SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · LIVING IN THE LIGHT

†
2:2

DEEP DIVE

1 Corinthians

Chapter Two, Verses 1–16

Christ Crucified and the Mind of Christ — a trembling preacher, a hidden wisdom, and the Spirit who opens the depths of God

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Paul came to Corinth without polish, in weakness and trembling, and preached one subject: Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. Then he shows that this "foolish" message is the deepest wisdom there is — hidden from the rulers of this age, revealed by the Spirit, and received only by those to whom God gives the mind of Christ. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Paul's key words.

THE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 2:1–16

the cross · hidden wisdom · the Spirit · two men

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Four movements from "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" to "we have the mind of Christ"

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"But we have the mind of Christ." — 1 Corinthians 2:16

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 2:1–16

Christ Crucified and the Mind of Christ — Paul came with nothing but the cross — and the Spirit made it the wisdom of God to all who love Him

† How to Read This Study

This study walks 1 Corinthians 2 in 4 movements, in Paul's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the argument so you can see where Paul is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word
R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle
MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED
God — His character & actions
Command / instruction
Key repeated word
Sin / warning
Promise / blessing
Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · 1 CORINTHIANS 2:2

"For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

† Before the Passage

Chapter 2 is the second half of one argument that began at 1:17: Christ sent Paul "to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void." Chapter 1 showed that God saves through a message the world calls foolish (1:18–25) and calls people the world calls nothing (1:26–31). Chapter 2 adds the third proof: God sent that message by a preacher the Corinthians thought unimpressive (2:1–5). Then Paul turns the word "wisdom" around — the cross is not anti-wisdom; it is God's wisdom, and only His Spirit can open it (2:6–16).

The background is a church dividing over its teachers ("I am of Paul," "I of Apollos," 1:12) and a city that prized eloquence. Corinth was a Roman colony, rich, proud, and fond of traveling orators; Guzik cites Barclay: "Corinth put a premium on the veneer of false rhetoric and thin thinking." Paul had come there from Athens (Acts 17–18), worked as a tentmaker with Aquila and Priscilla, and stayed more than a year and a half after the

Lord told him in a vision, “Do not be afraid any longer” (Acts 18:9). That fear is part of what he means by “in weakness and in fear and in much trembling” (v. 3).

Two Old Testament texts carry the chapter. Verse 9 echoes Isaiah 64:4 — eye has not seen a God like the one “Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him” — and Paul turns it into “all that God has prepared for those who love Him.” Verse 16 quotes Isaiah 40:13: “Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has informed Him?” The Greek Old Testament Paul used reads “the mind of the Lord,” and Paul answers Isaiah’s question with a startling claim: “But we have the mind of Christ.”

Read the chapter as a descent into the depths. It starts on the surface — what the Corinthians saw when Paul arrived (vv. 1–5). It goes beneath the surface to a wisdom hidden before the ages (vv. 6–9). It goes down into the depths of God Himself, which only His Spirit searches (vv. 10–13). And it ends inside the believer: the natural man cannot receive these things, but the spiritual man has the mind of Christ (vv. 14–16). “Spirit” appears nine times, “wisdom” nine times; by the end the two words have met.

