

## Session 3

July 30, 2023

### SET APART BUT NOT ALONE

#### 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

The context of this passage is the difference between human wisdom and godly wisdom. The Greeks were all about philosophy and the pursuit of knowledge. The first century heresy of Gnosticism taught that the knowledge of God was a hidden thing, accessible only to those able to tap into it intellectually, through a special—or even divine—knowledge; almost like the Eastern idea of “enlightenment.” The Gnostics were wrong about most of that, but they were right that God *does* give wisdom and knowledge to His people. This is not a *requirement* of salvation, however; rather it is a *result* of it! And it comes in the person of the Holy Spirit.

**God’s wisdom (vv. 6-9).** Here, Paul introduces the topic of wisdom among the mature (in contrast to the *immaturity* they displayed in chapter 3). Those who are spiritually adept are able to track Paul’s argument. Simply put, God’s wisdom is different than earthly wisdom (v. 6). God’s wisdom is eternal, but it has been shrouded in a mystery (v. 7). When you think about it from human perspective, the gospel makes no logical sense. If sin offends God, then man should pay. Yet God, the one offended, sent His own and only Son to pay the penalty for our sin? It makes no sense. If we are guilty then we should pay. And if there is any salvation to be had, shouldn’t we have to earn it? Yet He saved us “not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to His mercy...” (Titus 3:5). Again, it makes no sense. And for this reason, the best thinkers the world has to offer can’t come to grips with it. They “come to nothing” (v. 6). Paul makes his case even stronger: if they understood the mystery of the gospel of grace, they wouldn’t have crucified Jesus (v. 8). For reflection: *Verse 9 is often quoted at the graveside of a loved one and applied to heaven. That may be true, but it’s taken out of context! What does the verse mean when taken in its proper context?*

**God’s Spirit (vv. 10-13).** The key to understanding the mystery of God’s gospel is not empty philosophy. Rather it is *spiritual insight*. And that comes not through human wisdom, but through God’s Holy Spirit. In these four verses, Paul mentions the words “spirit” or “spiritual” nine times, revealing 5 principles. First, the truth of God is revealed by the Spirit. Yes, we know of God by nature and the God-consciousness within us (see Rom1:19ff), but the saving grace of God is only revealed through the Holy Spirit. Second, the Spirit searches (*seeks* and *evaluates*) the deep things of God (v. 10). The explanation offered by Paul in verse 11 is simple. Nobody knows us like *we* know ourselves. Hence, no one knows the deep things of God better than His own Spirit. Third, the Spirit knows the thoughts of God (v. 11). While the *depths* of God might refer to His infinite character (or attributes), the *thoughts* of God more likely refers to His will. Fourth, The Holy Spirit is sent by God to explain the grace of God (v. 12). Finally, the Spirit teaches us spiritual truth, which in turn allows us to share that spiritual truth with others (v. 13). For reflection: *Our coming to Christ requires that God is already at work in us (John 6:44). How do you explain that God’s Spirit is at work in a lost person’s life even before that person is open to it?*

**God’s perspective (vv. 14-16).** The older translations have it as the *natural man*. As opposed to the spiritual man, the natural man (obviously) does what comes naturally! He perceives through

his own natural understandings and evaluates the claims of truth using physical, earthly, and carnal criteria. The result is a very skewed and skeptical response to spiritual things. But before we condemn him completely, remember the second half of the verse. The natural (lost) man *can't* understand spiritual things because they are spiritually discerned. Just as an AM radio cannot receive FM signals, a lost person cannot receive spiritual signals. He doesn't have the proper receiver, which in this case is the Holy Spirit. Verse 15 is a bit awkward. Unlike the natural man, the spiritual man is able to discern spiritual truth. But the natural man is doubly confounded. He can't make sense out of the spiritual truth or the spiritual man who applies it! For reflection: *Verse 16 implies that no one can understand the mind (thoughts) of the Lord yet says plainly that "we have the mind of Christ." How are we to understand this apparent contradiction?*