

Christ and His Cross (1 Cor 2:1-16)

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[0 : 00] Cool, so if you guys can open your Bibles really quickly to Corinthians chapter 2, which is what Moxie will be sharing with us today. So I'll be reading off the NIV version, so if you guys can follow along, that'd be great.

And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom, as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

I came to you in weakness, with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden, and that God's destined for our glory before time began.

None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written, what no eye has seen, what no ears have heard, and what no human mind has conceived, the things God has prepared for those who love Him.

[1 : 26] These are the things God has revealed to us by His Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thought except their own spirit within them?

In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.

This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.

The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments. For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?

But we have the mind of Christ. Maxi. Thank you. Right.

[2 : 45] I really look forward to speak from the book of 1 Corinthians to you. You had two sermons on that. The first one was Pastor William and then Pastor Johan last week.

I've watched those two sermons as well. So I'm very glad to carry on with Chapter 2. And what Paul was saying, you know, I only know Christ and him crucified, right?

And I think this is a great cartoon. This is done by a Malaysian pastor. He's a pastor, but he's very good at drawing cartoons, right?

So the picture paints a thousand words. You know, this is what actually Paul was saying. You know, I don't boast on anything except Christ for whatever God has given to me.

I don't want people to remember how well I speak, what sort of charisma I have. I want people to know Christ. I don't want to stand in front of the cross and say, Oh, the Albert Tang.

[3 : 55] Oh, wow, he speaks well. No, no, no. Whatever we do, whatever we say, we should hide behind the cross and let people see Christ and him crucified.

Surely I believe that God gives us many gifts, right? God has given us much gifts in PCBC, English on Saturday, Sunday. Wow, as a pastor, I'm really amazed and I'm very grateful for the gifts, for the talents, for the resources that God has given to us.

But we don't boast about them. We boast about Christ and him crucified. And this is what the passage just said, right?

So in chapter 2, verses 1 to 16, thank you, friend, for reading that for us. And I believe that Paul deliberately restrained himself from so-called wisdom that was popular in those days.

Okay? And Pastor Johan explained that about the people who were speaking with eloquence, a lot of slick speaking. You know, people were very much attracted to them.

[5 : 11] And Paul said, no, no, no. I don't want to use those kinds of things. I want to proclaim Christ just the way it is.

Rather, he speaks that true wisdom, not the wisdom that the people was, you know, really adoring during those times.

True wisdom was actually from God, of God. And the only way to know that wisdom is not man striving, but the trust, faith, and the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

That applies to us today. I believe that whether we share or whether we receive biblical truths, wisdom from God, it's the power of the Holy Spirit.

Never any human resources. Now, using or utilizing human resources that God has given to us is quite different from relying on them.

[6 : 23] Right? When Paul says, I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified, he was not saying that, I don't use these sort of gifts that God gives me.

Right? If say for some of you, I have resolved to study well, hard this semester. All right?

And nothing else. And you truly know, he doesn't mean he won't come to church or he won't hang out with his friends on the weekends or he won't go to restaurants.

No. But what he meant, he was going to focus onto that one thing. And this is what Paul was saying. I resolved to know nothing when I was with you except Jesus and Him crucified.

That was his focus. He didn't mean that he won't speak with the gifts that God has given to him, but he won't rely on them. I think this is something we need to learn as well.

[7 : 40] So when he was saying this passage, I think three things I'd like to share. Firstly, from verses 1 to 5, he didn't want to mislead people so that the focus was unto him.

Right? Secondly, in verses 6 to 9, he really wanted to say that the cross is actually the true wisdom comparing to the human wisdom, the secular wisdom that the people were talking about.

The cross is actually the true wisdom from God. And thirdly, from verses 10 to 16, and the way to receive this true wisdom is via the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Not man can think how to strive to get those wisdom. It was the revelation from God. Alright? So I think this is something will speak to us as well.

It spoke to me, and I hope God, the Holy Spirit, will speak through his word to you guys. So firstly, we want to understand Paul in his second journey, you know, remember Acts 16 about this Macedonian vision.

[8 : 53] So when he, he was about to go back to the east, and the, and God somehow revealed to him, go, and to a cross, there was this Macedonian guy on the other side, waved to him, come, come, come over, in a dream, alright, in a dream.

So, in a vision. And so he went, and on the way across to Greece, right down, further down to Thessalonica, Beria, and then to Corinth.

And that was, that he has preached the gospel, people believe, church was started. And that was around about 50, 51 AD, okay, and the time he, when he wrote the letters to the Corinthians, it was about five years down the road.

So things have changed a little bit. And during those times, I think, in the church in Corinth, you know, I read a commentary about, it was the little book called To Corinth With Love.

It was a little book, that was 30 something years ago when I read it. It was very concise, but it was a very passionate book. And it says that if God can establish a church in the city of Corinth, nothing is impossible for God.

