

1 Corinthians 2:1-3:4

1 Corinthians 2:6-3:4

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Back up with me to 1 Corinthians 2:1. Paul said, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God”—the gospel of Jesus Christ. The term “testimony of God” refers to the gospel, the message of the cross of Jesus Christ, the revelation of God, of the Church, all the things that God had revealed through Paul. He said, “I . . . came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom,”—that’s manmade wisdom or man’s philosophy, which was one of the problems in Corinth, they were glorying in man’s wisdom. He said, “For I determined,”—that word ‘determined’ means I purposely decided—“not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” “I didn’t want to be distracted or focused on other things, I wanted to focus on Jesus Christ and Him crucified,” which is what the Corinthian church needed to do is focus on Jesus Christ. We, tonight, need to keep our focus on the gospel and Jesus Christ.

Paul’s ministry among them is described, verse 3, “And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” I’m so tempted to spend the rest of the night on these five verses. They’re so rich, especially when it comes to the ministry of preaching Christ and preaching the gospel.

Let me just make a couple of comments. Paul, in the first four chapters in 1 Corinthians, is dealing with this one issue of division in the church. The division in the church was over ministers. One said, “I’m of Paul,” another said, “I’m of Apollos,” another said, “I’m of Peter,” the others said, “I’m of Christ.” They were being divided, so Paul wants to bring them back in their focus to Christ, so he talks about his ministry among them, “I didn’t baptize anybody; I preached the gospel. Christ wasn’t divided.” In other words, “Don’t look at me. Don’t look at Apollos. Don’t look at Peter, but look at Jesus Christ. Keep your focus on Him.” That’s what he’s trying to do in 1 Corinthians 1, 2, 3, and 4. It’s not until 1 Corinthians 5 that he begins to deal with sexual immorality in this Corinthian church.

Remember, the Corinthian church was messed up. It had all kinds of problems and issues. Basically, all of Corinthians is a corrective epistle, and he’s going to be dealing with even questions that they asked that they were wanting to know about. Paul is writing to them about the need for unity in their fellowship, and one of the reasons they had disunity was not just because they were glorying in man, but they were glorying in man’s wisdom. They were glorying in philosophy. The Greeks magnified philosophy, and so the problem was they weren’t looking at God’s wisdom and walking in God’s wisdom, they were trying to glory and focus on the wisdom of man.

So, Paul’s method in preaching, verse 1; Paul’s message in preaching, verse 2; Paul’s manner in preaching, verse 3, “. . . weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling;” and Paul’s means,

“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” That word is dynamic, *dýnamis* in the Greek, dynamic power. Verse 5, “That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men,”—which is a very dangerous thing that a preacher would manipulate people to put their faith in the wisdom of men rather than in God. So, “I don’t want your faith standing in man’s wisdom, but I want it to be resting,” “ . . . in the power of God”—God working through the gospel.

We begin in verse 6. There are three divisions tonight in our text, and I’m going to give them to you. In 1 Corinthians 2:6-9, we have Paul talking about divine wisdom as being unique. He’s trying to bring them back away from man’s wisdom to God’s wisdom. He’s going to talk about the nature of God’s wisdom—divine wisdom. Just because we don’t preach the wisdom of men and philosophy, doesn’t mean that we as believers don’t have wisdom. We have the wisdom of God. Follow me, verses 6-9. He says, “Howbeit”—this is a word of contrast, ‘I want your faith to be standing in the power of God, so I preach the gospel simply, but I do speak wisdom.’ Verse 6, “Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect”—I’ll come back to what that means—“yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought”—or that are passing away.

