



## First Corinthians 2: 1-13

### Verses 30,31 [From last week]

Believers are **in Christ Jesus** (vs. 30). He is our **wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption**.

**Sanctification:** A person who believes in Jesus Christ for everlasting life is at once sanctified. Sanctified means “holy”. We are not progressively being sanctified. And while we are still “sinful” we are no longer called “sinners.” We are not “sinners saved by grace”. We are saved by grace, yet still sinful at times.

If sanctification is a process, then certainly Paul would have addressed this letter to them that are *being sanctified*. But he doesn’t do that. Paul addressed this letter to the **sanctified** (1:2).

In 1 Corinthians 6:11 we see, not a progressive sanctifying, but a stated fact that you are, as a believer, **sanctified**.

1 Corinthians 6:11 (NKJV)

*<sup>11</sup>And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*

In 6:11 it is a passive indicative word, meaning it is done to us. We are washed once, we are justified once (declared righteous), and we are sanctified once.

We cannot gain any of these things in verse 30 (wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption) by other worldly means. Therefore, because we are **in Christ** and not in the world, we should only **glory** (boast) **in the Lord**, never in anything we have achieved on our own. That is why we glory in him and not ourselves.

[Remember the context of this passage. The church in Corinth is divided over who is leading them—specifically, who baptized them. The disagreements became so heated, they wrote a letter to Paul, asking for his help in the matter. He told them that he didn’t come to baptize, and that our focus should be on the cross of Christ. It should not be “man” focused. The wisdom of man does not save.]

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Paul continues in chapter 2 by reminding the Corinthians that salvation does not come from human wisdom, and that he did not use it.

### Chapter 2

**Verses 1, 2 –**

**When I came to you.** The account of the apostle Paul coming to Corinth (about 5 years earlier) is recorded in Acts 18. He began in Corinth, not as the pastor, but as a tentmaker with Aquila and Priscilla, a husband and wife team. Paul worked all day long in the tent shop, and on the Sabbath day he reasoned in the synagogue and persuaded both Jews and Greeks to believe in the power of the cross of Jesus Christ. Later, when Silas and Timotheus (Timothy) brought money, Paul was able to pastor this new church full-time. He continued his work in Corinth for 18 months (Acts 18:11).

During his time in Corinth, he came humbly **...not with excellency of speech**. Literally that means he did not come to them with an air of superiority. Paul was extremely well educated, but he came alongside the people, working everyday like them. He never held authority over them. He didn't flaunt his **wisdom**. The word wisdom is *Sophia*, and we get our word sophisticated from it.

Rather, he came **declaring...the testimony of God**.

That testimony (vs. 2) was clear; **Jesus Christ, and him crucified**. He preached the cross of Christ and its power to save.

**Verse 3 –**

We do not typically think of the great apostle Paul as being fearful, timid, or weak, and yet when he was in Corinth he was with them in **weakness, fear** and **much trembling**.

In Acts 18:5 he seemed to be revived when he was joined by Silas and Timotheus. In Acts 18:9 the Lord Jesus spoke to Paul in a vision and told him, *"Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace."* What was Paul afraid of? The passage does not tell us specifically, but it appears he was fearful of the response to the words of the cross he was speaking.

Paul was opposed often regarding his testimony of the cross, and the same held true in Corinth; the message of the cross was blasphemed by some of the Jews. These were men out for blood (Just as Paul had been in his earlier life before believing). He knew what they could do to him. Even the Greeks were antagonistic. They beat Sosthenes, and he was the chief ruler of the synagogue (Acts 18:17).

Paul was with the Corinthians in **weakness**. He knew he could not preach the cross of Christ in his own power. He needed the strength of the Lord and, in fact, the Lord assured him there were many other believers in Corinth who would be Paul's encouragement (Acts 18:10). God uses other believers to keep us strong in the Lord. Which is why it is good to stay connected to a local Church--for edification to help us when we walk in **weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling**.

**Verse 4 –**

There is a dangerous worldly trend in the church today. It is fostered by what is called the Church Growth Movement. The buzz word is *winsome*. Winsome means "attractive" or "appealing in character." Pastors are taking this winsome preaching and turning their church services into a show. They have added winsome lighting, winsome sound, winsome choreography; it is a Broadway show with a fog machine and a cross in the background.

Paul's **speech** was far from winsome. In fact, he had no **enticing words of man's wisdom**. **Enticing** means: *to make friends of, to win one's favor, gain one's good will, or to seek to win one, strive to please one*.

In other words Paul says, **my preaching was not** winsome! So how did he do it? How could he ever reach the lost?

**Demonstration.** He pointed his speech away from himself, and focused solely on **the Spirit and of power**. We certainly want to be relevant when we share the cross of Christ, but we will only be successful with the **demonstration** of the Spirit's power, not our own winsomeness.

