**The Church at Corinth**

**A Church Facing Inner Problems – #10**

**Mature, Immature, Spiritual, Fleshy, Infant Believers**

**1 Corinthians 2:9-3:4**

***1 Corinthians 2***

***9*** *But, as it stands written,*

*“What eye has not seen*

*and ear has not heard,*

*and what has not surged in a human heart,*

*what God has prepared for those who love him”—*

***10*** *and this God has revealed to us through the Spirit.*

*For the Spirit examines everything, even the profound things of God that is the depths of God.* ***11*** *For among human beings, who understands what is truly human except the human spirit that is within*? ***12*** *Now we have not received the spirit of the world*, *but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.*

***13*** *We also talk about them not with words taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.* ***14*** *The living [or the animated] human being does not accept what comes from God’s Spirit, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*

**15** *The spiritual human being, however, discerns all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.* ***16*** *For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him*? *But we have the mind of the Lord [or the mind of Christ].*

**1 Corinthians 3**

***1*** *Brothers, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but only as worldly, mere infants in Christ.* ***2*** *I fed you milk, not solid food, because you were not yet able to take it.*

***3*** *Even now, you are still unable. Wherever jealousy and strife exist among you, are you not worldly and behaving in a secular human way?* ***4*** “*Whenever someone says, “I side with Paul,” and another says, “I side with Apollos,” are you not being merely human?”*

**Christian Knowledge**

In this verse, the quotation simply has to reckon that humans have had eyes that have not seen and ears that have not heard, and what has not surged in a human heart, God has prepared for those who love him. So Paul states positively the knowledge that he and other Christians have in contrast to the ignorance of “the rulers of this age.”

**VERSE 9 –** These words echo some of the words in the OT. The first clause echoes formulas found in Isa 64:3 (LXX: “*From of old we have not heard, nor have our eyes seen any God but you and your deeds, which you do for those who await mercy*” and also Isa 52:15 (LXX): “*For they will see who have not been told about it, and those who have not heard will understand*”. The second clause may echo either Isa 65:16, (LXX) “*it [distress of the past] will not surge in their hearts*” or Jer 3:16 (LXX) “*it will not surge in the heart*” that is it will not come to mind, or Jer 39:35; 51:21. The last clause may echo the book of wisdom of Ben Sirach (LXX) 1:10, “*he lavished her [wisdom] on those who love him*”; (cf. Rom 8:28, for a different way of expressing this idea. Cf. also Job 13:1–2; 19:26–27; 28:11, 17, 20, 22; Bar 3:16). Yet none of these OT passages corresponds exactly to the wording that Paul uses here. Jerome said that Paul was not quoting the exact words of the prophet Isaiah but simply quoting the substance of Isaiah (In Esaiam 17.64.4–5; and his letter 57.9.5–7 *Ad Pammachium*; CSEL 54.519–20).

**The Mystery Revealed by the Spirit to Those Who Love God**

The core of these words is intended to sum up the content of the hidden mystery, i.e., the wisdom of God: “*what God has prepared for those who love him*,” those who also received his love by the Spirit (Rom 5:5) which no human being has ever imagined or desired. The quotation ends significantly with the blessings that God has prepared “*for those who love him*,” a note that Paul will repeat (in 1 Cor 8:3 and in Rom 8:28).

**VERSE 10 –** “*And this God has revealed to us through the Spirit.*” [or “through his Spirit”].

The verb ***apekalypsen*** means “to reveal” and actually has no object in the Greek text, probably because Paul is emphasizing the fact of revelation; something like “*this*” has to be understood, a reference to what precedes in verse 9, or possibly to “*his wisdom*”, for God as revealer (see, Matt 11:25; Dan 2:22). Verses 10-12 constitute the second part of this paragraph and thus present God’s wisdom as revealed through the Spirit, which no human spirit can comprehend. This is one of the rare places in the NT in which the Spirit is said to be the source of the “revelation,” and it is not to be confused with the “inspiration” of Scripture. Here what is the revealed is the Mystery of God in Jesus Christ. Inspiration is also a divine gift, but quite different from revelation, and it is a notion derived from 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 1:20–21. Thus we have to maintain the distinction because the first is about the actions of God in the Person of Jesus and by the Spirit, while the second is about recording them in the books of the Scripture.