Verse 7, “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 8 Which none of the princes”—or the rulers—“of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” I’ll come back to that. Notice that statement about Jesus Paul makes, “the Lord of glory.” That’s actually an affirmation of His deity. Jesus is the Lord of glory. Paul would never say that, if Christ were not God. Verse 9, “But as it is written,”—he’s quoting from Isaiah 64:4—“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart”—or the mind—“of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

Go back with me to verse 6, and I want to point out the uniqueness of God’s wisdom. First, it was known only by the “perfect,” or understood or received only by the “perfect.” Now, the wisdom of God, again we’re going to see, is found in Christ, it’s found in the Scriptures, it’s found in the Word of God, and only those who are spiritually mature can receive or understand it. He’s saying, “We have wisdom, but it’s a different kind of wisdom than the wisdom of the Greek philosophers.” First, it’s known only by the “perfect.” Look at verse 6, “Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect” You’ve got to understand that word in the New Testament. When he uses the word “perfect,” it’s not talking about somebody who is perfect. You got that? It’s talking about somebody who’s mature. A mature person is not necessarily perfect. There’s no way anyone in their human body, no matter how long they walk with God, no matter how spiritual they are, will ever be perfect.

There are some religious groups, Christian groups, that believe Christians can be sinlessly perfect. Sometimes they’ll argue with you over that point until their veins pop out in their neck and they get all angry, “I told you, I’m perfect!” Then, they lose their temper right there in the argument. There’s no perfection in this life. The word in the Greek conveys really the idea of not what we would today call “perfect,” but it means mature. It’s an interesting word. It actually

means fully ripe. It was used of fruit that was fully ripe, that was ready to eat.

My favorite is plums. I love plums, and I love just to kind of smell them, feel them, rub them on my lips, and bite into the beautiful texture of a plum. I love plums, I love peaches, I love all kinds of fruit, but plums are awesome. But when you eat a plum, you don't want it to not be ripe; you don't want it to be too ripe; you want it to be just right, right?

That's what it means to be "perfect," it means to be grown up. It means to be full-grown or mature. He's talking about the saved, and he's talking about those that are spiritually mature. He's going to talk about the fact that there are "babes in Christ" that are Christians, but they're carnal. But these are Christians that are strong in the Lord and mature, and they can handle the deep things of God and the wisdom of God.

He says, ". . . yet not the wisdom of this world,"—my King James Bible has "world." It's the word age or ai Sn, the age. ". . . nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought." Now, the "princes of this world" are most likely referring to the human leaders that had the influence to put Christ to death, the leaders of the nation of Israel or the rulers of this world. Some Bible scholars believe that it's a reference to demonic powers, that demons had Jesus put to death, and didn't realize what they were doing would be their undoing or their destruction. That's possible, and I don't know which of the two to hold to, but I think that most likely it's referring to those the political leaders, the politicians—the Pharisees, the Scribes, the Sadducees—that were behind, and even the Roman government, principalities and powers, the rulers of this world, this age, ". . . that come to nought." They basically would not have put Jesus to death had they known who He was. So, he says there, ". . . nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought."

He says in verse 7, ". . . the wisdom of God,"—now is pictured as being from God Himself, divine. Notice verse 7, "But we speak the wisdom of God" So, there's the wisdom of the world, which is coming to nought, that is, the princes of this world, "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery,"—so it's God's wisdom. It's known only by the "perfect" or the mature. It comes from God, and it's called by Paul, ". . . a mystery." This is another word in the New Testament you need to understand. The word "mystery" doesn't mean something we cannot know. This isn't like an Agatha Christie story where you don't know "Whodunnit?" kind of a thing or Sherlock Holmes. It's not a mystery in that sense.

A biblical mystery is defined in Ephesians by Paul as something that in ages past was not revealed or known but is now revealed to us, the Church. It actually means that you cannot know it but by the revelation of God—was hidden, now is revealed. There are many mysteries in the New Testament. One of them, to give you an example, is the rapture of the Church, is the New Testament revelation given to Paul. So, when he wrote to the Corinthians in chapter 15, we'll get it on Wednesday night, he said, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye . . . For this corruptible"—referring to my body—"must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality . . . then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in

victory.” He calls the rapture there a mystery.

