

## Commentary on First Corinthians chapters 2 and 3 by Chuck Smith 8.13.23

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August memory verse **1 Peter 1:23 (NKJV)** having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,

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### Chapter 2

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God ([1Cr 2:1](#)).

Paul didn't come as one of the Corinthian philosophers, trying to stand in the streets and persuade them by the brilliant oratory to believe and to accept Jesus Christ. I wonder where the place of oratory is in the pulpit. It's interesting how that we so often admire the great orators in the pulpit. But I often wonder if oratory has any place in the pulpit at all. It surely didn't in Paul's pulpit. "When I came to you, I came not with the excellency of speech or of wisdom, as I declared unto you the testimony of God."

For I determined not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ, and him crucified ([1Cr 2:2](#)).

Oh, the common bond by which we are all brought together, Jesus Christ, Him crucified. That's all I want to know.

And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling ([1Cr 2:3](#)).

Now Paul had just come from some very upsetting experiences. While he was in Galatia he was wanting to go into Asia, but the Spirit was forbidding him, and Paul was too sick to get out of bed. And so finally, he heard the call, a man from Macedonia saying, "Come over and help us." And so he headed over to Macedonia to obey the heavenly vision. And when he arrived in Philippi, as he was preaching, they grabbed him and threw him in jail; beat him. And there in the dungeon at midnight the Lord shook the prison and opened the doors. Paul left Philippi, went down to Thessalonica, and there as he preached they had a riot. So he left Thessalonica... sly, really, to get out of there, because they were waiting for him. And he went down to Berea. And there a big ruckus was stirred up, and so he left Berea and headed down to Athens. And there on Mars Hill he was mocked as he sought to proclaim to them the truth of Jesus Christ. And he comes to Corinth now a broken man in weakness, trembling, in fear.

And my speech and my preaching [he said,] was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and power ([1Cr 2:4](#)):

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It wasn't really man's wisdom. My speech was a demonstration of the power of God and of the Spirit of God working..

And so Paul's ministry to those in Corinth wasn't the enticing words of man's wisdom, the demonstration of the Spirit and power.

That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but it should stand in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them which are fully matured: yet not the wisdom of this world, that comes to nothing: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory ([1Cr 2:5-8](#)).

So that true wisdom, the wisdom which is of God, the wisdom by which He speaks to those who are matured in their Christian walk and experience.

But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those that love him ([1Cr 2:9](#)).

Now, this is probably one of the most misquoted scriptures in the Bible because people stop there. And they say, "Well, heaven is going to be so glorious... 'Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, it hasn't even entered into your heart the things that God has prepared for you.' Oh, He is so glorious." But the next verse says,

But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God ([1Cr 2:10](#)).

So these things that the world does not know, now he's talking about the eyes of the world, the ears of the world, the hearts of the people in the world, they have no concept, no idea of the things that God has for us who love Him. "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

For what man knoweth the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God ([1Cr 2:11](#)).

So here the Spirit of God is attributed with the same omniscience that God possesses, knowing the things of God.

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 ([1Cr 2:12](#)).

And so God has given us the Spirit to teach us, and you have need, John said, "That no man should teach you but that unction that you have received, it will teach you all things" ([1 John 2:20](#)). "But the Comforter," Jesus said, "which is the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have commanded you" ([John 14:26](#)).

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And so God has given to us the Spirit that we might freely know the things of God as He instructs our hearts in the ways of God. And that is why I always encourage a person, before you start reading the Bible, pray, "Oh, God, let your Holy Spirit illuminate my mind and my understanding to your truth as I read."

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but with the Holy Spirit teaching; comparing the spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned ([1Cr 2:13-14](#)).

So the natural man is at a decided disadvantage, because he cannot know the things of the Spirit. He cannot receive them; he cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned.

The deaf man cannot enjoy the symphony, the blind man cannot enjoy the beauty of the sunset. Why? Because he lacks the faculties by which these things are appreciated. So, in the same logic, the natural man cannot receive or know the things of the Spirit, because he lacks the faculty by which these things are known. He lacks the Spirit. And lacking the Spirit, it's impossible for him to know the things of the Spirit.

But [in contrast to the natural man] he that is spiritual discerns all things, yet he himself is discerned of no man ([1Cr 2:15](#)).

Or another translation, "He that is spiritual understands all things though he is not understood my man."

Now the natural man cannot understand your love for the Word of God. He cannot understand your love for the people of God. He cannot understand your love for the things of God. They're foolishness unto him. What do you do for fun? And the natural man is just at a loss to understand. He walks away and says, "I don't know, he's crazy. He talks about the Lord all the time, something's wrong."