I
MOVEMENT

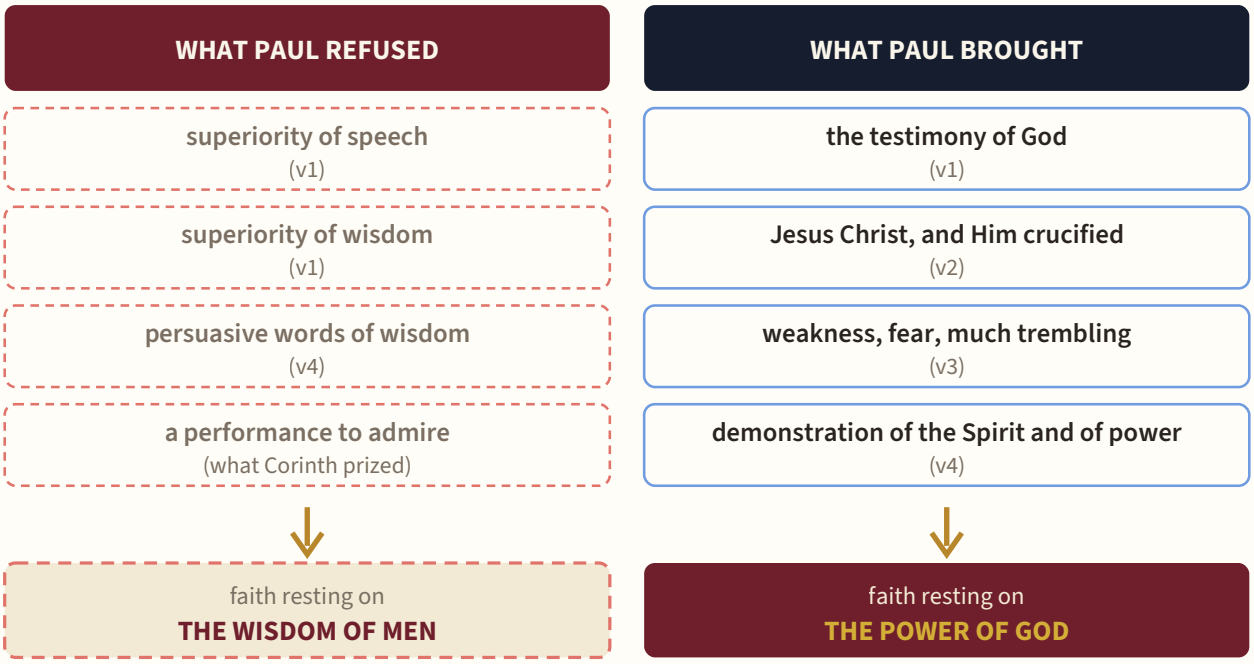
1 CORINTHIANS 2:1–5

Nothing but Christ Crucified

How Paul came to Corinth — one subject, much trembling, and the Spirit’s power

> [1] *And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with* ⚠ *superiority of speech* *or of* ⟲ *wisdom*, *proclaiming to you* △ *the testimony of God*. [2] *For* ▤ *I determined* *to know nothing among you except* △ *Jesus Christ, and Him crucified*. [3] *I was with you* ◷ *in weakness and in fear and in much trembling*, [4] *and my message and my preaching were not in* ⚠ *persuasive words of wisdom*, *but in* △ *demonstration of the Spirit and of power*, [5] *so that your faith would not rest on the* ⟲ *wisdom* *of men, but on* △ *the power of God*.
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 2:1–5

FIGURE · TWO FOUNDATIONS FOR FAITH



Guzik: "what you draw them with is what you draw them to." — Paul chose the right-hand column on purpose (v5).

Paul set aside everything in the left column on purpose, so that the faith of the Corinthians would rest on the foundation at the bottom right (v5).

ἔκρινα … εἰδέναι

EKRINA … EIDENAI · "I DETERMINED … TO KNOW" · G2919, G1492

Krinō is "to judge, decide" — a settled verdict, not a passing mood. Paul uses the same verb for another resolve in 2 Corinthians 2:1. He decided "not to know" (*eidenai*, the knowing of a man who has things settled) anything "except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." The last word, *estaurōmenon* (G4717), is a perfect participle: not merely "who was crucified" but "who has been crucified and remains the Crucified One." The risen Lord still bears that title (compare Revelation 5:6, "a Lamb standing, as if slain"). Paul did not move past the cross to something more advanced; he kept everything centered on it.

ἀσθενείᾳ … φόβῳ … τρόμῳ

ASTHENEIA … PHOBOS … TROMOS · "WEAKNESS … FEAR … TREMBLING" · G769, G5401, G5156

Astheneia is lack of strength — sometimes bodily sickness, sometimes frailty of every kind; it is the word of 2 Corinthians 12:9, "power is perfected in weakness." *Phobos kai tromos*, "fear and trembling," is a phrase Paul uses for the humble seriousness of a servant (2 Cor 7:15; Eph 6:5; Phil 2:12). "Much" goes with the trembling. The verb is *egenomēn*, "I was" — Paul is describing how he carried himself among them, not a show of strength.