The hidden mystery is made known by God Himself, but the mediation of the Spirit is emphasized. The Spirit makes known what God has prepared for us and also the grace to receive revelation is given by the Spirit himself. This is the work of God’s love for us. This activity of the Spirit resumes what was said in v. 4 about a “*demonstration of the Spirit and power to us*,” not only the ***teleioi***, “mature” Christians or the ***pneumatikoi***, (1 Cor, 6:5) would have it, but all Christians, who receive this revelation because they have been initiated in the divine love. Because we love God, we become able to live the mystery of his love. It is Paul’s way of stating the contrast between Christians who know and love and the rulers of this age who do not know (verse 8).

**The Depths of God**

**VERSE 10 (cont.) –** “*For the Spirit examines everything, even the profound things of God that is the depths of God*.”

The “divinity of the Spirit” is that being, the Spirit of God. *He knows or searches all things, even the inscrutable judgments and untraceable ways of God* (Rom 11:33–34), *which no human being can do* (Cf. Job 11:7–8), which speaks of “*the deep things of God.*” The book of Judith (LXX, 8:14), however, has a similar idea: “*The depths of the human heart you cannot plumb, or understand the thoughts of the human mind. So how will you search out God, who has made all these things, and really know his mind or understand his thought?*” Paul is using a common teaching among the Jews to say that only by the Spirit we can understand God’s wisdom.

**VERSE 11 – “***For among human beings, who understands what is truly human except the human spirit that is within*?”

Only the human spirit can understand the things of a human being, because his is within him. So also the Spirit that is in God and Paul draws an analogy between the divine Spirit and the human spirit.

**Abbot Sophronius: Jesus and the Spirit**

“The Holy Spirit is the Co-Worker with the Son. He formed his humanity in the virgin’s womb. The Spirit anointed Jesus after Jesus came out of the water of the river Jordon and manifested Jesus as God’s Anointed one. The Spirit also worked with Jesus throughout his ministry. Jesus was crucified as God’s Anointed Holy one and offered himself by the Spirit. The Spirit raised Jesus from the dead. So, the Spirit must reveal all that to us. The depths of God in all these divine revelation of love are in the conception; the Spirit replaced the physical father and created in embryo in the womb. The Mystery is that we have our origin now not in the first Adam but we are in the second Adam Jesus and have been removed from the fallen Adam to the New Adam.

The second Mystery is that at his baptism the Lord was God incarnate but after his baptism the Lord became Christ, the one who has a communion with the Holy Spirit as the New Man. Jesus received the Spirit to make the Spirit able to dwell in our humanity through his mediation as the New Head of the New Creation.

He accepted our death on the cross to abolish our death in his humanity which is our humanity and to communicate this victory to us in baptism.

He gave up himself as a sacrifice for sin. As a high priest, he took his blood that is his life to heaven to accesses us to heaven itself and by rising from the dead he bestowed immortality on our humanity.

In his conception the Holy Spirit created his humanity. In his baptism the Holy Spirit established his unction in his death the Holy Spirit offered his sacrifice. In his resurrection the Holy Spirit made his humanity glorious, immortal and heavenly.

By his conception we have our beginning in him, by his anointing we have communion with his in the Spirit. By his death we have our victory over death in him. By his resurrection we have our immortal life in him.

In his conception the Spirit offered him to us, at his baptism the Spirit anointed him king and priest to reconcile us to God. When he died on the cross, Jesus by his divine power and by the power of his anointing as the Christ offered himself by the Spirit (Heb 9:14) to unite his saving work with the work of the Spirit, making our salvation the one work of God the Father who is the source of both the Son and the Spirit, and God the Son who is the revelation of our adoption and God the Holy Spirit who is the fulfillment of all the blessing, for under the New Covenant, God works all in the Son by the Holy Spirit.”

