Power and Eloquence of the Spirit

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[0:00] Welcome to Built on God's Word, the preaching and teaching ministry of Highland Park Baptist Church in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.! Elder Tom Holland teaches on 1 Corinthians 2.!

Tonight we're going to leave behind chapter 1 of 1 Corinthians and enter chapter 2. It's only 16 verses but it is filled with important information.
Let me just read the chapter to you. It's not that long. 16 verses. And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom.
Of course, Paul is speaking. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And that was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling.
And my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.
[1:16] Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age, or of the rulers of this age who are doomed to pass away.

But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
But as it is written, no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him.
These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts, except the Spirit of that person, which is in him?
So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God, except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.
[2:38] And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him. And he's not able to understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.
The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. For who has understood the mind of the Lord, so as to instruct him?
But we have the mind of Christ. As we read this chapter, I hope we all realize that we are on holy ground.
This is an amazing chapter and brief. We have contained in a mere 16 verses of inspired Scripture truths, and these are truths that transcend time and eternity.
[3:47] Paul begins chapter 2 of 1 Corinthians by explaining that he has not come to this church utilizing his knowledge or eloquence of speech.

Rather, he is bringing to the church at Corinth the perfect wisdom and eloquence of the Spirit of God. He came to them with a demonstration of the power and wisdom of God and the Spirit.
Paul immediately points out in verses 3 to 5 that he came to them in weakness and fear and much tremor. It doesn't sound like Paul, does it?
But nevertheless, these are inspired words. Paul begins chapter 2 of 1 Corinthians by explaining that he didn't bring eloquence of speech.
Rather, he is bringing to the church at Corinth the perfect wisdom of the Spirit. Now, we should not assume from that description that Paul came to this church timidly or in fear for his own life.

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[5:00] Paul's journey thus far was really quite interesting. He came to Corinth through Philippi where he had been beaten and imprisoned.

He next journeyed through Thessalonica and Berea where he was run out of both towns. Paul had come through Athens where he was mocked and scoffed at.
And now he finds himself in Corinth this was a place of rank, paganism, and moral degeneracy.
Hiding behind all these problems undoubtedly was Satan and his demons.
They were set out to destroy Paul's ministry at all costs. The Greeks did not understand the importance of what Paul was seeking to accomplish in Corinth, but Satan understood it and he brought it under great assault.
Now, Paul was one of the most intelligent humans to ever live. But his preaching was not done utilizing his own skills, but rather resting on the power of the Holy Spirit.
[6:21] And that is something we should all do. I sometimes fear we Baptists have been scared off of the Holy Spirit because of our charismatic brothers and some of the outlandish things they've done.

This is something we should all do though. Paul did not depend on his knowledge or abilities, though he possessed both. He depended on God to bring this message.
The most brilliant theologian ever produced on American soil was Jonathan Edwards. But when he preached, including his greatest sermon, you may be familiar with it, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, he wrote out his sermon and he read it to the congregation in almost a monotone.
This weak little voice of this little guy. But Edwards later said he did not want to be guilty of using human persuasiveness or human techniques to elicit a response from the assembly.
He wanted the message to produce the results. And in other words, Edwards patterned his style of preaching after the Apostle Paul.
[7:50] These were results-oriented people. They wanted results. John Stott wrote this, It seems that the only preaching God honors through which His wisdom and power are expressed in the preaching of a man who is willing in himself to be both the weakling and the fool.

I remember the story of the great evangelist in Chicago, Dwight L. Moody. He was walking in the downtown area one noonday and a very intoxicated man came up to him and he said, Don't you remember me, Mr. Moody?
Moody? And he was stumbling drunk. He said, I'm one of your converts. And Moody looked at him and said, You look like one of my converts.
Next time, let the Lord convert you. That was Moody's response to him. When the Apostle Paul arrived at Corinth, he knew exactly what the unsaved church members needed.
The unbelieving church members, as happens to all unbelievers everywhere, needed a demonstration of the power of God's Holy Spirit.
[9:12] He alone, through that power, could deliver them from being lost and risking entrance into the kingdom of God.

Now the danger with the Greeks including those unsaved at Corinth was they would take what Paul was teaching and just turn it into another philosophical lesson.
Remember we talked about that a few weeks ago. They were huge on philosophy. And so Paul understood there's a danger here with that. I don't want to just start another branch of philosophy.
Charles Spurgeon understood Paul and he had this to say. The power that is in the gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher.
Otherwise, men would be converters of souls. Nor does it lie in the preacher's learning. Otherwise, it would consist of the wisdom of men. We might preach until our tongues rotted, till we would exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless the Holy Spirit be with the Word of God to give it the power to convert the soul.
[10:36] If the Corinthians or any other group came to faith through the wisdom of men, even that human wisdom, which was Paul, it would not be able to change that person spiritually.

Intellectual change could happen, but without the deep things of the Spirit, it would accomplish nothing except the eternal damnation of the recipient. those at Corinth would still be spiritual dead, and their names would not be recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life.
Now, the church of the Lord Jesus should be united, but not around philosophy and not around individuals.

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Even someone like Paul, he would be the first to tell us that unification should and must be centered upon the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone. That's who unites us.
We are all to be one in Jesus, one in His Word, one in His Spirit, one in the wisdom of God and not of man, one in the power of God through the truth of God, and one in fellowship among true believers that belong to Him.
[12:05] So we're going to continue tonight speaking about wisdom. We've already talked about that. We'll talk a little bit about where it comes from and how it is revealed to us.