This is why I say you can’t find the rapture in the Old Testament. It’s first revealed by Jesus in John 14 when He said, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and”—take you to My Father’s house. It is something not known but now is revealed. There’s that wisdom of God that is revealed, that is, God’s gospel and God’s purpose and plan for the Church and for redemption, verse 7, “. . . even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory,”—or God predestined or God predetermined. God’s wisdom was something that He had all the way in eternity past designed. He knew Adam and Eve would fall.

Do you believe that when Adam and Eve sinned it surprised God? Do you think God went, “Oh, no! I made them, and now he’s messed up. What am I going to do? Let Me think here. I’ve got to figure out what I’m going to do. How am I going to redeem fallen man?” He wasn’t caught off guard by that. He knew before the foundations of the earth was laid that man would fail, man would sin, man would fall and that He would send His Son—Jesus would come, He would be the Redeemer—and that God would get greater glory than just creating us in His image and likeness, but He would also redeem us. He made us and also redeemed us by the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ, but it was all part of God’s divine wisdom. In the cross and in the redemptive plan of God is the greatest wisdom anyone could fully fathom or comprehend, and we cannot understand it apart from being spiritually mature and being knowledgeable of what the Bible says. I’m excited to get some verses that deal with the subject of inspiration, revelation, and transformation as the Spirit of God, uses the Word of God, to change us into the image of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

So, we preach, “we speak,” verse 7, “the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” First, the divine wisdom being unique is known only by the “perfect.” Secondly, it is God’s wisdom. Thirdly, it is unknown by those who crucified Christ. The “princes of this world” didn’t realize what they were doing.

Jesus prayed when He died on the cross. Remember what He said? “Father forgive them; for they know not what they do.” They didn’t know what was going on. They were crucifying the very Lord of glory, “Which none of the princes of the world knew: for had they known it, they would not”—have done this.

Again, I’ve already mentioned when I read the text that Jesus is called here, verse 8, this gets looked over and missed a lot, so this is a little footnote that I just wanted to throw in. I won’t charge you anything extra for it. Jesus is called, “. . . the Lord of glory.” I want you to take note of that because it supports what the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is God. Paul would’ve never called Him “the Lord,” *kýrios*, which is the equal of the Old Testament +Á dônây or Lord God, if Jesus were not Lord. He calls him, “. . . the Lord of glory.” He is Lord, and He is divine. He is God.

Notice verse 9, “But as it is written,”—and he’s quoting from Isaiah 64:4. Now, I don’t have the time to turn there and to go into it, but make a note and write it down. What Paul does is unique. He actually paraphrases the verse. He doesn’t quote it verbatim, he gives a paraphrase of that. You say, “Could Paul do that?” Yes, he was an apostle. He was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so he gets the gist of the fact that God’s wisdom is something we cannot fathom, comprehend, or understand. This is my last point, verse 9, on the uniqueness of God’s wisdom. God’s wisdom is not understood, comprehended, or known by unsaved man. Verse 9, “But as it is written,”—as I said, Isaiah 64:4—“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” That’s the section from verse 6, down to verse 9.

Now, no doubt you’ve heard this verse quoted, and it’s so commonly misinterpreted and misapplied. How’s it misinterpreted? It’s misinterpreted to say that he’s referring here to heaven in verse 9, and saying that our eyes have never seen, our ears have never heard, “. . . neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,” and we hear it used at funerals quite often. When someone dies, “No, you can’t even imagine. You’ve never heard, you’ve never seen, you’ve never thought of how glorious heaven’s going to be.” I hate to pop your bubble on this favorite verse of yours about heaven, but it’s not about heaven. Now, heaven will be glorious.

When Frank Turek, last Sunday, was showing those pictures of the galaxies and the beauty and the colors in the universe, my heart just thrilled to think about, Can you imagine how amazing heaven is going to be? The colors in heaven? It’s going to make the most beautiful colors on earth look drab.