**The Spirit and Wisdom**

**VERSE 12** – “*Now we have not received the spirit of the world.*”

This could be read also as the spirit or of “this age” (2:6), God’s wisdom is contrasted with the wisdom of the world. Cosmos is now used with a pejorative connotation of what is at odds with the realm of God. By “the spirit of the world,” Paul means the ability to know what is peculiar or proper to that world, i.e., what makes it only natural but natural without God.

The name ***pneuma tou kosmou*** is a personal name but here it comes from the parallel sense of the phrase in the second half of the verse, to ***pneuma to ek theou***, the Spirit of God. Here the spirit of the world has its wisdom (1:20), but here Christians have not received that spirit but the Spirit of God (see Gal 3:2, 14; 2 Cor 11:4; Rom 8:15), so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. Literally, “*The things graciously given to us*.”

**VERSE 13 –** “*We also talk about them not with words taught by human wisdom*”.

Paul refers to the way he preaches about God’s gifts, meaning that they are really indescribable, when judged by human standards. “*The gifts bestowed by God*.” The sense of this verse, however, is linked to what Paul said in 2:6. Verses 13-16 make up the third part of this paragraph, in which the proclamation is described as uttered with words taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual realities in spiritual terms.

**The Spirit of God and the Spirit of the World**

1. The Spirit of God does not offer a system but offers freedom and growth. The spirit of the world can’t operate with a system and often enslaves those who are in charge of the system and those who are under the system.
2. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Love (Rom 8:8) and love communicates life and the very being of God and above all eternal life, the spirit of the word can’t operate with love but with the Code of reward and punishment.

**‘Interpreting spiritual realities in spiritual terms’**

1. Understanding both spiritual realties and “spiritual things,” by “comparing,” as in (2 Cor 10:12). There is one goal in all that is called spiritual and this goal is Christ Jesus Crucified.
2. The Cross is the True measure of discernment. How is this so?
3. Power is used for love and for love alone for this is the cross.
4. Wisdom is used for healing and for uniting the enemies.
5. Freedom is for growth and leaning the will of God that all actions have an end.

**The Spiritual and the Living or the Animated**

For a detailed study of Pauline use of such terms, please consult:

D. Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*. (Easy reading)

R. Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms.* (Very technical)

J. A. T. Robinson, *The Body, A Study of the Pauline Letters* (best summary and easy reading)

Paul uses now for the first time the adjective ***pneumatikos***, or “spiritual,” which occurs also at 2:14,15; 3:1; 9:11; 10:3,4; 12:1; 14:1, 37; 15:44 46). A term for a style of new life lived modifies under the influence of God’s Spirit. Sometimes it is contrasted with ***psychikos*** a term comes from the Greek ***psyche***, meaning “soul” but not in the Greek sense but in the OT sense, those who are just living or animated, that is living or “animated” (2:14; 15:44, 46); sometimes with ***sarkikos*** from the Greek ***sarx***, “fleshy” (3:1, 3; 9:11), those whose life, mind and will is centered on the flesh.

**VERSE 14 –** “*The living [or the animated] human being does not accept what comes from God’s Spirit*.”

In vv. 14-16, Paul analyses the human response to the revelation given through the Spirit:

1. Believing Christians welcome with faith the Spirit revelation now made known by Paul’s Spirit-guided preaching. He is echoing what he wrote in (1:18), applying it to people who are considered ***psychikoi*** living but without the revelation.
2. ***psychikos*** is not easily translated. It means “animated,” i.e., having ***anima*** in Latin or in Greek ***psyche*** and is intended to describe a human being whose activity is determined by the psyche in contrast to ***pneumatikos***, one who is influenced by ***pneuma***, “Spirit.” (Note: RSV, NRSV, NEB render ***psychikos*** as “unspiritual,” which captures the contrast, but not the meaning. NAB, ESV use “natural” or “worldly. The Vulgate has ***animalis homo***, it should not be translated as animal in its common meaning in English. Each translation has its drawbacks. The adjective is formed from the noun ***psyche***, for “soul” or “life principle,” referring to the immaterial but vitalizing component of our living being which is otherwise composed of skin, flesh, and bones. The whole living being, animal or human, has a life called “soul” as the animating principle of natural life, a common way of speaking in Greek philosophy. But in Hebrew the soul is life visible and invisible, the visible is the flesh, the invisible in the inner life of thoughts and memory.