[10 : 20] If we could understand, Corinth was that kind of immoral, vibrant, but very immoral city, you know. In North Shore, and now we need, there is a, is a, is a, is a street called Corinthian Way.

Have you been, been around that? It's a long drive, actually. Yeah, a lot of good cafes there. Yeah. But, in itself, the, the, the name Corinth, some dictionaries actually kind of describe it as immoral.

All right? Imagine this kind of city with so much possibilities, so immoral, so, yeah, anything can go wrong. but the church of God was established there.

This is the power of God. Nowhere too dark for God, for His gospel to shine the lights. Right?

So, praise God about that. And this is, this is what I've personally believed. That's the, the true wisdom of God. That's the power of God. Right? But firstly, yeah, it was in this kind of places in, in, in Greece, many cities in Greece, they had these kind of traveling speakers.

[11 : 44] And, that's why Paul, when he reached Athens, he, he went there and preached. And people just, just thought he was one of those traveling speakers. One of those eloquent speakers.

And people talk about these philosophies, different things, different, you know, they were, they had Stoics, they had Epicureans, they had different philosophers, traveling speakers.

And they thought Paul was just speaking one of those new things. And, yeah, you know, Greeks, they were famous with their philosophies.

Right? And actually, philosophy, there was actually two words from Greek. One is philo. Philo means I love. Sophia.

If somebody got names, you know, ladies' names, Sophia, that means wisdom. So, philosophy really means I love wisdom. And those Greeks, they really love wisdom.

[12 : 42] And they, they, they esteem those, those slick, charismatic speakers who are so cool, you know, so good looking. And, they would just go out to these places and just speak, just listen to these guys speaking.

But Paul was saying, when he, when he was preaching the gospel to the, to the Corinthians, he said, I deliberately did not want to use eloquent and human wisdom.

those were very popular in those days. And actually, the, they, they were a lot of factions in the church.

Remember, Pastor Johann spoke about last week. There was, there was a group, I say, ah, I belong to Peter. And I belong to Paul.

And I belong to Apollos. And I belong to Christ. Okay. And actually, one of the fact, one of the groups, Apollos, Apollos was actually a very, it seems to be a very eloquent speaker.

[13 : 59] And people liked his preaching. And compared to Paul, some really didn't like him because some people really felt that Paul was blunt.

And he wasn't as handsome as Apollos. Right? So, and Paul, he said that I deliberately did not want to employ those skills, even though he had them.

He was, he was very, he had really good quality upbringing. He knew Greek. He knew Hebrew. He was a Pharisee.

He was, he was, he was really well trained. But he said, I did not want to use those eloquent words, nor those human wisdoms.

And I didn't want to use those enticing words, persuading you. No. Deliberately, I resolve to know nothing except Jesus and him crucified.

[15 : 07] And he said that when I came to you in weakness and with great fear and trembling. And some commentators just wonder what kind of weakness, why was he fear, with great fear, with trembling.

There were different ideas. Some said he might have some physical weaknesses. And some said he may be emotionally unstable or just feeling of awesomeness of the task of preaching the gospel.

We don't know. But the thing is, I believe Paul, he was saying he did not want to rely upon himself.

He refused to use any human competence when preaching the gospel. I think we all have things to learn.

Now, not to rely on them or not to use them as different things. God has given us many gifts.

[16 : 23] And we can use them. In order to make things clearer, easier for the people to understand, we can use them.

But it's a big difference if we really rely on them. Okay? And Paul, when he was writing to the Philippians, that was his testimony.

When he described about the upbringings that he had, the past experience, the education, the qualities that God allowed him to have in the past, he carried on writing.

He said, but whatever were gains to me, I now consider loss loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For those sake, for whose sake I have lost all things, I consider them garbage that I may gain Christ. If anything that will hinder me to know Christ, to share Christ, I will just throw it away.

[17 : 46] I use them, but I don't worship them. I think this is something that is really reminding us how do we use God's gifts or how much we want to rely on them.

Last year the church we had a rally, evangelistic rally. It was in Cantonese, so many of you may not have attended, but some came and helped.

Praise the Lord. And we really, when we wanted to prepare this rally, we wanted to invite someone who was famous. You know, you have some celebrity wanted to come, so the people, oh, he's coming, oh, he's coming, oh, we can bring friends, because he's well-known.

But God frustrated our plans. So, we had these guys giving their testimonies, all right, and it was me, this, nobody knows this pastor from PCBC, to wrap up.

Now, personally, I felt that it was powerful because there was not celebrities sharing their high-profile stories.

[19 : 16] It was a day-to-day people experiencing Christ and him crucified in our lives during the COVID times. And this guy here, he couldn't even make it to the rally.

he died before the rally. You know who this guy was? This pastor, he's actually Pastor E.T.'s father.

He had cancer. I wanted to kind of film him prior, but he didn't even have the energy. He was too sick.

But even he was dead. He still spoke. God could still use that. That is our daily walk with Christ, with the crucified Christ, and that power came through.

We don't need to be famous. We don't need to rely on those things, what the secular world seeks. Just us trusting God.

[20 : 25] This is what Paul said. I resolved to know nothing while I was with you. except Jesus Christ and him crucified. Just the way we are. And God can use that.

Please remember that. Please remember. God can use us. Just the way we are. Secondly, the cross is the true wisdom of God.

Now, this passage did not only start at chapter two. Actually, the context started at 118. That's the verse of the month.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. This is what Paul was truly put, stake his life on.

Christ, him, crucified. The world didn't know, in 121, for since the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not know him. Because the world thought they were wise enough, and this is something so foolish.

[21 : 36] That's why they did not believe. They considered them foolish. And this is the foolish message proclaimed in a foolish way to the foolish people.

Only foolish people believed. And we wise people did not want to believe such foolish things. But the interesting thing was, there was a lot of foolish people believed.

And churches were established everywhere in Asia Minor, in Greece, in Rome. And today, one-third of the world population believed in this foolish gospel.

Right? And Paul said, no, no, no. Yes, the world thinks this is foolish. But this is actually the true wisdom of God.

So in 7, verses 7 to 10, he described, no, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that had been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

[22 : 45] None of the rulers of this age understood it. If they did, they would not have crucified Lord Jesus. Right? Now, he was saying the true wisdom was from God.

And this gospel was the true wisdom. He used this word mystery. Okay? That a mystery has been hidden. What that word mystery means?

Today is kind of superstitious, something not very nice, but actually the word mystery during that time, it meant something that was hidden, but now something revealed.

Prior to their time, prior to the time of Jesus, this mystery was hidden because it was not kind of fulfilled. God has planned it right at the time of creation in his wisdom.

And during those times, in different era, different people, God has his wisdom and chosen these things so that in times it became clearer and clearer and it fulfilled in different process.

[24 : 00] And until the time of Jesus, this mystery is revealed. and this is the wisdom of God.

Imagine how God would even, despite the failures of the people, this plan, this history of salvation continue to work for the plan of God.

This is truly the mightiness, the power and the wisdom of God. And Paul said, yes, this is the wisdom of God.

It's long been hidden but it was actually planned, God planned it before time began and how God could bring it to fulfillment.

That is the wisdom of God. So, we believe, we believe the cross of Christ is the ultimate salvation and the wisdom of God that revealed and fulfilled to us.

[25 : 19] Very hard to describe, very hard to, in our normal logic, how could a weak, frail guy who was hung on the cross could save the whole world.

You know, sometimes, for our human logic, it doesn't make sense, right? It doesn't make sense, but please remember, it's not human logic, it's theologic, God's logic, not our logic.

And God in His wisdom, through the cross of Christ, to save the whole world. and we can see it today, how lives have been changed.

We had Franklin Graham came to us last September, and many of us went to the rally only once, but his dad, you know, when he ran rallies, he used to run quite a few meetings in different cities.

1955, and was prime of his years, he was still quite young, he was invited to England, a tour of speaking series in England, and at once he was invited to speak in Cambridge University, all right?

[26 : 47] And England was pretty skeptical at the time, still today even worse, I believe, and the editor of the London Times at that time, he wrote an article in the newspaper, he said that, I'm sure this Graham is a nice man, but he's a fundamentalist Christian.

The sort of belief that the blood of Christ is required for salvation, I don't think we, it doesn't go well here. And also he said, further, I can't imagine a fine young man and woman from the University of Cambridge can learn something from him.

So, when he read this article, Billy Graham, okay, I want to, yeah, create something academic. So, he created seven or eight series of high-minded scholarly lessons, just to meet with these expectations.

The first night, he spoke. The second night, he spoke. He just felt that, nah, not getting anywhere. So, on the third night, he'd gone back to his normal self.

He just spoke the blood, right? So, from Genesis right through to the different books in the Bible, he spoke about the blood of the sacrificial lamb.

[28 : 22] And by the time he finished, he said, okay, I'm finished. Now, for those who want to go, please, but for those who really want to know about Jesus, the blood of the lamb, you can stay behind and I'll help you to make decisions for Christ.

And on that night, 400 students, Cambridge students stayed and decided to follow Jesus.

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. That is the true wisdom of God. We, human mind, human logic, doesn't make sense, but it's more than senses, I tell you.

That's why Paul continued to say, we cannot with our logic to accept. It's only to our humility to receive, accept the inspiration of the Spirit in me.

He's inspiring me, changing me, urging me, and I surrender to Him. And that is the way to accept this message of the cross.