But this is not what Paul is talking about in this verse, and it’s pretty self-evident if you’d just read the next verse. Here’s one of the problems with taking a verse out of its context, or taking a verse and isolating it from its context. What the author meant to say is what it means. Somebody said, “Well, what is the meaning of a text?” The meaning of the text is what the author meant it to mean. You cannot impose your idea on the text. That’s called eisegesis, which means putting into the text your ideas and your interpretation. Exegesis means to pull out of the text its meaning. One of the best ways to do that is to look at the context—who’s writing, who are they writing to, what’s the subject, what is he talking about, why—and you read the verses leading up to the text, you read the verses after the text, and it helps to shed light on the meaning of the text.

Let me just peek at verse 10 for just a second to give you the context. He says, “But God hath”—past tense—“revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” In verse 10, he says, God has revealed them to us, so it’s not talking about heaven and how marvelously gorgeous it will be and that we could never fathom or comprehend or understand. Well, what is it talking about then, if it’s not talking about heaven? It’s basically saying, verse 9, and we’ll see it more as we move into verses 10-13, that the natural man with his eyes, with his ears, with his own human, sinful heart cannot understand or receive or comprehend the things of God. It’s talking about the natural man—the unbeliever,

the unsaved person—doesn't have the capacity, doesn't have the ability to see or to hear or to understand.

What it's implying, too, is that God cannot be found by searching. God cannot be found by you looking for Him. God cannot be found by human knowledge or wisdom or by your own eyes or by your own ears or by your own intellect. It's impossible. Can thou, by searching, find God? The answer is no. God must find you. You say, "Well, I was seeking the Lord." Yeah, you know why you were seeking the Lord? Because He first sought you. Who put it in your heart to seek Him? He did. He put it in my heart to seek Him, and then He sought me and saved me. You think, I'm running from God, and God is a hound dog of heaven. He comes after you, and He convicts you, and He convinces you, and He softens your heart, and He opens your eyes, and you see your need of Christ and turn to Him in repentance, and all the time you're thinking, God, why have You done this? Because God loves you. He's a God of grace. It's basically saying that we don't know God on our own. Again, God is transcendent. God is infinite. God is transcendent. He's above and beyond us, and we cannot by searching find God. That's what that verse is saying.

The second division for tonight in the text is verses 10-13 and that His divine wisdom is revealed by the Holy Spirit. So, first, verses 6-9, divine wisdom is unique; secondly, divine wisdom is revealed by the Holy Spirit. Let's read it, verses 10-13. He says, "But God,"—an intended contrast—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," we haven't grasped it with our heart, which is a reference to our mind, the inner person—"But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit"—that's a reference to the Holy Spirit—"for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." The gospel and the message of the cross are, " . . . the deep things of God."

Verse 11, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God," which is a reference to the Holy Spirit because He's God, He can reveal God. Only God can reveal Himself. God the Holy Spirit reveals God the Father, God the Son, and reveals the truth to us.

Verse 12, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things,"—again, remember he just said, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man,' now he's saying God has given us things freely to us. Look at verse 13, "Which things also we"—the "we" is no doubt Paul and the other apostles—"speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy [Spirit] teacheth"—take note of that, the Spirit is our teacher—"comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

I very rarely hear these verses properly interpreted. It's so very important. So, what is he talking about? Again, back to verse 10, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." If you're taking notes, I want to give you some real important points that'll be helpful. First, write down the word next to verse 10, or for verse 10, "revelation." This is a text on the doctrine of revelation, which is one of my favorite