### Verse 5 –

How are we eternally saved and able to stand before God? By our **faith**. The Greek word for faith is *pistis* and is translated belief, assurance; and carries the sense of putting your trust in something, in this case someone. It is not faith in the wisdom of men. This we can be sure of since, while man's wisdom is helpful, it does not provide any power for us to stand before the Lord. We can only stand in the power of God. It is faith in the power of God, i.e, the cross of Christ that saves us.

### Verse 6 –

[**Howbeit** is an adverb most English speakers do not use anymore. Notice I am using the King James Version. You might ask why not use another translation since we don't use that word anymore? I do use other translations, but by using the KJV for study it compels me to look up words I might simply pass over when reading a 21st century translation.

The word **howbeit** in our contemporary vocabulary just means *nevertheless*, or *however*. Knowing the contemporary meaning of this particular word doesn't change the interpretation of the passage. Instead of just knowing the meaning of *nevertheless*, and *however*, we know what **howbeit** means; our vocabulary has increased and we have just become a little smarter!]

Howbeit, let's move on.

We don't speak the wisdom of men, *however* we do **speak wisdom among them that are perfect**, that is, those who are mature...but again, Paul is not disrespecting those with education or wisdom of the world, rather he is driving home the truth that our wisdom in the church is not to worldly wisdom (stuff we learn in philosophy class at the university).

**Nor** is it wisdom of **princes of this world**: Rulers, leaders, judges, and others who seem so wise; we might be intimidated by them. They are here today and gone tomorrow and their wisdom goes to the grave with them, it comes to **nought**.

### Verses 7,8 –

Paul has been exhorting the church in Corinth to come together and not be divided. He says, Christ is not divided (1:13), and neither should they be.

The Gospel of the cross of Christ is for everyone, both Jews and Greeks (non-Jews), and indeed, this is the dispensation of grace that was a **mystery** (Ephesians 3:2ff). So what is this dispensation of grace, or this mystery Paul speaks of?

Before the kingdom comes, God has **ordained** this period of grace we are now living in. It was hidden from the O.T. saints and prophets. Paul made this grace known and declared salvation is not only for the Jews. A mystery, yet it was God's **wisdom...before the world** to our glory by offering all men everlasting life.

Although ordained by God, salvation is an individual choice. Had the princes (rulers) of this world, or age (Greek: *aion* not *cosmos*), known about this dispensation of grace, they would never have **crucified the Lord of glory**. Why didn't they know it? Because it was only revealed spiritually. They depended on their own wisdom.

This is Paul's continuing point to the church--by dividing Christ and depending on human wisdom, we miss the blessings of God.

### Verses 9,10 –

Paul is answering a question, *Why didn't the rulers of this world know the mystery of salvation to all men?* The mystery is the offer of salvation to all the people of the world in the Age of Grace (Dispensation of grace). This mystery was not made known in other ages but is now revealed (Ephesians 3:5). In other words, what we see today, as far as God's grace to all, both Jew and Greek, was completely unknown to mankind in previous ages (dispensations).

**As it is written** Paul quotes from Isaiah 64:4 in which, in its original context, a plea is going out to God for Him to come to the aid of Israel in the last days and show His strength and glory like never before. So Paul uses the Isaiah passage to show how, in the age of grace, God's mystery is only revealed **by his Spirit**. Maybe a better way to think about the mystery is that it was only available to the Spirit, but was made manifest (or shown) to Paul and now revealed to us.

No one knows the **deep things of God** without the **Spirit**.

### Verse 11 –

**Knoweth the things of man.** Have you ever had someone say to you "I know what you're thinking!" No they don't. No one knows the mind of any man except that man himself, **Save the spirit which is in him**.

Likewise, no man knows anything about God; **knoweth no man**, except the **Spirit of God**. This is why churches need to get back to pure Bible study. Not man's idea of the Bible, not books about the Bible, not the latest and greatest popular book by a Christian celebrity. They might be interesting to read and even inspirational, but none of the ideas of man reveals God. We only know God through His **Spirit** and it is the Bible which reveals that to us.

### Verses 12,13 –

How do we know we can be saved; that is, those of us who are not Jews and are not God's chosen People? It is because of the mystery that has been **received**. We did not learn it from the spirit of the world (cosmos). There is no universal wisdom which can save a man. Our revelation of the mystery (which is: there would come a period of grace for all men, Jew and Greek) is only by the **spirit which is of God**, that has been revealed.

When the spirit of God reveals his truth to us through his revealed word (and it was first announced by Paul) we understand that our salvation is by grace (it is no longer a mystery), though we are Gentiles, and is **freely given to us of God**. The Corinthians were depending on human wisdom: "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas..."

Now the things that were once a mystery or secret can be openly announced by us. **Comparing spiritual things with spiritual**. This can only be accomplished through studying the Bible, which is why Paul admonished us to:

"Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15

Everything about our faith hinges on the Bible. Without it, the people are useless.