The contrast of ***pneumatikoi*** and ***psychikoi*** is based on the distinction between the work of the Spirit in the spiritual and the lack of his work or rather the work of the Spirit is not obvious in the ***psychikoi***.

When applied to people, as here in 1 Corinthians, the adjective ***psychikoi*** means that they are living only with psyche or anima and are not open to the revelation or the wisdom that comes from God’s Spirit, whereas the ***pneumatikoi*** are those who do have opened their heart to the Spirit.

**The ‘Pneumatikoi’ and the ‘Psychikoi’ in Our Time**

They are round us in all churches. They come to the Christian faith because of psychological needs. Christ does not reject any one. Christ is the Lord and Savior of all. But you can see them creating problems in church meetings, maneuvering someone because they don’t like not because his or her teaching or life is evil. Their feeling is their creed and the more the feelings are multiplied the more their creeds are multiplied.

The spiritual ones are the peacemakers, they are kind to sinners and to those who disagree with them. They radiate the love of Jesus because they have been filed with his Spirit (Rom 5:5).

In any case, the distinction between the ***pneumatikos***, “spiritual,” and ***psychikos***, “animated, natural, worldly, unspiritual,” as descriptive of two different types of Christians is clear. The former describes the human being who is open to God’s Spirit and enlightened by it, whereas the latter is not. ***Psychikos*** means neutrally the natural man who lives without the gift of the Spirit and who thus belongs to the world (verse 12) and not to God (verse 10). Such a natural person would “*not accept what comes from God’s Spirit*” and have too many objections that may sound philosophical, but in fact the rejection comes from putting the mystery of God into the circle of the “ordinary life.”

The wisdom of the world is not open for the Gospel because both operate on different ground. The cross is “folly “and is also a “stumbling block.” The cross should become the power that crushes the enemies, but if the cross is the wisdom of healing the broken, then, it is indeed “folly” and such a folly because the wise of the world can’t understand it, because it is spiritually discerned as the revelation of God. To receive something from God’s Spirit would make no sense for the merely animated human being, who is incapable of grasping what can only be discerned in a spiritual way, i.e., guided by God’s Spirit. “Folly” is now taken up again, as an echo of 1:18, 21, “*folly to those who are perishing*.” In this context, that means that the ***psychikoi*** do not attain the knowledge required for salvation. Paul does not analyze the human nature as such, but rather from humanity’s encounter with the revealed wisdom of God about what leads to salvation.

**Judging Spiritually**

**VERSE 15 –** “*The spiritual human being, however, discerns all things*.”

The ***pneumatikos***, by contrast, judges rightly not only affairs of this world or age, but also “what comes from God’s Spirit,” and “the gifts bestowed on us by God” (v. 12). The reason is that such a person judges “spiritually,” i.e., under the influence of God’s renewing and enlightening Spirit. His judgment is that of “wisdom” and should not be subjected worldly scrutiny. Spiritual human beings are not subjected to the judgment of other human beings, because they transcend the human wisdom that is limited to the ordinary human wisdom and enlightened by God’s Spirit. This is not a sweeping statement because Paul is not speaking about all things but only about what is revealed in Christ and in his cross. Paul also says that the ***pneumatikos*** is subject to God’s judgment (see Rom 2:6).

**Who Has Known?**

**VERSE 16 –** “*For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him*?”

These words of the prophet Isaiah were from a question referring to the deliverance of the Jewish people from Babylonian captivity by God’s creative power, and they accordingly extol God’s great wisdom in providing for them. That question expects the answer, “*No one*.” Paul accommodates the words of Isaiah to bring his discussion of God’s wisdom to a fitting conclusion, because they support his contention that no ordinary human being can judge or scrutinize what comes from God and His Spirit. Paul also quotes part of the same verse of Isaiah in (Rom 11:34), in his hymn of praise to God’s wisdom and mercy.

**The Mind of Christ**

**VERSE 16 (cont.) –** “*But we have the mind of the Lord or the mind of Christ*” (in other MSS [scriptural manuscripts] B, D, F, G, 81 read “the Lord” ***kyriou*** instead of ***Christou***, Christ).

Paul now has changed the reading of the LXX Lord (***kyriou***) which he retains in Romans 11:34, because ***kyriou*** could be ambiguous in this context. “We” means Paul and all Christians, as v. 3:1 will make clear. In using the Greek word ***nous***, “mind,” he is adopting this word from the LXX form of Isaiah 40:13, and by it he means the intellectual part of the human perception by which a human being thinks and reasons and receives the divine light. Hence for Paul the “mind” is the equivalent of “*the spirit coming from God*” (v. 12), but now it comes more immediately from Christ. Hence the mind of the Christian is in communion with the mind of Christ because it is formed by Christ and is oriented toward him.

The “mind of Christ” is best explained by reference to the hymn to Christ in Philippians 2:5–11, which begins with the words, “*Have this mind which you have in Christ Jesus*.” That hymn stresses Christ’s “*obedient self-emptying and sacrificial death*.” Such an outlook formed by the message of the cross should be the guide of community life and conduct, as Paul will make clear in 3:1-4.

Please remember that the divine title Lord in the letters of Paul comes from the LXX and it was used in the LXX for Yahweh.

**1 Corinthians 3**

**Warning to Believers: Do Not Be Fleshy (*Carcinoid*)**

**VERSE 1 –** *Brothers, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but only as worldly, mere infants in Christ.*

Literally “but only as fleshy,” i.e., people whose mind-set is that of **sax**, “flesh.” Again, Paul addresses the Corinthians as ***adelphoi***, “fellow Christians,” (as in 1:10,11,26; 2:1), even though he cannot identify them as ***pneumatikoi***, “spiritual people,” as he has defined that term in Chapter 2. In his eyes, they are rather ***carcinoid***, “fleshy,” i.e., dominated by “worldly” ways. He has been discussing the wisdom that comes from God’s Spirit, and he has not been trying to keep it to himself; but immature, worldly Corinthian Christians have not been able to understand it or cope with his communication. These “fleshy” are those who question for rejection the learning of the wisdom of the cross. They are the ***carcinoids***, “made of flesh,” that is, life based in essence and all actions on the flesh and its link with wordily life.

Paul often contrasts spirit, ***pneuma,*** and flesh “sax”, (5:5), especially in his other writings (2 Cor 7:1; Rom 8:4, 5, 6, 9, 13; Gal 3:3; 4:29; 5:17). In that contrast, ***sax*** denotes all that keeps a human being tied to earthly, worldly, or selfish tendencies and makes him or her unresponsive to God’s Spirit. “*Those who live according to the flesh are concerned about things of the flesh*” (Rom 8:5); “*those who live by the flesh cannot please God*” (Rom 8:8). The adjectival forms used here have the same sense. ***Carcinoid*** may be a literary variant for ***psychice*** (2:14), but ***psychics*** denotes the neutrally of natural man who lives without the gift of the Spirit, whereas ***sarkikos*** is the believer who is making no progress because the dominated by the desires of the flesh.

**Infants Who Are Less Mature but Still in Christ**

In addition, Paul calls his Corinthian addressees “infants” in their spiritual lives and in their relation to Christ, because they regard spiritual things from the viewpoint of a small child who is unable to comprehend their real meaning and worth. Such Corinthians are still “*in Christ*” (1:2, 4, 30), but, having accepted the gospel and been converted, they are behaving in childish, immature, worldly ways. Their conduct does not measure up to their conversion. Paul reproaches his readers that wordily wisdom divides their attention and is the reason for their failure to advance in their understanding of the message of the cross because if they were exceedingly proud of their knowledge, they will miss the Gospel. Paul has moved from the contrast between ***pneumatikoi*** and ***psychikoi***, to a contrast of “infants, immature.

**VERSE 2 –** *I fed you milk, not solid food, because you were not yet able to take it*. Literarily “I made you drink milk, not eat solid food,” an elliptical expression called ***zeugma***. Paul continues the metaphoric comparison of the Corinthian Christians with infants, by stressing that he was like a mother to them, he gives them the food that they can digest; that is, like baby food.