doctrines of the Bible, the idea that God must reveal Himself. God reveals Himself through dreams, through visions, through the prophets, through creation. Psalm 19, “The heavens declare the glory of God . . . Day unto day uttereth speech . . . Their line is gone out through all the earth,”—creation is a revelation to us of God. There’s all these ways that God’s...and God’s revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ, “And the Word was made flesh . . . we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Here’s the thing that excites me as a Bible teacher is all these means by which God chooses to reveal Himself to us; and remember we can’t find God on our own, God must come to us, God must reveal Himself to us. One of the things that excites me is the primary way of God revealing Himself to us and the most comprehensive way God has revealed Himself to us is in the Bible, “the B-I-B-L-E / yes that’s the book for me / I stand alone on the Word of God / The B-I-B-L-E.” If you have a Bible in your hands right now, that’s a revelation from God of God. Do you want to know God? Read the Bible. Amen? You want to hear God? Read it out loud. God is speaking through what He’s spoken. Again, read Psalm 19 where he talks about, “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart . . . More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb”—God’s Word.

How do we know God reveals Himself through prophets? The Bible. How do we know God revealed Himself in dreams? The Bible. How do we know God revealed Himself in creation? The Bible. How do we know Jesus Christ is the living Word? The Bible. So, we have to open the Bible. This is why it’s so important we get out God’s Word, we get the Word of the Lord out because the wisdom of God is discovered in the Word of God. It’s a revelation to us from God. It’s so very, very important.

God revealed to us by His Spirit, so the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary, an essential ingredient, for understanding the wisdom of God, understanding God Himself, “ . . . for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” Even the preaching of the cross, which the Greeks thought was foolishness, and the wisdom of God found in the cross is called, “ . . . the deep things of God.”

Notice verse 11, “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?” Let me paraphrase that. It’s hard to understand what he’s saying. He’s basically saying the only way to know a man is if a man speaks and reveals himself. He’s using a humble illustration. Have you ever been with somebody that you just kind of met, but they’re real quiet and they don’t talk at all? They don’t say anything, and you want to get to know more about them? What needs to happen? They need to talk, right? They need to tell you about themselves. They need to tell you where they’re from, what their career is, and about themselves or maybe their feelings or their emotions. You can’t really know what’s going on in a person’s mind or heart unless they open their mouth and speak words. Some people say that it’s because we are human and God is divine, we can’t really understand God unless the Spirit of God reveals God to us as human beings, so a person cannot be known unless he speaks and

opens up. This is why it's so important in a marriage, right? Married couples should share their hearts, they should talk. It's kind of a good idea if married people to talk to each other.

God does speak, and He speaks in His Word, and the Spirit speaks through what He's spoken. It's a revelation, that's the doctrine of revelation, verses 10-11, and I love that subject. By the way, when it says, “. . . even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God,” that's a text that proves the deity or supports the doctrine of the deity of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is God.

Here's the second doctrine revealed in this text, verse 12, the doctrine of illumination. Notice verse 12, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” This is what's called illumination. So, we have revelation, and we have illumination. How do we know what we're reading is of God? The Spirit of God gives us illumination. He opens our...you know, before you read or study your Bible, you should pray and say, “God, open my eyes to behold wonderful things. Open my ears to hear wonderful things. Open my heart to understand wonderful things.” Before you hear a Bible study on Wednesday night or Sunday or whatever time it might be, you should pray before you listen to the preaching of God's Word and say, “Speak, Lord, I'm listening. Open my ears. Open my eyes. Give me illumination.” So, the Bible is a revelation, and the Holy Spirit brings illumination.

Have you been reading a verse and you just feel like God just jumps off the page and speaks to your heart, and God just speaks to you, and it's just the Word of the Lord to your own heart? That's a marvelous, wonderful experience. This is what the wisdom of the world cannot do; but God's wisdom, by the Spirit, can do that.

Then, verse 13 is another doctrine, and that doctrine is inspiration. Write that down. So, we have revelation, illumination, and now we have inspiration. Not perspiration—we don't want perspiration, we want inspiration. Verse 13 says, “Which things also we”—that's, most likely, the apostles, and I don't believe there are apostles today with the authority to write Scripture. I pretty much believe, and you may not like this, but if somebody claims to be an apostle, run for your life. We have God's Word. There's no new Scripture being written. Be careful about those that say, “I'm an apostle,” or “I'm going to speak this prophecy over you,” and whatever it might be. Open your Bible to hear God's voice. This is the objective Word of God. You don't have to question whether this is God's Word or not. Verse 13, “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth.”

