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The Maturity of the Spiritual Believer

2: 6-16

The maturity of the spiritual man DIG: What does Paul mean when he says that if the “rulers of this age” had understood God’s wisdom, they would not have crucified the Messiah? What are some of the ways the Ruach helps believers (John 14:26, 16:13-15)? How does Paul explain in this passage why a person without the Spirit is unable to understand spiritual truths? What does it mean to “have the mind of Messiah?”

REFLECT: In what ways can you know God’s thoughts and plans? In what ways do people try to gain wisdom? Why do they want it? What happens when you rely on human “wisdom” instead of God’s wisdom? When has the Ruach helped you understand God’s Word? What sometimes keeps you from seeking God’s help? In what ways can you depend more on the Spirit of God to help you make wise decisions?

All believers possess the Spirit of God; the real issue is how mature are such believers.



Chapter 2 is crucial for understanding what some of the difficulties in **Corinth** were. It has also been wrongly used to insist that there were several kinds of believers there: some **spiritual** and some carnal. **Paul** understands that there are some believers who are more **mature** than others and that there is a level of teaching appropriate for each level of **spiritual maturity**. However, that is very

different from suggesting that some believers are **“spiritual”** or have **the Spirit**, while others do not. For **Paul**, part of the very definition of what it means to be a believer is having **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh** in one’s life.

True wisdom is not humanly discovered (2:6-9): Up to this point, **Paul** has been rather hard on **“wisdom,”** because **he** is arguing against the **Corinthian** attitude of those who were pursuing *sophia* as such. But **he** now makes a considerable turn in the argument in order to assert that the Good News **he** preaches does, in fact, demonstrate **God’s wisdom**.⁶¹

Yet, there is a wisdom that we are speaking to those who are mature enough for it (2:6a). It is important to understand that **Paul** did not have a “simple gospel” for babes in the faith, and a different “wisdom gospel” for **the mature**. **Paul** was not suggesting that there is a deep knowledge which **ADONAI** has reserved for the spiritually elite (like the Gnostic’s). It is **God’s** plan and desire for all believers to move toward **maturity**.⁶²

But it is not the wisdom of this age or of this world’s leaders, who are in the process of passing away (2:6b). The word **age** (Greek: *aionos*) refers to a period of time, a historical age. **Paul** was speaking not only of the particular historical period in which **he** lived, but of all periods of history. All **worldly “wisdom”** is **passing away**. It is empty, futile, and comes to nothing. Even **this world’s leaders** cannot claim it or even relate to it.⁶³

On the contrary, we are communicating a mystery (Colossians 1:26) from God which has hidden until now but which, before history began, God had decreed would bring us glory (2:7). The message is a **hidden mystery** because it can only be known through **the revelation** of **ADONAI** (see below). It is now an open secret: open because **YHVH** revealed it, and a secret because **the revelation** both reveals **the mystery** and obscures **it** at the same time (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Er - That Same Day He Spoke to Them In Parables**). The use of the perfect participle (Greek: *apokekrymmenen*, meaning *to hide* or *conceal*) expresses **Paul’s** view that it remains **hidden** to unbelievers, like the parables of the Kingdom. Only **the mature** who love **God** and who receive **the Spirit (2:12)** can recognize it as divine **wisdom**. **Paul’s** point is that humans cannot unravel **the mystery** for themselves; it can only be given to them by **Ha’Shem**. This **wisdom** can be discerned by those who trust and love **God (2:9)**, not by those who analyze and debate. So unbelievers will continue to grope in their own darkness, and yet think they see and

understand.⁶⁴

Not one of this world's leaders has understood it (2:8a). This verse is often misused to infer that all of **Isra'el**, under the authority of **her** leaders, willed for and subsequently put **Yeshua** to death. But as seen in **Matthew 27:25**, only a select few declared: **His blood will be on us and on our children!** Thus, neither the responsibility for the desire for **Yeshua's** crucifixion fell upon all of **Isra'el**, but instead only a small number who aligned **themselves** with Pontus Pilate toward **Yeshua's** death. From a naïve reading of **Matthew**, one might think there were tens of thousands of **Jews** who sought out Pilate. However, archeological discoveries have confirmed that the courtyard for these proceedings was large enough to hold little more than a hundred people.⁶⁵ Obviously **their** actions in the heat of the moment can't be applied to all future **Jewish** generations.