But first, we must understand that the wisdom spoken of in these inspired words could not be understood by the natural man.
You'll see that in the Bible sometimes, the natural man, this or whatever. That's the unsaved man. It's the unsaved man. And it will not come through the natural man.
The natural man does not understand such wisdom. Many even consider it to be utterly foolish.
How do we know that they did not understand?
Well, there's a very deep and profound answer to this question, and it's actually located in this chapter, 1 Corinthians 2, verse 8.
[13:06] And there Paul says this, None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had understood this, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

The crucifixion proves that the rulers of that age did not have God's wisdom. The Jewish leaders did not understand God's wisdom.
In fact, the gospel was a great stumbling block to them. And to the Gentiles, this same information was foolishness to them. They were so ignorant of it that they crucified the Son of God.
Let's take into consideration how ignorant Paul was in words that he wrote in 1 Timothy. I thank Him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because He judged me faithful, appointing me to His service, though formally I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent, meaning of Christ.
But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.
[14:40] The world looked at Jesus and saw no glory. God the Father looked at Jesus and saw pure glory.

Perfect glory. In God's eyes, He was the very Lord of glory. That prepared the readers for this portion of Scripture.
1 Corinthians 2, verses 9 and 10, For it is written, What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him.
These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.
By the way, that is a quote from Isaiah. A little comes out of chapter 64. The rest of it, chapter 65. Now we're actually gearing up.
[15:51] It's a short chapter. We're gearing up to conclude our lesson tonight. But we've been speaking about divine wisdom. True wisdom is divinely revealed.

So how is God's wisdom revealed to us? Well, there are three avenues by which such wisdom is delivered to us.
The first of these is by revelation. And by that, I don't necessarily mean the last book of the Bible. I'm talking about the revealed Word of God. And he says this in 1 Corinthians 2, verses 10 and 11, these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.
For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the Spirit of that person which is in him?
So also, no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. the Holy Spirit is the one that transmits and communicates truth to his children.
[17:09] The Spirit of God is a fully equal partner in the triune Godhead and thus knows fully the mind of God.

The Spirit knows the other two members of the Trinity perfectly. He even talks about the mind of Christ. And Paul goes so far as to compare a personal knowledge that the knowledge of the Spirit has with the Father and the Son.
The Spirit has been sent by the Godhead that we may intimately know the Trinity in depth and in thought.

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So our wisdom of God is apprehended by divine revelation. Secondly, by inspiration.
Now we have received not the Spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God that we might understand the things freely given us by God and we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.
[18:28] That's verses 12 and 13 of the second chapter. The Spirit of God transmits to us the truth of God God the Father and His Son.

This may sound shocking or even contradictory but God's truth is not something we discover on our own. We've got the Spirit leading us.
Spirit of God Spirit of Christ it must be received by us because it's been imparted to us freely. There is a vehicle by which God freely gives us His wisdom.
It's the Bible also known as the Word of God. According to the doctrine of inspiration it is freely given to us by God.
God brings us His revelation through the Bible. But we must be diligent in seeking these great truths.
[19:34] Why do we seek such divine knowledge from the Bible? Consider this passage which should be very familiar to all of you. 2 Timothy 3.16 Why do we seek such divine knowledge?

Now the Scripture. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training and righteousness.
When Paul wrote those inspired words, he had to come up with a word for God breathed, theoponustos.
God breathed out the Word. God. And now we come to the third method by which the Spirit of God imparts to us God's eternal truth.
That third one and for night's study is referred to as by illumination. Verses 14 through 16.
[20:44] The natural man, that's the unsaved man, does not accept the things of the Spirit of God. They are folly to him.

Elsewhere it says they're foolishness to him. And he's not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. They can only be spiritually appreciated or apprehended.
The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?
But we have the mind of Christ. God transmits his truth to us through the Spirit by revelation, by inspiration, and by illumination.
People can study the Bible for decades. And still will not grasp the central meaning. Probably the greatest example of that is in God's Word.
[21:51] And it's the lesson of the Pharisees when Jesus was on earth dealing with them. The Pharisees, the religious elite of Israel, had been highly trained in the books of the Old Testament.

And the only reason I'm leaving out the New Testament there is it hadn't been written yet. it was a work in progress. The Pharisees bragged about knowing the Bible in depth.
Well, first of all, if that had been true, they should have recognized that Jesus was the Messiah. He came exactly when he was supposed to, as foretold in prophecy.
prophecy. But they missed it. And it was very costly. Consider this passage from the book of John. John 5, verses 37-40.
And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard. His form you have never seen, and you do not have His Word abiding in you.
[22:59] For you do not believe the one whom He has sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. And it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

The doctrine of illumination does not mean that we can know everything about God's Word. in Deuteronomy chapter 29 and in verse 29, this truth is taught to us.
The secret things that belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.
Neither does it mean that we don't need human teachers. That is taught to us in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 11 to 12. And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.
And it does not mean that our study of Scripture is not hard work. that's taught to us in 2 Timothy 2.15. We can know Scripture. We can understand Scripture.

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[24:31] But God requires on our part the application of diligence and obedience. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

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