He which is spiritual, he understands things though he is not understood by the natural man, no man understands him. And that, of course, makes for difficult relationships sometimes. When these kids come and accept the Lord and then they go home and begin to share the things of the Spirit with their parents, all of a sudden there's lost communication.

For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ ([1Cr 2:16](#)).

What does he mean by that? When he was writing to the Philippians he said, "Let this mind be in you which also was in Christ Jesus, who though He was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery or something to be grasped to be equal with God, yet He humbled Himself and took upon Himself the form of a man and came in the likeness as a man, as a servant, obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" ([Philippians 2:5-](#)

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8). The mind that was in Christ was the mind that was willing to step down, a mind of humility. "We have the mind of Christ," Paul said. That mind which doesn't exalt itself or its own wisdom, but that mind that submits to God and to the will and the authority of God.

We have the mind of Christ. Oh God, help us that we might indeed possess the mind of Christ, that that mind, that mental attitude that Jesus had, will be our mental attitude. That of not lording over one another, but serving one another in love.

### Chapter 3.

Beginning with the fourteenth verse of chapter 2, Paul here separates men into three classifications. Starting in chapter 2 with the natural man, the unregenerate man, the man who knows not Jesus Christ. And concerning him, he said, "He cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned." So the natural man in darkness, not able to see, not able to know the things of God.

In realizing this, in praying for those who are not saved, it is important to realize that Satan, as Paul said, the god of this world has blinded their eyes that they cannot see the truth. So they cannot receive, neither can they know, because Satan has blinded them to the truth of God. And as Paul said to Timothy, "That we might take them from the captivity of the enemy who is holding them captive against their wills" ([II Timothy 2:26](#)).

So the direction of our prayers for the natural man would be that God would open their eyes to the truth, that God would deliver them from that power of Satan by which they are held, that blindness that Satan has brought over their minds concerning God, and that Satan's work be bound in order that they might be freed and become a free moral agent capable, then, of receiving Jesus Christ.

It is a misnomer to declare that the natural man is a free moral agent. He is furthest from free moral agency. He is bound and he is blinded by the power of darkness. And so the thrust of the prayers are to deliver him from this power of darkness to make him a free moral agent, in order that he might believe.

Now in contrast to the natural man, you have the spiritual man. And Paul says, "But he that is spiritual understands or discerns all things though he is not understood by men. For who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him, but we have the mind of Christ" ([I Corinthians 2:15-16](#)).

So the spiritual man is a man whose mind is now controlled by the Spirit. Man, a threefold being: body, soul, spirit. If the body is uppermost, then your mind is controlled by the body needs and is occupied by your body needs and you have what Paul calls in [Romans 8](#), "the mind of the flesh" or "the carnal mind which is enmity against God, neither can it know Him."

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When a person is born again by the Spirit of God he becomes spirit, soul and body. And when the spirit is uppermost, then you have the mind of the Spirit, the mind that is under the control of the Spirit, as Paul said here, "We have the mind of Christ." Now as we get into chapter 3, Paul introduces us to a third classification.

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual ([1Cr 3:1](#)),

Now he's talking to those in Corinth, those in the church in Corinth, those who are presumably born again. And yet, they are not spiritual, for he says, "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual,

but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ ([1Cr 3:1](#)).

Now the issue arises, and people often question, is it possible to be a carnal Christian? A carnal Christian is one who has received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, but does not yet have victory over the flesh and thus, still walks, many times, under the control of the flesh. He does believe, he has received Jesus as his Savior, but not as his Lord, for the flesh is still ruling over him. And he needs deliverance from that power of the flesh that has a hold on his life. So Paul describes this as the conditions of those in Corinth.

He cannot talk to them as spiritual, for they are still carnal, but he does call them babes in Christ. And so he acknowledges that they are in Christ, but unfortunately, they are babes. There is a natural development and growth physically even as there is and should be a natural development and growth spiritually. There is a time when being a babe in Christ is a beautiful, glorious thing. I love to see natural babes in Christ.

To me it's beautiful when a person has just come to the realization that Jesus is Lord and their sins are washed away. And that enthusiasm, that love, that excitement that they have for the things of the Spirit, it's just something that's glorious to behold. And they're just fun to be around because the things of the Lord are just so exciting to them at that point, babes in Christ. But there is also a necessity of growing up into a fully matured relationship.

There are many marks of the babe in Christ, and Paul gives to us some of the marks. First of all, they need to be fed with milk because they are not able to endure the meat of the Word of God. So their first relationship is extremely experience-oriented. And thus, as they relate their experiences, they are usually relating them to the feelings that they have of excitement, of joy, of thrill as they come into the spiritual dimension, and for the first time begin to really discern or understand the things of the Spirit.