I want you to underline the word “words.” God speaks in words. This is why we have words in the Bible. This is why we do word studies. This is why I say, “This Greek word means this; this Hebrew word means this; this word means that.” It's what's called, if your taking notes, verbal inspiration—God spoke to the authors of Scripture and superintended their writing so that the very words they wrote were the words of God. Technically, it's called verbal (words), plenary (all of them), inspiration. The Bible is the verbal plenary inspired Word of God—not just the ideas, not just the concepts, but the very words. They spoke in words, “. . . not in the words which

man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy [Spirit] teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

Notice that the Holy Spirit is our teacher. I love that. You can read the Bible as much as you want, study as much as you want, but you're not going to learn anything if it doesn't come to you by the Holy Spirit, to illuminate you to the Word, to transform your lives by His power. It's done in words, and it's the work of the Holy Spirit. He's our teacher.

The challenging phrase to interpret, ". . . comparing spiritual things with spiritual," is sometimes translated explaining spiritual things to spiritual people. I think that is a fitting translation of that phrase, that it's explaining the Spirit of God is teaching us, explaining spiritual things to those who are mature, we just read, are spiritual.

I want you to note in verse 14, down to chapter 3:4, is our third division tonight, if you're taking notes. What we see now is the responses to divine wisdom, so the response to the divine wisdom of God. He talks about three classes of human individuals and how each one responds to the wisdom of God found in the Word of God and the gospel of Christ. The first is the natural man, verse 14. He says, "But," we just got through reading verses about what God has done for us—given us revelation, given us illumination, given us inspiration, and bringing about transformation. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he that is spiritual judgeth"—or discerns.

The word "judgeth" in the King James translation's a bit unfortunate. It actually means to discern or understand. "But he that is spiritual"—which we just read earlier that they were called those who are 'perfect,' now they're called those who are 'spiritual.' He discerns, understands all things, that is, the things of God, "yet he himself is judged"—or understood—"by no man." He's an enigma to the unbeliever.

Verse 16, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord,"—which is a reference again to Jesus Christ who's Lord—"that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." Don't stop reading. Look at 1 Corinthians 3:1, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. 3 For ye are yet"—here it is—"carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? 4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" Now you see why I wanted to go into chapter 3:1-4, it all ties together.

What's the response to God's divine wisdom? Well, there's the response, first of all, of what's called the natural man. Go back with me to verse 14. In my hippie days, a natural man would be someone with long hair, a big beard, drank smoothies, ate grass or whole wheat or whatever; and a hippie girl was a natural momma, you know, and I'll just stop right there. I better not describe her. It's kind of frightening. The natural man here is a reference to the unbeliever. Theologically, it would be the unregenerate, they haven't been born again. They're

unsaved. He's talking about the non-Christian. He's called the "natural man." All he has are his natural senses—what he can see, what he can hear, what he can understand. He " . . . receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

That's a given. We understand that. The unregenerate, unsaved person, they don't have the antennae, the receptors, to be able to understand the things of the Spirit of God. When you talk to an unbeliever, they're dead in trespasses and sins. They just don't understand unless God brings conviction and the Spirit of God draws them to Christ. This is why when you're witnessing to unbelievers or unsaved family, sometimes it's better to pray more for them than it is to preach to them. Once you've preached to them, you need to pray. Instead of talking to them about God, talk to God about them. Get on your knees and storm the gates of heaven and say, "God, send the hound dog of heaven. Sick 'em. Convict them. Make them miserable, Lord. Do whatever You've got to do to bring them to their senses, to bring them to their knees, and bring them to repentance," because they're natural individuals. They cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. They think it's foolishness, "Why would I believe in Jesus? Why would I study the Bible? Why would I believe that Jesus rose from the dead? Why would I believe that I can trust God and believe in Jesus who died on the cross and go to heaven?" They just reject all that.