Not one of this world's leaders has understood it; because if they had, they would not have executed the Lord from whom this glory flows (2:8). **Worldly wisdom** is not merely skillfully arranging arguments to persuade others. It is wicked, nasty and evil. It opposes **YHVH** at every turn . . . and it crucified the Messiah. The best government and the highest religion that **the world** had ever known up to that time conspired to put **Yeshua** on the cross. Those **rulers** did not recognize **Him** to be **the Lord from whom this glory flows**. **They** also didn't recognize that **the wisdom of God** was radically distinct from **their own wisdom**. But **their** ignorance is nothing new. Regardless of which time **Messiah** had come onto the scene of history, **the world's leaders**, of whatever age, would have put **Him** to death.⁶⁶

In typical style, **Paul** concludes **his** argument up to this point with scriptural support. **But, as the TaNaKh** says: **No eye has seen, no ear has heard and no heart has imagined all the things that God has prepared for those who love Him (2:9).** This free quotation from **Isaiah 64:4** and **65:17** is often memorized, but frequently misapplied. **Paul** is not referring to the wonders of heaven, but to **the wisdom God** has **prepared** for believers. **His** point is that the natural **eyes, ears, and hearts** of the unsaved cannot know or comprehend **God's wisdom**. It is **prepared only for those who love Him**.⁶⁷

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for preparing such a wonderful home (**John 14:1-3**) for **Your** children who love **You**! How awesome it will be to never feel pain, never cry, never die and to always live with you in wonderful peace forever! **I also heard a loud voice from the throne, saying: Behold, the dwelling of God is***

among men, and He shall tabernacle among them. They shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them and be their God. He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Nor shall there be mourning or crying or pain any longer, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:3-4).

*Thoughts of eternal joy in heaven give me courage to face problems in life now. **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).** I rejoice in wisely spending my time by worshiping **You** and praying for the salvation of family, friends and those in other countries who have not yet found the joy of repentance from old deeds and eternal peace in loving **You** as their **Lord** and **Savior**. In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of resurrection, Amen*

True wisdom is divinely revealed (2:10-16): It is as unnecessary as it is impossible for us to discover **ADONAI's** truth on our own. What we cannot find; **God** has given. We cannot come to **YHVH** on our own; but **the Lord** has come to us. **The Ruach Ha'Kodesh** has invaded our closed box and shown us **the Divine** – through **revelation, inspiration** and **illumination**.

By revelation (2:10-11): How can something that has no place in the human heart be made known? How do humans cross the divide between **the world** and **YHVH**? **For it is to us that God has revealed these things.** Because this **mystery** must be **revealed**, but it can only be **revealed through the Spirit**. We do not have access to **these things** and do not even have the grammar or vocabulary for **them** until **they** are graciously bestowed by **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**.⁶⁸

Now, **Paul** begins the main part of **his** argument: **For the Spirit probes all things, even the profoundest depths of God.** The absolute key to **spiritual maturity** lies with **the Spirit of God**. To lend support to **his** argument, **Paul** drew upon an analogy between **the human spirit** and **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**. **For who knows the inner workings of a person except the person's own spirit inside him? So too, no one knows the inner workings of God except God's Spirit (2:10-11).** **The Corinthians**, of course, took credit for **their** understanding of the Good News and other **spiritual things**, thinking they had attained them through human **"wisdom."** By correcting this error, **Paul** removed the basis for the quarrels and divisions that existed among them (see **Ak - Splits and Division in the Church at Corinth**).⁶⁹

You must build your life on eternal truths, not pop psychology, success-motivation, or inspirational stories. When you read your Bible, hear a sermon, or listen to a podcast, don't just forget it and walk away. Develop the practice of reviewing the truth in your mind, thinking about it over and over. The more time you spend reviewing what **the Lord** has said, the more you will learn and develop a relationship with **Him**.⁷⁰

By inspiration (2:12-13): ADONAI has given us **His Spirit**. That's why we don't think the same way that **people in the world** think. **Now we have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit of God, so that we might understand the things God has so freely given us (2:12)**. The miracle of inspiration is that **Paul** wrote down precisely what **the Ruach** wanted **him** to write down, and did so without committing any errors or making any mistakes. Yet, throughout the process, **Paul** retained **his** own unique writing style; so much so, that **First Corinthians** sounds distinctly different from, say, the **Psalms** or **Proverbs**. The *what* of inspiration is easy to define; however, the *how* of inspiration is truly miraculous and defies human explanation.⁷¹