But as we grow and as we develop spiritually, it is God's desire that we come into a full maturity, as Paul the apostle declared to the Ephesians that they might come into that perfect man. And the word *perfect* is *fully matured*, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of the image of Christ. And so it is God's will that we grow up spiritually into the image of Jesus Christ as we become fully matured.

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Now, when a person first is born again by the Spirit of God and they are spiritual babes, babes in Christ, it's just always beautiful to behold, that fresh work of the Spirit of God in their lives. But, if after fifteen years, twenty years, they're still in the crib state, they haven't matured, they haven't developed in their spiritual growth or maturity, then it is painful and it is tragic to behold. It is important that we grow up.

Now Paul said they were carnal, and because of that they weren't able to take the meat of the Word of God. They were interested only still in milk.

Another mark of their carnality,

was the envying, and the strife, and the divisions ([1Cr 3:3](#)),

That existed among them. Envy, strife, divisions, marks of carnality, and Paul said as long as these exist,

are ye not carnal and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are you not carnal? ([1Cr 3:3-4](#))

join?" "I was born into it by the Spirit of God." To see the whole body of Christ.

The fierce dividing of the body into these quadrants is a mark of carnality. "Some say, 'I'm of Paul,' some say, 'I'm of Apollos.'" Paul said,

Who is Paul? who is Apollos? they are only servants by whom ye believe, even as the Lord gave to every man ([1Cr 3:5](#)).

They are only the instruments that God used to bring you to a faith.

I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but it is God who gives the increase ([1Cr 3:6-7](#)).

So Paul said, "Who am I? Who is Apollos? We are only instruments that God used. You shouldn't identify with us. You should identify with the Lord. It is God who gave life. All I did was plant seed, all Apollos did was water seed. All we were is instruments that God used to bring to you salvation. But it is God who gave to you your life and thus, you should identify with Him."

Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one ([1Cr 3:8](#)):

Apollos and I are one. Why are you trying to create a division? We are one.

and every man will receive his own reward according to that labor ([1Cr 3:8](#)).

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So Paul will receive his reward for planting. Apollos will receive his reward for watering. And that is the beautiful thing about serving the Lord, He does reward us for that work that we do, not for the results of the work, because the results belong to Him.

So I'm on a salary, I'm not commissioned at all. I'm not paid with a commission. I'm only salaried by the Lord to teach His Word; whatever comes of it is His and it's for His glory.

I cannot produce fruit in your life. All I can do is teach you the Word of God, water really. And maybe someone else has planted the seed, but here we are watering, cultivating, in some cases planting, great. But it's the work of God that counts. It's God who brings life and gives life to the Word, and thus, I just receive the reward for that which I have done, and I receive the reward whether or not anything comes of it, because I've been faithful to do what God called me to do.

And that's the thing that we need to really realize: that God rewards us for the work that He's called us to do, not for the results of that work. Sometimes we feel so discouraged, because, "I've witnessed to so many people, then none ever believe, you know. I haven't been able to lead one person to Jesus Christ and I've talked to so many." Hey, it doesn't matter. As far as your reward is concerned, God only asked you to talk to them.

God didn't commission us to argue people into a faith in Jesus Christ, to get into disputes with people over the inerrancy of the Bible or whatever. I find it rather pathetic that we so often are placed in the position of defending the Word of God. God didn't call you to defend His Word. God called you to use His Word.

Paul, speaking of Apollos and himself, said,

We are laborers together with God ([1Cr 3:9](#)):

"You see, I planted, Apollos watered, but we are, both of us, working together with God." And that, to me, is always a glorious concept, to realize that I am a worker with God, co-laboring with God in His harvest field. You are God's husbandry, plantings, the vines. Jesus said, "I am the true vine, my Father is the husbandman, every branch in Me that bringeth forth fruit... "

So really,

you are God's husbandry ([1Cr 3:9](#)),

He is cultivating your life in order that you might bring forth fruit for His glory. And then he goes on to say,

you are God's building ([1Cr 3:9](#)).

You are the work of God. You're not the work of Chuck Smith or of Pastor Romaine or of any other pastor here. You are the work of God. It is God that has worked in your life

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through His Word. And so he who plants is nothing, he who waters is nothing, but it is God who gives life and brings increase. And so,

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereon ([1Cr 3:10](#)).

"I planted; you are God's building." So he takes it from the farm to construction, from the field to a building now. "I planted. Apollos watered. I laid the foundation. Apollos came and built upon that foundation. For you are the building of God." But he warns, "Let every man take heed how he builds thereon."

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ ([1Cr 3:11](#)).

Now the church is the building of God that has been built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. And no other foundation can any man lay than that which is laid.

Finally, Jesus said, "Who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Or, "You're the Messiah. You're the Son of the living God." And Jesus said, "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto you, that you are Petros [you're a little stone], and upon this petra [the rock] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" ([Matthew 16:16-18](#)).

So the rock upon which the church was built, the Catholics say, was Peter. He is the foundation. Not so. Jesus said, "You are Petros [a little stone], upon this petra I will build my church." What is the petra, the rock upon which the church was built? The confession of Peter that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. That's the foundation upon which the church was built, as Paul here declares, "No other foundation can any man lay than that which has already been laid, which is Jesus Christ."

He is the foundation of the church. He is the one upon whom the church is built. But, we must be careful even how we build on that foundation.

Now if any man build upon this foundation of gold, and silver, and precious stones, or wood, hay, and stubble; every man's work shall be manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire ([1Cr 3:12-15](#)).

Christ, the foundation upon which the church is being built. Paul acknowledges that there are some who are building with wood, hay, and stubble. Others are building with gold, silver, and precious stones. But there is a day that is coming in which the building



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is to be tested. It's to be tested by fire, and when that day of testing comes, then it will be manifested, the materials that were used in the building.

You remember Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 6, "Take heed to yourself that you do not your righteousness before men to be seen of man." In other words, take heed that you're not doing things in such a way as to receive the recognition and the reward from man. For He said unto you, "You have your reward." So when you pray, don't make a big public demonstration of it. Don't be always telling others about it so that they know what a prayer warrior you are. For Jesus said, "You have your reward." When you give, don't do it in such a public demonstration that everybody knows what you gave, for you have your reward. When you fast, don't put on the appearance of sackcloth and ashes and long mournful faces so that everybody knows how spiritual you are because you fast.

But do these things rather to your Father, before your Father, in secret before Him, and you'll receive your reward from Him. But Jesus is saying that in the acknowledgment that you receive from man in doing things in a public display, that will be the only reward that you'll get from them, that which comes from man. So our works will be judged, what sort they are as the motives of our hearts will be judged when we stand before God.

Now Paul goes from the building to the individual,

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God ([1Cr 3:16](#)),

Two Greek words for temple, the word *hieron* referred to the entire temple complex. It included the buildings, the courts, the porches, even the temple mount. Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple, the *hieron*.

The other Greek word for temple is *naos*, which is the inner sanctuary, the holy place. It is the word that Jesus used when the Pharisees asked for a sign and He said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will build it again." He used the word *naos*, this inner sanctuary, this holy place.

"You," Paul said, "are the naos of God." The inner sanctuary was the place of divine activity. That's where God revealed Himself to man. That's where man came into a relationship with God, for the Shekinah dwelt in the naos, in that inner sanctuary. "You," Paul said, "are the naos of God." Therefore, your life becomes the center of divine activity. Your life is the instrument through which God reveals Himself to man today. Your life is the dwelling place of God, your body.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God,"

and that the Spirit of God is dwelling in you? ([1Cr 3:16](#))

Every believer in Jesus Christ has the Spirit of God dwelling in him. The moment you ask Jesus Christ to come into your life, the Spirit of God begins to indwell you. Paul

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said, "Don't you know you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God is dwelling in you?" And then he goes on to declare,

If any man defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy ([1Cr 3:17](#));

Now in the sixth chapter he tells us some of the ways by which the temple of God can be defiled, as he tells us there your body is the naos of God. And if I commit fornication, Paul said I am then sinning against my body, my body, the temple of God, member of Jesus Christ, joined unto Him.

But basically, though it isn't primarily physical, but spiritual defiling of the temple of God, it is important that we keep ourselves pure and holy. "For if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy;"

for the temple of God [the naos of God] is holy, which temple ye are ([1Cr 3:17](#)).

So it is a call to a holy, righteous life.

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he might be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God: for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness ([1Cr 3:18-19](#)).

Now, to me the biggest hoax that men, supposedly of science, are trying to perpetrate upon people is that of the theory of evolution. Supposedly a scientific theory, very credible, and every science accepts it as fact according to those who espouse it so heartily. Even though there are many scientists who are arising now and say, "Wait a minute. There are too many gaps, unexplainable things here." And evolution is not a satisfactory explanation of the existence of life.

And again, The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are empty. Therefore let no man glory in men ([1Cr 3:20-21](#)):

Now Paul is saying, "Don't glory in Paul, don't glory in Apollos, don't glory in man. Man at his best is an empty show. The thoughts of the wise are empty. Don't glory in men."

for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Peter, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's ([1Cr 3:21-23](#)).

So I can learn and I can gain from Paul, or Apollos, or Peter, or whoever else. Everyone has something to offer. Of course, with some you've got to sift through so much before you find something that's worthwhile, that it's easier just not to listen.

But all things are yours, and so learn to gain from the whole world around you.