Here's the second category of man and his response to the things of God, that is, the spiritual man. So, we have the natural man and we have the spiritual man, verses 15-16, "But he that is spiritual judgeth"—or discerns or understands—"all things"—that is, all the things of God or the things from God—"yet he himself is judged of no man." It means he's an enigma to the world. They don't understand. They don't understand your joy. They don't understand your peace. They don't understand your faith in Jesus Christ who was crucified and died a long time ago. This is the Christian, not only the Christian, but please make a note of this, the mature Christian. He's called "spiritual," not just born again, but spiritually mature and receptive to the things of God. He understands all things. He has the mind of Christ. Verse 16, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, the he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." In Philippians 2, it says that we should take on the mind of Christ or the attitude of Christ.

Here is the third category in 1 Corinthians 3, and we won't take too long on these verses. The third category is the carnal man. This is the one that throws people for a curve and kind of confuses people, and Christians argue about and debate about and divide over. It's the third category of man called the carnal man. "And I, brethren,"—I want you to take note of the word "brethren." If he's calling someone "brethren," what does that mean? It means they're Christians, right? Paul would not call them "brethren" or "sistren" unless they were saved. " . . . could not speak unto you as unto spiritual,"—that was that last category, spiritually mature—"but as unto carnal,"—which means fleshly—"even as unto"—defined as—"babes in Christ. 2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it,"—couldn't take the meat of the Word—"neither yet now are ye able. 3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you"—here's the evidence of their carnality—"envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? 4 For while one saith, I am of Paul;"—that's carnal—"and

another, I am of Apollos;”—that shows their carnality—“are ye not carnal?”

Let me go back over these verses for just a moment. What is this “carnal” individual? Let me make it real simple, okay? Do you want me to make it real simple? You say, “Yeah, I want to go home.” I believe the carnal man here is a Christian that is in great need of growing and maturing and walking in the Spirit; that they got saved, but they stayed a spiritual infant, they never matured or never grew. It doesn’t mean that everything about them is carnal, but it means that they have carnal traits. They’re not—listen carefully—growing in sanctification.

This is what throws us for a loop because someone gets saved and then they don’t change a lot or they change a lot and they backslide a little bit, then they frontslide, they backslide, and they frontslide and they backslide, they frontslide and then backslide. It’s like, “Are they saved or not saved?” God alone knows the heart, and if there’s no fruit at all, it’s a good indication that perhaps—we don’t know, only God knows the heart—they weren’t really saved or born again. But a lot of times they do get saved, but they don’t grow. They don’t grow in the Word, and they stay spiritual infants, so they have carnal traits. This is why they were divided. This is why they were fighting over ministers. This is why they had this personality cult in their church because they were carnal, they were acting like unsaved. So they had characteristics of this.

Let me give you the points. First, the carnal man is saved, verse 1. He called them “brethren,” and says that they are “babes in Christ.” He uses the term “in Christ.” Let me tell you something. No one “in Christ” is unsaved. Romans 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,” period. As believers, we are all “in Christ.” These people are saved.

Secondly, they are fleshly. The word “carnal,” we get our word carnivorous from it, means fleshly. This was the real reason for the divisions in the church. This is why churches even today have divisions because of carnal Christians. They’re fleshly.

Third, they are a “babe.” Notice in verse 1 he calls them, “. . . babes in Christ.” So, they’re not growing; they’re not maturing. Notice about a “babe,” they are fed with milk, not with meat. You don’t give a three-month-old baby a filet mignon, right? They take milk. They don’t eat meat, so they’re not growing. It’s interesting, too, that babies and toddlers will put anything in their mouths whether it’s good for them or not. “. . . babes in Christ,” they’ll take any spiritual thing that comes along and devour it. They’ll take it in. That’s one of the great heartaches for me as a pastor, to be teaching the Word of God and preaching sound doctrine and have some silly Christian listen to some false teacher and follow the piper and get swept off their feet and led astray and not discerning, not being a Berean, not knowing right truth from error. They’re swept along with every wind of doctrine. They’re always under the influence of the last person they listened to rather than the Word of God. So, read and get grounded in God’s Word.

