted and the casting of lots for His vesture. That was all there but they didn't understand that until it actually happened, but then it was now revealed.

So the mystery of the wisdom of God, *the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory*. The plan of redemption was something that God ordained before He created the world. The Bible speaks about Christ, crucified from the foundations of the earth. The Bible speaks of our names being written in the Book of the Lamb from the foundations of the world. Something that God ordained from the beginning, that He would demonstrate His love to fallen man by sending His own Son to take their guilt and to die in their place.

The wisdom of God ordained before the ages for our glory,⁸ *which none of the rulers of this age knew*; That is, this mystery, they did not understand, *for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*. Had they really understood. Now, they were without excuse because God had declared it in the Word, but had they really known the wisdom of God, they would never have crucified Jesus Christ.

⁹*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, how many times have you heard that spoken of as heaven? You know the glories of heaven, the beauties of heaven, the excitement of heaven, eye has not seen, ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the hearts of man, the things that God has prepared for them that love Him. No doubt, it refers to heaven also, but Paul is actually, in context here, is talking about the blindness of the worldly wisdom to the grace and the mercy of God, demonstrated in the cross of Jesus Christ. The plan of God's redemption of man! The eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things that God had prepared for those that love Him.

¹⁰*But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit*. The forgiveness of sins, the hope of Eternal life. This walking in the Spirit, living after the things of the Spirit, the worldly wisdom, the worldly man, never dreamed of this, but God has revealed that unto us by His Spirit. These marvelous things of God, justification, redemption, righteousness by faith, things that God has revealed to us by His Spirit!

For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹*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*. So, who really knows what's in your heart? You do! But I don't know the motives of men. You don't know the truth about someone else. We know those secrets of our heart, but who really knows the things of man, except the spirit of man, which is in him? So with God, man doesn't understand or know God, but the Spirit of God, understands and knows God.

¹²*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*. Now, we have the contrast of the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God. Now we have a contrast between the spirit of the world and the Spirit of God. The spirit of the world is the spirit of rebellion, rebellion against God, against the things of God. The Spirit of God, of course, is what we have received as the Holy Spirit teaches us, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. Now, eye has not seen the worldly wisdom. Their ears have not heard, it hasn't entered into their hearts, but God has revealed unto us by His Spirit. And this Spirit of God has caused us to know the things that are freely given to us of God. The love, the salvation, the things freely given to us of God. We know them by the Spirit.

In the fourteenth chapter of John, Jesus was talking to His disciples. His last interchange with them, the evening that He was betrayed before the morning when He was crucified, their hearts are troubled because He has been talking about the fact that He is going away and where He is going they cannot come. He's been telling them about His being turned over to the hands of the Gentiles and being crucified and slain. Their hearts are troubled because that's not what they had been expecting of the Messiah. So He tells them, don't let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me. Then He said, I'm not going to leave you as orphans. I'm not going to forsake you. But I will come to you. He said, I will not leave you

comfortless, but I will pray the Father and He will give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot receive because it can't see Him and it doesn't know Him. But you know Him for He dwells with you and shall be in you.

Then a little further down in the same conversation, He said, but the Comforter which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring all things into your remembrance whatsoever I have commanded you.

Then as they are going from the upper room over toward the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said, but when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me.

Then, further down, in chapter sixteen of John, He said that I tell you the truth that it is expedient for you that I go away. For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. When He has come, He will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not of me. Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more. Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have many things to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He the Spirit of Truth has come, He will guide you into all truth, for He shall speak not of Himself but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak. And He will show you things to come. So the promise of the Holy Spirit, to be our instructor, to teach us, to show us things to come.

So we have received, Paul said, the Spirit, which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. ¹³*These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.* So not in man's wisdom.

It's interesting, I've been reading some commentaries on Corinthians, in preparation for our study. And it seems to me that most of the commentators, who have written on this particular passage are seeking more to impress you with their wisdom than seeking to actually understand what Paul is saying. As I was reading the commentaries, I really got so confused that I set them aside. And I just prayed, Lord, just open my mind to things of the Spirit, that I might compare spiritual things with spiritual. You give me, Lord, the understanding of these passages. And just the very thing that Paul said, he did not endeavor to do, most of the commentators endeavor to do. That is to approach with the worldly wisdom and impress you by their wisdom, rather than just allowing the Spirit of God to unfold the truth as He compares the spiritual things with the spiritual.

¹⁴*But the natural man* Now of course we have another contrast between the natural man and the spiritual man. The natural man, the man with the nature of the flesh. You, before you were born again. Paul, writing to the Ephesians said, And you who were dead in your trespasses and sins, wherein in times past, you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, that even now works in the children of disobedience. Among whom you all once had your manner of living as you were controlled by the lust of your flesh and the lust of your minds. And you were by nature the children of wrath, even as others, the natural man, who lives and is controlled by his fleshly desires, by the lust of his flesh. He lives after the flesh. He is controlled by the flesh.

Contrasted with the spiritual man, who is controlled by the Spirit of God. One man whose mind is the mind of the flesh, who do mind earthly things, Paul said, that's the natural man. His mind is the mind of the flesh, versus the man with the mind of the spirit. Now Paul said the mind of the flesh is death. But the mind of the Spirit is life and peace and joy.

But the natural man *does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him;* So the natural man, first of all, doesn't understand the things of the Spirit. They are an enigma unto him. When you talk to him about justification, about redemption, about sanctification, he doesn't comprehend. He doesn't understand. He doesn't have a clue as to the glorious things that God has provided for mankind through His Son, Jesus Christ!