πειθοῖς … ἀποδείξει

PEITHOS … APODEIXIS · "PERSUASIVE … DEMONSTRATION" · G3981, G585

Two words that appear nowhere else in the New Testament. *Peithos* (from *peithō*, persuade) is the art of winning a hearing by technique — the KJV's "enticing." *Apodeixis* is the word ancient rhetoric used for a conclusive proof; Paul takes it from the orators and gives it to the Spirit. The proof of his message was not a clever argument but what the Spirit and power did in Corinth. The "power" (*dynamis*, G1411) of verse 4 is the same "power of God" on which faith is to rest in verse 5.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reminds us that Paul's arrival is told in Acts 18: tentmaking with Aquila and Priscilla, more than a year and a half in the city. He came "as a witness," not as a philosopher or salesman — "Paul was an ambassador, not a salesman." He could reason with anyone, but he made a conscious decision to put the emphasis on the cross, even though Corinth wanted rhetoric. Following Fee, Guzik says "not to know anything" means a singular focus, not a refusal of all other knowledge. Paul's weakness "kept him from the poison of self-reliance," and "it is the preacher's job to preach and it is the Holy Spirit's job to demonstrate." On verse 5 he is pointed: "what you draw them with is what you draw them to" — whoever is argued in by human wisdom can be argued out by it.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

In *Leadership in the Church* (excerpted at Ligonier), Sproul calls verse 1 "the first principle of godly ministry and leadership—that we do not assume a posture of superiority, whether in our speech, in our demeanor, or in our attitude." Verse 3 is "a key to Paul's success": he "was constantly identifying with the weaknesses, fears, and trembling of his people." In *The Truth of the Cross* he reads verse 2 as hyperbole — "a form of emphasis that uses intentional exaggeration" — since Paul taught much else; but "the central point of importance was the cross." And in his *Ultimately* podcast he says on verse 4 that Paul's words are powerful only "insofar as the Spirit of God attends them and uses them and carries them home": "I knew the psalm, but he knew the Shepherd."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached verse 2 as "The Man of One Subject" (No. 1264, 31 October 1875). Paul refused philosophy, polish and roundabout methods; "he determined to go straight forward, and promote the gospel by proclaiming the gospel." The cross needs no supplement: "it contains all that is vital within itself," and Paul trusted that "the Spirit of God will make this the instrument for the conversion of men." Spurgeon warns that a preacher who rides only doctrine, only experience or only precept will lopsidedly shape his hearers, while Christ crucified feeds the whole man. Sects grow from something added to the cross, "but this is the soul and marrow of Christianity."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry: "Christ, in his person and offices, is the sum and substance of the gospel," and the minister's "business is to display the banner of the cross, and invite people under it." Paul "did not affect to appear a fine orator or a deep philosopher." Henry guesses he may have had "a little body, and a low voice," yet "he was no mean speaker" — at Lystra he was taken for Mercury, the chief speaker (Acts 14:12). His fear and trembling were humility, "fearful of himself, lest he should mismanage in his trust." The purpose of the plain style was "lest it should be said that either rhetoric or logic had made them Christians."

II
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 2:6–9

God's Hidden Wisdom

A wisdom the rulers missed — predestined before the ages, prepared for those who love Him

> 6 *Yet we do speak* ⟲ *wisdom among those who are mature; a* ⟲ *wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age,* ⚠ *who are passing away;* 7 *but we speak God's* ⟲ *wisdom in a mystery,* △ *the hidden wisdom which God* ☆ *predestined before the ages to our glory;* 8 *the* ⟲ *wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified* △ *the Lord of glory;* 9 *but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN,* ☆ *ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 2:6–9

> *"For from days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear, Nor has the eye seen a God besides You, Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him."*
>
> ISAIAH 64:4

FIGURE · TWO WISDOMS

1 COR 2:6–9	THE WISDOM OF THIS AGE	GOD'S WISDOM
WHOSE IT IS	**of this age and of** the rulers of this age (v6)	**God's — He spoke it,** and we speak it (vv6–7)
ITS TIME	**"passing away" —** already being made void (v6)	**"predestined before** the ages" (v7)
ITS FORM	**on display: rhetoric,** argument, applause	**"in a mystery, the hidden** wisdom" — now revealed (v7)
WHO MISSED / WHO SEES	**"none of the rulers of** this age has understood" (v8)	**"those who are mature" (v6);** "those who love Him" (v9)
WHERE IT ENDS	**"they would … have crucified** the Lord of glory" (v8)	**"to our glory" (v7) — what** God has prepared (v9)

Read across each row: the wisdom of this age is on display and passing away; God's wisdom was hidden before the ages and ends in glory.

τελείοις

TELEIOS · "MATURE" · G5046

From *telos*, "end, goal": what has reached its intended end — full-grown, complete. The mystery religions of Paul's day used the word for the initiated, but Paul's use is moral and spiritual. He sets it against "infants" (*nēpioi*) in 3:1, tells them in 14:20, "in your thinking be mature," and uses it of grown believers in Philippians 3:15 and Ephesians 4:13. The KJV's "perfect" means complete, not sinless.