Fourthly, they act like unsaved people. Notice verses 3-4, “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you,”—in other words, verse 3, Paul’s saying, ‘These things that you’re doing are the evidence of your carnality, O ye Corinthians’—“envying, and strife, and divisions,”—which,

by the way, are all in the list of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21—"envying, and strife, and divisions,"—these are all the evidence of the flesh, not the Spirit. My prayer for Revival Christian Fellowship is that we will mature, walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh, and that there'll be no divisions among us, that we love as brethren.

Paul says, "You're carnal. You're envying each other. You're striving with each other. You're divided." ". . . are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" Notice, "walk as men" is an indication that they are carnal Christians and also the fact that, verse 4, they again were following a personality, "I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" You should be focused on Jesus Christ.

There are some Christians today that do not believe, and I don't know how in light of these verses, that there is such a thing as a carnal Christian. Usually, it's tied in with what's known as Lordship salvation—not always, but sometimes tied in with that. I'm sympathetic to their teaching. I understand where they're going with that, but this verse seems to me very clearly that you can be saved and not be perfect in every facet of your life, have areas of carnality, because what is sanctification? It's a lifelong process of being made more like Jesus. When you are justified, you are declared righteous—all Christians—positionally. It starts a lifelong process of sanctification. Some Christians get saved and a year later, two years later, three years later, they're teaching Bible studies. They know the Word of God. Their lives have been radically changed. There's a lot of their old sins have dropped off and fallen away, and they're just on the road to becoming more and more like Jesus.

Then there are others who get saved and they have a little bit of a change, a little bit of heart for God, but they struggle. They don't read the Bible. They don't pray. They don't yield to God. They don't walk in the Spirit, and they kind of have a lot of bumpy road along the way, but it doesn't mean they're not saved. It doesn't mean they're lost. It doesn't mean they're going to hell. They're just weaker brothers that we need to pray for, we need to encourage them, we need to try to mentor and disciple them, encourage, and bring them along. I've seen as a pastor people who struggle in their walk with the Lord, stumbled and fallen, and then finally they're broken and they come back to the Lord and surrender their heart and are filled with the Spirit and begin to study the Word. Then, they become a dynamic person used by God for His glory. It's just a mystery. There's no rhyme or reason. I've seen people that looked like they were really growing, doing great, and then they stumble and fall and never seem to come back to the Lord. Only God knows the heart. We don't know the heart.

I do believe that if you have been born again, if you've been regenerated, that you cannot be lost. You can't lose your salvation. You didn't find it, God found you. Here's something to remember about this, "Can you lose your salvation?" When you got saved, something actually happened to you. You didn't just believe in Jesus, you were born again. So, for you to lose your salvation, you would have to be unborn again. You'd have to reverse regeneration. There's nothing in the Scripture that indicates you can do that or how you would do that. When you're born again, you're taken out of Adam with his condemnation, sin, and death, and you're placed in Christ; so for you to lose your salvation, you have to take yourself out of Christ and put

yourself back into Adam. How do you do that? There's nothing in the Bible that indicates you can do that. Let's be patient with people. Not everyone grows at the same pace. We need to pray for others and encourage others, and we all should be our brother's keeper. But the goal of the Christian life is to be growing in the likeness of Jesus Christ, right? The job of the pastor, which is astronomical, is to bring the believers in the church to full maturity, to full perfection, into the likeness and image of Christ.

Why does Paul talk about all this? Notice how he ended verse 4, because they were following personalities and not following Christ. So we need to get our eyes on Jesus. We need to yield to His Spirit, read His Word, and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen?