

1. The Spirit of God Opens the Eyes of Believers to Value God’s Revealed Works
 - a. We have received
 - i. NOT the spirit of the world
 - ii. BUT the Spirit from God
 - iii. so that (purpose)
 1. we might understand the things *freely given* to us by God
 - b. We speak this truth in words
 - i. NOT taught by human wisdom (related to “spirit of the world” above)
 - ii. BUT taught by the Spirit (related to “Spirit from God” above)
 1. bringing together spiritual teaching to spiritual people
 - a. “like is known by like”
 - b. It is the Spirit of God who makes us spiritual people and then teaches us the beauty of the things of God
2. In Our Sinful, Self-Determining, State We Always Reject the Things of God
 - a. The natural (*psuchikos*) man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God
 - b. There are two families of Man
 - i. Natural and Spiritual
 - ii. Children of the Devil and Children of God (1 John 3:10)
 - iii. Flesh and the Spirit (Rom 8:5)
 - iv. Believing and Unbelieving (2 Cor 6:15)
 - v. Sons of disobedience and children of light (Eph 5:6-10)
 - c. The man who does not value and welcome the gospel of God through the crucified Christ, does not have the eyes to see, the heart to love, or the mind to approve that he lacks virtue and needs a proxy for his virtue – he has no need for a crucifixion for his salvation
 - i. FOR the teaching of the Spirit (the words) is foolishness to him
 1. Acceptance of what is wise is natural to all men – we all examine, investigate, and choose what we deem to be wise
 2. Thus, the man who does not receive Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord rejects it because he cannot approve *the message (gospel) of Christ crucified for him* as wise, good, or true
 - ii. AND he *is not able* to comprehend it (teaching of the Spirit of God)
 1. The natural man cannot understand *the things freely given by God* (v12)
 2. He is not able to approve it, because he cannot grasp its value, i.e. *know* it
 - a. This is not related merely to facts – as if one cannot understand what is being *claimed* as True in the proclamation of the gospel
 - b. Rather, he cannot comprehend its *veracity*; he rejects it as something false because he already deemed it to be foolish
 - iii. BECAUSE it is *discerned* spiritually (worked by the Spirit of God, see Rom 7:14; Eph 1:3; and taught by the Spirit of God)
 1. This is not a mystical or esoteric understanding, but an evaluation that the historical works and words of Jesus are true
 - a. Thus, Gnosticism, the “secret knowledge” of hidden things that are unexplainable, is not the issue here
 - b. In fact, Paul explicitly denies and condemns Gnosticism in Colossians and other letters
 2. This word, “discerned”, is a judgment word
 - a. It means “to critically evaluate” – to reach a verdict

- b. In the context, the two possible verdicts are “wise” or “foolish”, and the natural man cannot reach the proper conclusion because it is a spiritual investigation for which he is not equipped
 - c. He does not value the Truth revealed by God, but concludes that this crucifixion, death, weakness, is foolishness
 - 3. This means that without the Spirit of God *freely given by God*, WE WOULD NOT SEE OR JUDGE CHRIST WORTHY EITHER - HUMBLLED
 - d. Thus, we see that the natural man, not regenerated by the Spirit of God, considers the word of the Spirit of God to be foolishness and all the things taught by the Spirit of God ludicrous, in fact he is not even able to ascertain their truth
 - i. For only the Spirit of God reveals the things of God as valuable, good, virtuous, true (Eph 5:6-10)
- 3. God Has Made a New People by His Spirit Who See, Know, and Believe in His Son
 - a. The spiritual person (*pneumatikos*, regenerate of the Spirit) discerns all things (of the Spirit), and he is not critically evaluated by anyone.
 - b. The "discernment" of these passages as to do with investigation and conclusion that something under investigation is considered to be wise and not foolish.
 - i. Thus, the natural man investigates, but finds the Spirit taught things (concerning the things given freely by God through a crucified Christ) to be foolish, while the spiritual man investigates and finds the Spirit-taught things to be the wisdom of God (the gospel), and he is not examined and approved by anyone but God
 - c. Christians have been transferred by the divine and sovereign act of God through His Spirit to a different sphere, the Kingdom of God, whose values are vastly different than the world's.
 - i. And this transfer is all of God, so that nobody can boast of being made spiritually capable of evaluating the gospel and finding it valid
 - ii. Colossians 1:11-13 – “giving thanks to the Father *who has qualified you...and transferred you* from the domain of darkness into the Kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have the forgiveness of sins.”
 - d. “For who has comprehended the mind of the Lord which will bring it together? But we, we have the mind of Christ?”
 - i. That is, like v11, shows that nobody can know the mind of God but the Spirit of God, and who can make the gospel “make sense” of the Lord’s mind but the mind of Christ, which we have by his grace.
 - ii. That is, we have, because of the Spirit of God, discerned and valued Christ, the one who brings it all together, the one who knows the mind of God, the Spirit of the Son, combining spiritual teachings of God to spiritually regenerated people.
 - 1. We value Christ, and this one we have, who "brings it all together" as right and true and therefore glorious and affective.
 - 2. We value God not because of our own mind, but because we have been given the valuation of Christ by the Spirit of God – REGENERATION and ILLUMINATION
 - e. This truth, that God illuminates the mind of His elect and regenerates our hearts to love His truth, to see and appreciate and welcome the truth of Christ crucified for us, should humble us deeply
 - i. We did not discover it – He opened our eyes by His Spirit
 - ii. We could not attain righteousness – Christ was crucified for us
 - iii. All things move us to boast of God’s grace in Christ Jesus and from His Spirit of grace, rather than compare and contrast our righteousness, wisdom, or “sight”