ἀρχόντων … καταργουμένων

ARCHŌN … KATARGEŌ · "RULERS … PASSING AWAY" · G758, G2673

Archōn is a ruler, chief, prince — used of human authorities (Acts 3:17; 4:26) and of Satan, "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31). *Katargeō* means "to render idle, make inoperative, abolish." It is one of Paul's favorite verbs in this letter: God chose the things that are not "so that He may nullify the things that are" (1:28), and Christ will abolish "all rule and all authority and power" and finally death (15:24, 26). The present participle pictures the rulers already on their way out.

μυστηρίῳ … ἀποκεκρυμμένην

MYSTĒRION … APOKRYPTŌ · "MYSTERY … HIDDEN" · G3466, G613

In Paul a *mystērion* is not a puzzle but a secret God kept and has now made known — "the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints" (Col 1:26; Rom 16:25–26; Eph 3:3–5). *Apokekrymmenēn* is a perfect participle, "having been hidden." God "predestined" it (*proōrisen*, G4309, the verb of Romans 8:29) "before the ages," and its goal is "our glory" (*doxa*, G1391) — the same word as "the Lord of glory" in verse 8.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik: Paul's refusal of Corinthian "wisdom" does not mean his message had none — "there is a vast wealth of wisdom sealed off to everyone except the Christian." He lays out two readings of "the mature" (believers versus unbelievers, or mature versus immature believers). On "the rulers of this age," a debate that "goes all the way back to the time of Origen and Chrysostom," he weighs human rulers (Morris: "Paul habitually ascribes power to the demonic forces, but not ignorance") against demonic powers who did not foresee their defeat at the cross (Col 2:15); either way they are "coming to nothing." "Lord of glory" is perhaps Paul's loftiest title for Jesus. And verse 9 is not mainly about heaven: verse 10 says God "has revealed them," so "This glorious thing has been revealed by the gospel."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

In "The Commission of Christian Leaders" (from *Leadership in the Church*) Sproul quotes verses 9–10 and comments, "Here we see God's revelation versus the wisdom of this world," adding, "The world has plenty of human wisdom—too much of it—and it doesn't need ours." Verse 8's startling phrase — the Lord of glory crucified — is guarded in his *The Truth of the Cross*, though there he does not cite this verse: he will not say the divine nature died, yet insists, "It's the God-man Who dies," and "The atonement was made by the human nature of Christ" without diminishing His deity. The One the rulers nailed to the cross was the Lord of glory in the flesh.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's early sermon "Heaven" (No. 56, 16 December 1855) takes verses 9–10 and first corrects a habit: people quote verse 9 and drop verse 10. In context "the apostle is not talking about heaven at all"; the point is "that the wisdom of this world is not able to discover the things of God" — which is why the princes of this world crucified the Lord of glory. Only then does Spurgeon apply the principle to heaven, and even there he strips away our pictures: "Heaven is not a place for the delight of mere sense," and "it is not a heaven of the IMAGINATION." What God has prepared lies past eye, ear and heart, and is known only as the Spirit reveals it.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry calls the mature those "well instructed in Christianity," who see in the plain story of the cross "the deep and admirable designs of the divine wisdom." "How different is the judgment of God from that of the world! He seeth not as man seeth." The mystery was hidden from the heathen and "made mysterious to the Jews, by being wrapped up in dark types and distant prophecies." He takes the princes to be "the Roman governor, and the guides and rulers of the Jewish church," and says Christ is "the Lord of Glory, a title much too great for any creature to bear." Of verse 9 he notes Isaiah's "him that waiteth for him": "Waiting upon God is an evidence of love to him."

III
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 2:10–13

Revealed Through the Spirit

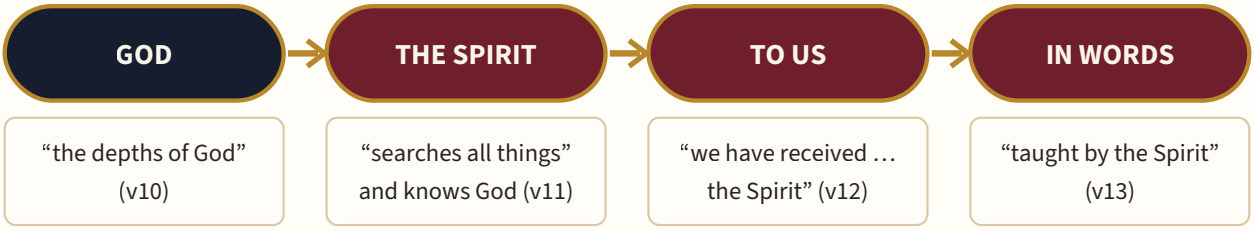
Only God's Spirit knows God's thoughts — and He has given them to us in words He teaches

10 *For △ to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the ⟲ Spirit searches all things, even △ the depths of God.* 11 *For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the ⟲ spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the ⟲ Spirit of God.* 12 *Now we have received, ◷ not the spirit of the world, but ☆ the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things ☆ freely given to us by God,* 13 *which things we also speak, not in words taught by human ⟲ wisdom, but in those △ taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.*

1 CORINTHIANS 2:10–13

FIGURE · FROM THE DEPTHS OF GOD TO THE WORDS OF THE APOSTLES

HOW THE DEPTHS OF GOD REACH US · 1 CORINTHIANS 2:10–13



THE ARGUMENT OF VERSE 11 — LIKE IS KNOWN BY LIKE

the thoughts of a man	=	the thoughts of God
known only by "the spirit of the man"		known only by "the Spirit of God"

Not "the spirit of the world" but "the Spirit who is from God" —
"so that we may know the things freely given to us by God" (v12)

Follow the arrows: what no eye saw is known by the Spirit, given to us, and spoken in words He teaches — and verse 11 shows why only He can do it.

ἐραυνᾷ … βάθη

ERAUNAŌ … BATHOS · "SEARCHES … DEPTHS" · G2045, G899

Eraunaō is to search, examine thoroughly — the word for the Jews who "search the Scriptures" (John 5:39), for God who "searches the hearts" (Rom 8:27), and for the risen Christ who "searches the minds and hearts" (Rev 2:23). The Spirit does not search because He lacks knowledge; the present tense describes His full and constant penetration of God's own being. *Bathos* is "depth" — Paul's word in Romans 11:33, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Only a divine Person can know the depths of God, which is why Henry draws from verses 10–11 a proof of the Spirit's deity.

χαρισθέντα

CHARIZOMAI · "FREELY GIVEN" · G5483

From *charis*, grace: to give as a favor, freely, with nothing owed. It is the word of Romans 8:32 — "how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" The aorist participle points to what God has already given in Christ. The Spirit is not given so that we can earn these things, but "so that we may know" (*eidōmen*) what is already ours.

πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες

PNEUMATIKOS … SYNKRINŌ · "COMBINING SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS WITH SPIRITUAL WORDS" · G4152, G4793

Synkrinō can mean "combine," "compare" or "interpret"; elsewhere in the New Testament only at 2 Corinthians 10:12 ("compare"). *Pneumatikois* may be neuter ("spiritual words/things") or masculine ("spiritual people"). So the NASB reads "combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words," the KJV "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," and Clarke (cited by Guzik) "explaining spiritual things to spiritual persons." Each is grammatically possible; all agree that Spirit-given truth needs Spirit-taught words.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik: “only the Holy Spirit can tell us about God and His wisdom.” Paul argues from a premise the Greeks knew, “that like is known only by like.” His homely picture: “You can guess what your dog is thinking, but you really can’t know unless he was to tell you.” The Corinthians thought Paul dealt in mere basics; Paul insists the gospel reaches “the deep things of God.” Because every believer has received the Spirit, every believer has access — which “does not mean every believer has equal spiritual wisdom,” but does mean “every believer can understand the basics of the Christian message.” On verse 13 he gives both readings: spiritual things in spiritual words, or with Clarke, “Explaining spiritual things to spiritual persons.”