[29 : 43] these are the things God has revealed to us by His Spirit. And the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. We cannot set out and think, put God in the microscope and find, where are you, God, in this kind of things?

I want to dissect you, whether you are right or you make sense. No. We accept the wisdom of God, we accept the message of the cross because the Holy Spirit prompts us.

How did we come to Christ? Yes, we have to think, we're not superstitious, right? We're not Chinese superstitious.

There are things that God has given to us to think through, okay? But ultimately, we cannot rely on these things. We have to be humble before the Spirit of God when He prompts us, when He inspires us, when He really wants to change us.

Yes, I will accept. And in the following verses, Paul was describing, you know, how one's a man's spirit to understand another's spirit.

[31 : 11] So, and it was illustrating that, now, this is God's spirit, not man's spirit. In the same way how one would relate to another with his spiritual dimension, and this is how God speaks to us.

God has given us different faculties in our lives, and we must relate to God in a spiritual dimension.

We cannot use our mind to truly understand God. It's like marriage. All right? If you just use your mind, your reason, to understand your wife, Isaac, you're going to run into problems.

Right? And she comes home, oh, I had a tough day. Oh, really, really horrible. I really don't want to carry on anymore. And you just use the mindset, yeah, just quit your job.

No, she doesn't need that. She just wants you, oh, yeah, it must be tough. Yeah, I can't understand, but I want to stand beside you. I want you, I'm with you. And then she just carry on another 10 years.

[32 : 26] Right? And I think God has given us different aspects in our lives. And when we want to relate to God, we cannot use other.

Primarily, we need to open up our spiritual dimension, let the Spirit of God speak to us and change us. I remember, as I was preparing this sermon, I was remembering many years ago when I was still in Hong Kong, when I was in my final year in seminary, I was kind of invited, in a sense, to another church for a summer camp, a big thing in summer camps in Hong Kong.

It was a gospel camp from quite an affluent church, North Point, Baptist. All right? And all these young men, they were top-knock.

They were ready to go to universities. Not a problem to enter Hong Kong University or Chinese University in Hong Kong. Not a problem. The only problem was which degree they were pursuing.

So I was in a group, I was talking to these young men, ready to go into universities. Some were believers, some were not. And some were pretty skeptical.

[33 : 54] Skeptical. Oh, don't think I had this. My friend actually just tased me, tempted me to come into the camp. I really didn't want to come. So there was a lot of arguments about this science thing and about whether it's reasonable to believe in Jesus.

But then, this guy, he was a senior professor from the mathematical department faculty in Hong Kong University. And he just came and shared.

And he just says, yeah, God has given me all these logics and maths, understanding, and all these scientific kind of things.

But I believe that when I believe in Jesus, it's my heart just to open up to him. Wow. that was quite powerful.

It's from someone who was really up there, who was humble enough to express that I need to be humble before God. All my understandings, all the things I've acquired, it's nothing compared to God.

[35 : 02] Now that was quite the testimony to all these young ones. Some of them probably would be taught by him. And there was a couple in my group.

I was trying to, they were deciding whether they should believe in God. If I believe in it, would my parents against me? Would it ruin my future?

Some say, God would want you to become pastors or missionaries. No, I didn't want to do that. It was a lot of struggles. But I encouraged them.

I believe ultimately it was the spirit of God. working in their hearts and they were ready to open themselves so that the spirit was working in them.

And I was grateful as I recall those times. A few years back, I mean, a few years later from then, one of the young ones finished his degree in the university and he came to the seminary.

[36 : 04] Wow. Praise God. Only God could do that. And another one, he went into university and he studied medicine. And today, I actually Googled it, his name was still there.

And he actually was one of the high profile ophthalmologists, eye doctor in Hong Kong. And his pastor told me that he was still very faithful and committed in the church.

Wow. This has got to be the wisdom of God. It's not what I say. It's not what he said. It's the power of the gospel.

So, this is what Paul was saying. I resolve to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

And this is something we believe. This is something we hold on to. This is something we share. And Paul said, that is the spiritual man.

[37 : 20] And the spiritual man discerns all things. So, do we want to be spiritual in a sense? in that sense, we don't rely on the things that we have.

In that sense, we want to trust that even though it doesn't make my human logic, but we trust, believe, that Jesus and him crucified is the true wisdom of God.

And in that sense, we believe nothing but the blood of Jesus. And the spirit only revealed that to us.

And we believe. Not to throw away our mind, but when we believe, we utilize our minds to serve God.

Because Jesus said, love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. Let's pray.

[38 : 39] Father, I just want to thank you for your word. And thank you for the conviction, Lord. Indeed, as Billy Graham has proclaimed, nothing but the blood of Jesus.

and as Paul has said, yeah, I resolve to know nothing while I accept Jesus and him crucified.

Lord, this is what we believe, Lord. Hallelujah. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.