

I CORINTHIANS: HANDLING BELIEVERS' PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

II. Handling Divisions Among Believers, 1 Corinthians 1:10-4:21

C. Contrasting Ungodly With Spiritually Mature Wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:6-16)

I. Introduction

- A. The people Paul disciplined in Corinth lived in a city that was famous for its immorality, alcoholism and worldly pursuits (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, "Introduction to the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians: The City of Corinth," p. 1619), so the formidable influence of the city's culture on the Corinthian believers left Paul addressing "(a)berrant beliefs and practices of an astonishing variety" in his letters to them, *Ibid.*
- B. However, in a vision Paul received from God as he ministered at Corinth in Acts 18:10b NIV, God told him, "I have many people in this city," so Paul was to keep on ministering regardless of the trials he faced there.
- C. This epistle is timely for us who face our own decadent culture today, so we view 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 where Paul contrasted the ungodly wisdom that causes divisive church politics with spiritually mature wisdom:

II. Contrasting Ungodly With Spiritually Mature Wisdom, 1 Corinthians 2:6-16.

- A. 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 does **not** contrast the world's wisdom with that of believers in general, but the wisdom of the world **and** that of "carnal" believers who live by the sin nature versus the wisdom of mature believers:
 - 1. In 1 Corinthians 3:1, Paul claimed that he could not speak to his readers as unto spiritual Christians, but as unto "carnal," and as unto immature believers that Paul termed spiritual "babes."
 - 2. Yet, in introducing his comments of 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 at 1 Corinthians 2:6, Paul wrote that he spoke a wisdom of those who were "perfect" (KJV), the Greek term being *teleios*, meaning "adults," or "mature," Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 816-817; *Ibid.*, Ryrie, ftn. to 1 Corinthians 2:6.
 - 3. So, the contrast of wisdoms noted in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 were the wisdom of the godless world and that of carnal believers on the one hand versus the wisdom of spiritually mature believers on the other hand.
- B. We then view Paul's contrast between godless wisdom in general and the wisdom of mature believers:
 - 1. The ungodly wisdom of this world and that of ungodly believers exists throughout the world where the wisdom of spiritually mature believers is hidden from all but mature believers, a fact that God ordained before the ages for the gracious glory of believers who go on into spiritual maturity, 1 Corinthians 2:6-7.
 - 2. Had the princes of this world known of this wisdom, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, but God has hidden His wisdom to give to believers who love Him and grow in Him, 1 Corinthians 2:8-9.
 - 3. God has revealed the truths of His wisdom unto mature believers by His Holy Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even God's deep truths, 1 Corinthians 2:10. Just as the spirit of a man is required to know the things of another man's spirit, so God the Holy Spirit is required to know the things of God, and in grace, God the Holy Spirit then reveals God's deep spiritual truths to spiritually mature believers, 1 Cor. 2:11-12.
 - 4. Paul explained that he spoke not in the words which an ungodly unsaved person or a carnal believer uses, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, "interpreting spiritual truths to spiritual men," 1 Corinthians 2:13 NIV margin. ["The Greek word *pneumatikois* may be neuter gender and so translated "spiritual words" as in the NIV ("expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words")) or "it may be masculine gender and translated "spiritual men" ("interpreting spiritual truths to spiritual men") as in the NIV margin," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 510. Since the context contrasts the unsaved and the ungodly believer with the spiritually mature, we interpret *pneumatikois* in the masculine gender to read "interpreting spiritual truths to spiritual men."]
 - 5. However, the "natural" (*psuchikos*, Theol. Dict. of the N. T., v. IX, p. 661-663) man, be he the unsaved or a carnal believer, does not receive the things of the Holy Spirit, for they are foolish to him, and he is not able to know them since they are spiritually "appraised" (*anakrino*, *Ibid.*, v. III, p. 943-944), but he who is spiritually mature "appraises" (*anakrino* again, *Ibid.*) all things, yet he himself is not "appraised" (*anakrino* again, *Ibid.*) by any man, 1 Corinthians 2:14-15. This is because the natural or carnal man has not known the mind of the Lord (Isaiah 40:13), but the spiritually mature have the mind of Christ, v. 16.

Lesson: *God has eternally ordained that the Holy Spirit teach mature believers His deep truths to their glory while carnal believers and the unsaved indulge in the world's futile wisdom and view God's wisdom as foolish. Mature believers are blessed to learn God's deep truths, more blessed to discern the error of the wisdom of the world and of carnal believers, and all the more blessed to see the unsaved and carnal believers not even perceive their maturity.*

Application: *May we rely on the Holy Spirit to mature and be richly, immensely blessed and honored by the Lord.*