**How Can ‘The Message of the Cross’ Be Given As ‘Baby Food’?**

1. They have to turn to the Person of Christ, who is the Wisdom of God and learn how Christ is different from the wisdom of the this world.

1. The real contrast, then, is not between two quite different diets which Paul has to offer, but between the true food of the Gospel with which he has fed them (whether milk or meat) and the artificial substitutes that come from the systems of the world which the Corinthians have preferred.
2. The same contrast of milk and solid food is used in the letter to the Hebrews in his exhortation addressed to backsliding Christians (5:12–14). So the wisdom of the world is milk because it does not nourish the most important and vital creative energy in us that is love. Corinthian Christians, fed on such milk, may have criticized Paul, claiming that they were seeking, indeed, the solid food of philosophical speculation, rhetorical eloquence, and advanced knowledge. They were in fact like many of us today: prisoners of systems. Then Paul would be refuting their contention, making the point that they are still babes, as the next clause makes clear. His solid food is the wisdom of God, which is foolishness to the world, and nothing other than “the message of the cross,” but now presented as “Christ crucified” (1:30), a wisdom turned upside down, for it is not the wisdom the Corinthian Christians were seeking.

**VERSE 3 –** *Even now, you are still unable. Wherever jealousy and strife exist among you, are you not worldly and behaving in a secular human way?*

Paul here explains his charge from verse 3:1: for you are still worldly (literally,“fleshy”). They are still affected by the customs, concepts and secular culture of pagan Roman Corinth. This condition, like our condition today, would make Paul hesitate in his attempt to feed Corinthian Christians with solid food. Why they are still worldly is explained in the next sentence of verse 4, which comments on their conduct: *“Wherever jealousy and strife exist among you, are you not worldly and behaving in a secular human way?* Which is to pose the challenge: Are you not still influenced by the secular social conventions of Roman Corinth?

The main point is that their having jealousy and strife reveals their worldview and their true attitude to the message of the cross is far away from seeking peace and love.

**A Note from Philemon**

“Those who accept the crucified Lord are those who love peace and seek unity, but those who confess with their lips and cause strife mobilize their inner life to spread hatred and create jealousy are the babies of Christ who need more care and more milk for nourishment.”

**The Works of the Flesh**

Those who are caught up in rivalries (1:10–11), which give rise to the “jealousy and strife” have in their life the vices in a list of vices (2 Cor 12:20 and in (Gal 5:20), this list are called “works of the flesh,” because these vices are the product of the natural life of our humanity that has not received the grace of the Holy Spirit.

**Parties in the Church are Works of the Flesh**

**VERSE 4 –** *Whenever someone says, “I side with Paul,” and another says, “I side with Apollos,” are you not being merely human?*

Or, are you not living a human life like the rest of Roman Corinth?” Paul recalls what has been reported to him (1:10–12). Rival factions in the Corinthian church reveal that the church was going through a dark patch and about to neglect the noble way of the wisdom of God where love and peace reside.

**Appendix from the Old Commentaries**

**The wisdom found in the cross**

“ Paul is saying that when he, a man thought to be foolish and a preacher of folly, gets the better of the wise, he overcomes their wisdom, not by foolishness but by a more perfect wisdom. This wisdom is so broad and so great that the other kind appears to be foolishness. True wisdom is the gospel, the means of salvation through the cross of Christ. The perfect are those who believe. They are indeed "perfect," because they know that all human things are utterly helpless, and therefore they ignore them, being convinced that they have nothing to gain from them. This is what true believers are like.”

* John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the First Letter to Corinthians*, 7:1

**The Spirit of the World**

“The "spirit of the world" is the one by which different people are possessed. It does not know the truth but can only guess at it, and therefore it both deceives others and is itself deceived by appearances”

* Ambrosiaster, *Commentary of Paul’s Letters*, 4:25

**Discerning the Work of the Spirit**

“The Holy Spirit has the truth embedded in his name, that is what is holy belongs to the Spirit. How we recognize the holy by two marks:

1. It is dedicated for God
2. It has God as its aim and God is the means of achievement that is done for him and for his love.

* Abbot Sophronius, *Letter to the Novices*, 1:3

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