The natural man just doesn't understand the things of the Spirit *nor can he know them,* And neither can he know them. It isn't that he just doesn't. He can't know them, *because they are spiritually discerned.* Comparing spiritual with spiritual, Paul said. These things are spiritually discerned.

In other words, it is only as the Holy Spirit opens up our understanding, opens up our minds to understand.

It's interesting that God has chosen the foolishness of preaching as the instrument of opening man's minds to the things of the Spirit, but the natural man can not understand them, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. In fact, they are foolishness unto him. He is just at a loss when it comes to spiritual comprehension of God's truth.

I was reading of a farmer in Canada who was upstairs in the farmhouse when he heard his wife scream. It seems that an intruder had entered the house and was threatening his wife. And as he came downstairs and saw the intruder, he tackled the man and bodily threw him out the back door and locked the door. The next morning they found that man frozen to death at the bottom of the stairs, the backstairs of the house. So he went down to the Royal Mounted Police. He reported the incident. They came out. They made a full and complete investigation. The date of the trial was set. They read into the record all of the investigative reports, what happened, the incident and all. When it was finished, the judge said, you were justified in what you did. And all of the records, all of the testimony, was then destroyed because he had been justified by the court. That meant that they destroyed even the records of the case.

God has justified us. The records against us have been destroyed. Now the natural man doesn't understand that. How that God can so completely forgive us that the indictments are all dismissed. The records have been destroyed. I stand before God innocent as though I had never sinned. The natural man, the natural mind just doesn't grasp this. It's foolishness unto him. He can't know them because they are spiritual discerned.

In contrast, ¹⁵*But he who is spiritual judges* (Judges is probably a poor word. Maybe discerns all things. The idea is that he understands all things. The natural man does not understand the things of the spirit. They are foolishness unto him, but he who is spiritual understands these things.) *all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.* The natural man has tremendous difficulty with you as a child of God. He just doesn't understand you. He doesn't understand the joy that we have in Jesus Christ, the satisfaction, the peace that we have, as he is striving and struggling with life. Trying to find purpose and meaning. And he sees you smiling, he sees you with your joyful attitude. He just doesn't understand it. Sometimes they even accuse you of not caring or of not really understanding the severity of the situation that you are facing. And they just don't understand the peace of God that passes human understanding. They don't understand the joy that is just indescribable and full of glory that we have when we fellowship with God and walk with God. And they wonder, what do you do for fun? You don't get drunk. You don't party. You don't chase women. What do you do for fun? And they can't understand that your life is so rich and full and complete in Christ Jesus, that you don't need these things. You've got that contentment and that peace in Jesus Christ.

Several years ago one of my sons kept pressing me to retire. He said, dad you don't need to go so hard. You're getting old. You know there is nothing like a son to blunt and honest with you. He said, you know, you could, you don't have to do that anymore. You could just go over to Hawaii and make tapes and write books. You could have a beach home. Why do you keep pressing? Why do you keep putting in so many hours, dad? You ought to retire. I said but if I retire, what would I do for fun? The joy of serving the Lord! Oh people don't understand it! Just the joy of knowing God, living in fellowship with Him. He that is spiritual understands all things, yet, he is not understood by man.

¹⁶*For "who has known the mind of the LORD?"* Back in the eleventh verse, "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" Who has known the mind of the Lord? That means that he may instruct Him? Well, the Spirit knows the mind of the Lord and has made known unto us these things of God.

Paul said, *But we have the mind of Christ.* Writing to the Philippians in chapter two (Philippians 2:5-8), Paul said, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus, the mind of submission to the purpose and the will of the Father, the mind of self emptying. How opposite that is of the world, which seeks self-glory, to build up self. But He emptied Himself, the Greek word is *kenosis*, He emptied himself. A form of God thought it not robbery to be equal

with God, yet he emptied Himself. Let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus. Paul said, we have the mind of Christ.

He said (again as he was writing to the Philippians) that of all the things that he had, that were at one time, his ambition and goals that he had achieved, his position among the Jews as a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin, one of the ruling body of the Jewish faith, all of these things that were once so important to him, his obedience and the keeping of the law, concerning the law, blameless, all of these things that were once so important to Paul, he said, these things I counted loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. For whom I suffered the loss of all of these things, his reputation among the Jews, his position among the Jews. I suffered the loss of all these things and do count them of refuse, that I might know Him and be found in Him.

Now Paul suffered the loss of the prestige and all of being a member of being a Sanhedrin. He gave that up for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the simple message of the cross and salvation through Jesus, that I might be found in Him. Not having my own righteousness which was of the loss, but now the righteousness which is by faith in Christ Jesus. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who emptied Himself that He might redeem mankind.

As we empty ourselves in order that we might live, those that are dying, that we might bring them hope and the message of hope and salvation through the cross of Jesus Christ. The simple message of the cross, to the Greek, foolishness, to the Jew a stumbling block, but to us who are saved, we have discovered that it is the power of God to transform our lives, to give us a life that is worth living. A life of the Spirit.

Father, we give thanks, tonight, again for the beautiful message of the cross of Jesus Christ. And the transforming power of that message which has transformed our lives, as You have brought us out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of Your Son. Lord, we are so grateful that we have been redeemed from that former life of emptiness and now have something worthwhile to live for, as we follow after Jesus Christ. Bless, Lord, bless Your people as they go out as a light in this dark world to bring Your light into that darkness. As they go out to be Your witnesses, living epistles, known and read by all men. Let their light so shine before men that as they see their good works, they may glorify You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.