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

Sproul, in “The Commission of Christian Leaders,” refuses to make verse 10 mystical: “This does not refer to some kind of psychic experience or mystical intuition.” Rather, “Paul was saying that through the Spirit, God speaks to us in the Scriptures.” He presses the depth of verse 10: “What human has searched the depths of God? No one. Even if someone has sixteen Ph.D.s, he hasn’t searched the depths of God.” But the Spirit has, and so “If we have Christ, if we have the Spirit, if we have the Scriptures, we have revelation through the Spirit.” For Sproul the Spirit’s teaching and the written Word are never set against each other.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In “Heaven” (No. 56) Spurgeon says of verse 10, “the very marrow of the whole passage lies in this”: “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.” The Spirit gives believers foretastes now — in trials met with calm faith, in quiet contemplation of election, covenant and union with Christ, in communion with Him (“do not neglect the supper of thy Lord”), and in seasons of prayer. He is careful: “I am a firm believer in the doctrine of impulse,” yet he warns that some misuse claims of inner leading. What no eye has seen, the Spirit begins to show the believer before he ever sees heaven.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry finds here “a proof of the divine authority of the holy scriptures”: what the apostles taught was revealed by the Spirit. He also draws “a double argument” for “the divinity of the Holy Ghost” — the Spirit is omniscient, searching even the deep things of God, and He is “as much and as intimately one with God as the man’s mind is with the man.” We cannot know God’s counsels “till he enlightens the faculty, opens the eye of the mind.” And “the truths of God need no garnishing by human skill or eloquence”; “comparing spiritual things with spiritual” means setting one part of revelation beside another, the New Testament beside the types and prophecies of the Old.

IV
MOVEMENT

1 CORINTHIANS 2:14–16

The Mind of Christ

The natural man cannot receive God's things — the spiritual man has been given Christ's own mind

> 14 But ⚠ *a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God*, for they are ⚠ *foolishness to him*; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually ⇄ *appraised*. 15 But he who is spiritual ⇄ *appraises* all things, yet he himself is ⇄ *appraised* by no one. 16 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But ☆ *we have the mind of Christ*.
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 2:14–16

> *"Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has informed Him?"*
>
> ISAIAH 40:13

FIGURE · THE NATURAL MAN AND THE SPIRITUAL MAN

1 COR 2:14–16	THE NATURAL MAN *psychikos — soul-level only*	THE SPIRITUAL MAN *pneumatikos — Spirit-indwelt*
GOD'S THINGS	"does not accept the things of the Spirit of God" (v14)	has "received … the Spirit who is from God" (v12)
HOW THEY LOOK	"foolishness to him" (v14; compare 1:18)	"the things freely given to us by God" (v12)
ABILITY	"he cannot understand them" — no organ to see with (v14)	"appraises all things" (v15)
UNDER EXAMINATION	judges by what works, the bottom line (Guzik)	"appraised by no one" — no natural standard fits him (v15)
THE MIND	"Who has known the mind of the Lord?" (v16, from Isa 40:13)	"But we have the mind of Christ" (v16)

What moves a man from the left column to the right is not education but new birth.
Spurgeon: "you cannot educate an old nature into a new one."

Paul's two men differ not in intelligence but in the Spirit: one cannot receive God's things, the other has been given the mind of Christ.

ψυχικὸς … πνευματικὸς

PSYCHIKOS … PNEUMATIKOS · "NATURAL … SPIRITUAL" · G5591, G4152

Psychikos comes from *psychē*, soul or natural life: the man who lives on the level of natural life only. It appears six times — here, three times in 15:44–46 (the "natural body" sown in death), James 3:15 ("natural" wisdom) and Jude 19 ("worldly-minded," "devoid of the Spirit"). Jude's comment is the definition: the *psychikos* man does not have the Spirit. *Pneumatikos* is the man whose life comes from and is governed by the Spirit. "Does not accept" is *dechetai* (G1209), "welcome" — he will not take God's things in as a guest; and to him they are *mōria* (G3472), the "foolishness" of 1:18, 23.

ἀνακρίνω

ANAKRINŌ · "APPRAISE, EXAMINE" · G350

To examine closely, question, investigate — a courtroom word (Luke 23:14; Acts 4:9). Of its sixteen New Testament uses, ten are in 1 Corinthians: here three times (vv. 14, 15 ×2), then of Paul being examined (4:3–4; 9:3), of buying meat without asking questions (10:25, 27), and of the unbeliever examined by prophecy (14:24). One famous use is Acts 17:11: the Bereans were "examining the Scriptures daily." The natural man cannot examine God's things, because they are examined only by the Spirit's light.