This is what we speak, not in words taught to us by human "wisdom," but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words (2:13 NIV). Having been arguing that **their** common **gift of the Spirit** is what enables the **Corinthian** believers to understand **God's wisdom**, **Paul** now returns to **his** own preaching of that **wisdom**, first mentioned earlier and links **it** to the same reception of **the Spirit**. "What we preached to you was **God's wisdom** to be sure," **Paul** asserted in **2:6-7**. Now **he** returns to that assertion. It's as if **Paul** was saying "Just as we have all received **the Spirit** so as to understand **the gift** of salvation, so also the words **I** have preached to you were given **in words taught by the Spirit**." Therefore, **the Spirit** is the key to everything . . . **Paul's** preaching (**2:4-5** and **13**), **their** conversion (**2:4-5** and **12**), and especially **their** understanding of the content of **his** preaching as **the true wisdom of God (2:6-13)**.⁷²

It is interesting to note that **Paul's** letters never use the term "Christian." What we moderns would call a "Christian," **Paul** calls a **spiritual** person, that is, one who has received **the Spirit of God**. Therefore, **Paul's** primary definition of the believer is by means of **the Spirit**; likewise, the reception of **the Spirit**, is for **Paul**, the hallmark of entry into the congregations of **God**.⁷³ And because **the wall of separation has been broken down (Ephesians 2:14)**, Messianic believers,

although largely ignored, are just as much part of **the Body of Messiah** as their counterparts in the Church.

By illumination (2:14-16): Only **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh** can show us **spiritual** truth. Anyone can hear the facts, study other people’s teaching, and gain something of an intellectual understanding about the meaning of **the Bible** – yet not really understand it. The scribes and Pharisees of **Yeshua’s** day were highly trained in the TaNaKh, yet they missed its central message.

With **his** concluding sentences, **Paul** now picks up the negative side of the argument, in light of what has been positively argued about the work of **the Spirit**. **Now the natural** unsaved **man/woman** (Greek: *psychikoi*) **cannot receive the things from the Spirit of God - to him/her they are foolishness** (see [An - The Foolishness of Worldly Wisdom](#))! Human “**wisdom**” is totally unable to understand or express divine truth. **Moreover, he/she is unable to grasp them, because they are evaluated through the Spirit. But the person who has the Spirit can evaluate everything, while no one is in a position to evaluate him (2:14-15).** The ability to be able to compare and contrast, discerning what is **worldly “wisdom”** from **godly wisdom** is quite serious for those who regard themselves as **His** own.

Every believer has **the Spirit of God, the One** who lives within us and can help us understand **God’s Word**. But **the Ruach’s** illuminating ministry cannot replace conscientious study. They work together. We should keep in mind that **ADONAI Himself** requires that we be diligent: **All Scripture is God-breathed and is valuable for teaching the truth, convicting of sin, correcting faults and training in right living (2 Timothy 3:16).** As we explore **Scripture** carefully and thoroughly, **the Holy Spirit** uses whatever tools we acquire, whatever **godly wisdom** we expose ourselves to, as the means to illumine our hearts.⁷⁴ **The Psalmist** understood the need for **God’s** illumination of **His Word**. He prayed: **Open my eyes, so that I will see wonders from Your Torah (Ps 119:18).** He did not need **the Lord’s** help to read **His Word**, but **he** knew **he** needed **His** help to understand it.

For who has known the mind of ADONAI? The mind of ADONAI does not refer to some mystical ecstasy, but is related to sobriety, watchfulness, faith, hope and life. The believer’s worldview is shaped by an awareness of **Messiah**. **Who will counsel him (Isaiah 40:13)? But we have the mind of the Messiah (2:16; Romans 11:34; Philippians 2:5)! Paul’s** concern needs to be resurrected

throughout the congregations of **God**. **The gift of the Spirit** does not lead to special status among believers; rather, it leads to a special status regarding **the world**. But it should always do so in terms of the centrality of the Good News. **The Spirit** should identify us in such a way that our values and worldview are radically different from **the worldly “wisdom”** of this age. It should be obvious that we *do* know about **the Messiah**; we *do* live out our life of the future in the present age that is passing away; we are *indeed* marked by the cross forever. As such, we are **the people of the Spirit**, who stand in bold contrast to those who are merely human and do not understand the scandal of the cross. Being **spiritual** does not lead to elitism. It leads to a deeper understanding of **God’s** profound **mystery** – redemption through a crucified **Messiah**.⁷⁵