4. The Gospel of God's Grace Should Make Us Act Like Spiritual Men

- a. "Fleshly" - That is, basing the conclusions of wisdom on worldly values rather than those of the Holy Spirit's revelation of the crucified Christ
 - i. The Corinthians were still operating out of the value system of the world, arguing and comparing themselves to one another rather than coming to the cross of Christ as equally needy and receiving God's gifts as given freely by Him alone
 - ii. This is why it's called "infancy" – it is to not know truth, but only comparative competition for goods and approval and attention.
- b. The Corinthians were still acting like infants, though they should have moved on to solid food, to operating not out of worldly values and methods, but instead operating out of Spirit-filled values and methods, i.e. humility of God's grace (given freely)
 - i. Thus, Paul describes what it is that leads him to call them still "not as spiritual, but as fleshly" and as "infants":
 1. "For when there is jealousy and strife among you...are you not walking according to Man?"
 2. Jealousy and strife are the roots of prideful competition and comparison, they have nothing to do with Christ crucified
- c. All comparison with one another is really a means of wanting to justify ourselves before God and others.
 - i. The Flesh (ego) busies itself trying to make itself feel important by (1) comparing and (2) defending.
 1. We lack gentleness because our ego is comparing itself with superiority over another. We look down on them and treat them as lower than us, even puffing ourselves up if we help them and appear kind (Galatians 6:1, 14-15).
 - a. C.S. Lewis: "Pride is something that is essentially competitive. Pride gets no pleasure in having something, only in having more of it than the next person. You may think you're proud of being successful, intelligent, good-looking, but you really aren't. You're only proud of being more successful, more intelligent, more good-looking than other people and when you are in the presence of other people who are much more successful, intelligent, or good-looking than you, you lose all pleasure in what you had. Because you never really had pleasure in it, you were proud of it. Pride is the pleasure of having more of it than the next person. Pride is the pleasure of being more than the next person."
 - b. Living by the Spirit seeks to have your brother know and value Christ Jesus above all things, the same thing the Spirit of God is doing
 - i. In the Gospel we desire a transformation of loves, for which we are inadequate to effect in our own power. - PRAYER
 - ii. Living by the Spirit rejoices in other people's successes because you have pleasure in the work of the Lord.
 2. We lack patience with each other because our "wisdom" has been questioned and we must defend it.
 - a. We don't forgive each other because we must defend our examination of righteous, wise, acceptable.
 - b. We are presumptuous and assume that we are good, not merely good but that we are better, that we are more important than another. That we are right and we're going to let the person who has sinned against us, or provoked us, know that we are right, good, and wise!

3. Tests of “fleshly” responses: Irritability, Complaining, Gossip, Critical Spirit, Expecting people to make retribution for their sin against you (unforgiveness), etc.
- d. The Gospel of the Crucified Christ means that we are nobodies who are called somebodies *only* because God provided all that we need in Jesus – crucified for our sins, raised for our justification, enlightening our eyes only by the Spirit from God – ALL HIM
 - i. One of the foundational truths of the Gospel is that you are not wise enough, strong enough, or good enough to place yourself in God’s favor. There is nothing that you can do to make yourself good.
 - ii. So, God had to do it for you.
 - iii. He even had to open your eyes to make you see the value of the gospel.
- e. Understanding this, at the heart level, is what leads to gospel-centered relationships.
 - i. Humility leads to unity. We are all in the same body of Christ, with the same Holy Spirit, with one calling, equally sharing in all spiritual blessings, we have the same Lord, the same dependence upon Him, the same baptism, the same God, the same Father, and it’s all about Him (hence the emphasis on the Spirit of God *making spiritual people*).
 1. There is nothing within any of us that makes us better, or more important, or more significant, or more acceptable to God because we are all saved completely by His grace!!!
 2. There is nothing within any of us that makes us worse, or less important, or less valuable, or less significant, or less acceptable to God, either!!
 3. 1 Corinthians 1:30-31; Christ Himself is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption
- f. The Spirit of God is working powerfully to grow you up, teaching us how great the grace of God is towards His beloved people
 - i. What He “freely gives” to those who believe
 - ii. So that we might boast in His kindness, His goodness, His grace towards us who deemed Him foolish until HE opened our eyes by His Spirit and redeemed us through His Son, crucified for our foolishness

Conclusion: The Gospel Reveals Only One Comparison – The Adequate Christ for the Inadequate Sinner

We were all natural men, blind to beauty, but for the crucified Christ and the Spirit of God renewing our minds. Therefore, there is no basis for comparing ourselves with ourselves, as though appearing more righteous than another will justify us before God. It is to the degree that we believe the gospel of the crucified Son *for me AND for you*, and the truth that we only know and believe this because the Spirit of God made us new *before we saw and believed*, the less jealousy and quarrelling will exemplify our lives.

This is Christian maturity: Spirit-filled living, to lean only upon the Cross of Christ for my righteousness, and to acknowledge only the Spirit of God as the source of my faith, and to boast only in Him and not in my righteousness or methodology, for though we all labor in differing ministries and to differing effect, we are all working according to one Spirit with one Gospel under one Lord, and it is God who builds His church. Let us humble ourselves, and stop comparing ourselves with ourselves and compare ourselves to Christ Jesus, which should humble us severely and give us an insurmountable hope that God is up to something spectacular according to the power of His Spirit of the Crucified and Risen Christ: “What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed (in Jesus), according to whom the Lord assigned to each...God gave the growth.”