νοῦν Χριστοῦ

NOUS CHRISTOU · "THE MIND OF CHRIST" · G3563, G4822

Nous is the mind — the faculty of understanding, a way of thinking (Rom 12:2, "the renewing of your mind"). Isaiah 40:13 in Hebrew asks who has directed "the Spirit of the LORD"; the Greek Old Testament Paul quotes reads "the mind of the Lord," and Paul quotes the same verse in Romans 11:34. "Instruct" is *symbibazō* (G4822), "to bring together, knit, teach" (Col 2:2, 19). No one can instruct the LORD — but believers have the mind of Christ. Paul sets Christ where Isaiah set the LORD.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik: *psuchikos* "describes the materialist, who lives as if there were nothing beyond this physical life." The natural man is where we all start — unregenerate. There is nothing sinful about eating, sleeping and working, but life on that level has no spiritual insight; expecting the natural man to value spiritual things is like expecting "a corpse to see the material world." Then a warning to believers: "When our only concern is for 'what works' or the 'bottom line,' we are not spiritually discerning." Verse 15 does not put any Christian above criticism — much of this letter is criticism — but "no natural man is equipped to judge a spiritual man." And verse 16 swaps Christ for Isaiah's LORD "because Jesus is Yahweh!"

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier Ministries

Sproul closes "The Commission of Christian Leaders" by quoting verses 11–16 and drawing the line: "Christian leadership means ministering by the power of the Spirit, by the mind of Christ, and with the wisdom of God." The goal is that God's people "reflect the mind of Christ and not the mind of the secular community in which we live." Why the natural man cannot receive these things he states in *Chosen by God* (excerpted at Ligonier), arguing from Romans 8:7–9 rather than this verse: "No one who is not reborn is indwelt by God the Holy Spirit," and fallen man "has no desire for Christ." Only "the effectual grace of God working in his heart can bring him to faith."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "Natural or Spiritual?" (No. 407, 1 September 1861) takes verse 14 and insists the fault is not in the truths but in the man: the gospel is profound, not foolish. The natural man, however respectable, lacks the taste and the faculties for divine things — "He lacks the organs, he has no ear of faith, no eye of faith." Culture cannot fix it: "you cannot educate an old nature into a new one." Regeneration is absolutely necessary, and "The Spirit of God alone can do it." So believers should pray earnestly for the conversion of others and for preachers to be filled with power, for "Man is dead in sin, and life is a gift of God."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry offers two readings of the natural man. He may be the man "never yet illuminated by the Spirit of God," and here Henry is careful: "Not that the natural faculty of discerning is lost, but evil inclinations and wicked principles render the man unwilling." Or he may be the worldly-wise philosopher who will "receive nothing by faith." The spiritual man can judge both common and divine things, but is himself hidden: "God's saints are his hidden ones." On verse 16: "the mind of Christ is the mind of God," and "It is the great privilege of Christians that they have the mind of Christ revealed to them by his Spirit."

V
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From Isaiah's unseen God to the Spirit of truth — where 1 Corinthians 2 reaches back and forward

> *"And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.""*
>
> ACTS 18:9–10

> *"And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me."*
>
> 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9

> *"But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."*
>
> GALATIANS 6:14

> *"that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints,"*
>
> COLOSSIANS 1:26

> *"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."*
>
> JOHN 16:13

> *"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!"*
>
> ROMANS 11:33

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reads verses 9–10 beside Ephesians 3:1–7, where the mystery "was not made known to the sons of men" in other ages as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets — the same hidden-then-revealed shape as this chapter.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · 1 Cor. completed after 1714

Henry hears verse 8 alongside the cross itself: the rulers acted in blindness, and Christ "pleaded with his Father for their pardon: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. Guzik walks the text and weighs the debated readings; Sproul, from his books on leadership and the cross, presses what the chapter means for those who teach; Spurgeon preaches three of its verses to the heart; Henry gathers it into Puritan counsel. Where they differ — who the rulers are, how to read verse 13, whether the natural man lacks the faculty or the will — the glance shows it.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · Christ crucified	An ambassador, not a salesman; what you draw them with you draw them to.	No posture of superiority; "know nothing" is hyperbole — the cross is central.	The man of one subject; the cross is the soul and marrow of Christianity.	Display the banner of the cross; no rhetoric or logic made them Christians.
II · Hidden wisdom	Rulers human or demonic, debated since Origen; verse 9 is the gospel, not only heaven.	God's revelation versus this world's wisdom; the God-man died.	Don't quote verse 9 without verse 10; heaven lies past sense and imagination.	Princes = Pilate and the Jewish rulers; waiting on God is love to Him.
III · The Spirit reveals	Like is known by like — the dog illustration; every believer can grasp the basics.	Not psychic intuition but the Spirit speaking in Scripture; sixteen Ph.D.s can't search God.	The marrow of the passage is verse 10; foretastes in trial, table and prayer.	Proof of Scripture's authority and the Spirit's deity; truth needs no garnishing.
IV · Two men	The natural man is a corpse to God's things; believers can think like him.	Minister by the mind of Christ, not the secular mind; the unreborn lack the Spirit.	He lacks the organs; you cannot educate an old nature into a new one.	Not the faculty lost but the will bent; the mind of Christ is the mind of God.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:1–16 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **The cross was a decision, not a default.** *Ekrina* — "I determined" (v. 2). Paul could argue with philosophers (Acts 17), and chose not to rely on it in Corinth. Sproul calls the "nothing" hyperbole; Spurgeon calls the cross "the soul and marrow of Christianity." THE GREEK
- **Still the Crucified One.** *Estaurōmenon* is a perfect participle: Christ crucified and remaining crucified in His significance. The gospel never graduates from the cross. THE GREEK
- **What you draw them with is what you draw them to.** Guzik on verse 5: if someone is persuaded into the kingdom by human wisdom, he can be persuaded out of it the same way. Paul wanted faith that rests on the power of God. GUZIK
- **Weakness is the preacher's credential, not his embarrassment.** Sproul: Paul "was constantly identifying with the weaknesses, fears, and trembling of his people." The same word, *astheneia*, returns in 2 Corinthians 12:9. SPROUL
- **Verse 9 is about the gospel before it is about heaven.** Guzik, Clarke and Spurgeon all insist verse 10 governs verse 9 — "God revealed them." Spurgeon: "the apostle is not talking about heaven at all." Henry allows both the future life and the gospel now. SPURGEON
- **The Lord of glory was crucified.** Guzik calls it perhaps Paul's loftiest title for Jesus; Henry, "a title much too great for any creature to bear." The rulers did not know whom they were killing. HENRY
- **Like is known only by like.** Only a man's spirit knows a man's thoughts; only God's Spirit knows God's (v. 11). Henry draws from it a proof that the Spirit is God. THE TEXT

- **Illumination, not new revelation.** Sproul: verse 10 "does not refer to some kind of psychic experience or mystical intuition" — the Spirit speaks in the Scriptures. Guzik: every believer can grasp the basics, though not all have equal wisdom. SPROUL
- **Faculty or will? The teachers differ.** Spurgeon says the natural man "lacks the organs." Henry says the faculty is not lost but the will is bent. Both agree on the cure: only the Spirit gives new life. THE TEXT
- **Paul puts Christ where Isaiah put the LORD.** Isaiah 40:13 asks who has known the mind of Yahweh; Paul answers, "we have the mind of Christ." Guzik: "because Jesus is Yahweh!" GUZIK

† Questions for the Table

1 **If someone listened to me talk about my faith for a week, what would they say my one subject is?**
Paul determined to know nothing but Christ crucified — a decision, not a default.
2:2; Gal 6:14

2 **Where do I hide my weakness when I try to help another man — and what would change if I let it show?**
Sproul: Paul identified with the weaknesses, fears and trembling of his people.
2:3; 2 Cor 12:9

3 **What first drew me to Christ or to church? Is my faith resting on a person, a program, or the power of God?**
Guzik: what you draw them with is what you draw them to.
2:4-5

4 **What has the Spirit shown me in Scripture that I could never have figured out on my own?**
Only the Spirit knows the thoughts of God — and He has given them to us.
2:10-12; John 16:13

5 **Where am I still thinking like a natural man — judging my life by what works, the money, the bottom line?**
Guzik: believers can slip into the natural man's way of judging.
2:14-15

6 **Name one old rut of thinking I need to trade for the mind of Christ this week. Who will help me?**
The mind of Christ is a gift to receive and a way of thinking to practice.
2:16; Rom 12:2

Paul came to Corinth shaking, with one subject and no tricks, and God built a church on it. The wisdom the rulers could not see, the Spirit has shown to everyone who loves God. If you are in Christ, you do not have to be clever to know God's mind — you have been given it.

Teaching the Word. Living in the Light. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry died in 1714 having reached Acts; his *Commentary* on 1 Corinthians was completed after his death by Simon Browne from his notes and method, and is cited under his name as it is published. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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