

1 Corinthians 2

What is the relationship between faith and reason? We know that God expects us to believe – to have faith – but does that mean as Christians we become a bunch of mindless airheads? Paul was obviously pretty smart; think back on the book of Romans. But can it be possible that only the smartest people can become truly godly? That can't be right. Can we ever balance the heart and the mind?

- I. We lead others to faith in Christ not by human wisdom, but by the power of God. 2:1-5
- II. The wisdom we need is the wisdom of God, which is imparted by God's Spirit. 2:6-15

Regardless of our intellect, our lives are changed by the supernatural power and wisdom of God.

- I. We lead others to faith in Christ not by human wisdom, but by the power of God. 2:1-5
 - A. 2:1-2 Paul was not short on intellect, nor was he making excuses for poor study habits. He simply knew that the power he needed to make his preaching effective was not to be found in his ability to argue a case or to give a good speech. That supernatural power is in the message of *Jesus Christ and Him crucified*.

Rom 1:16 NKJV *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*

- B. 2:3-5 Here Paul emphasizes his humility. The people in Corinth were arrogant, affluent and decadent. They may not have appreciated a man like Paul, but he wasn't about to play by their rules. He understood that the power of the gospel is in the story, not the storyteller. He wanted them to be impressed with the message, not the messenger.
 - We don't need to be great speakers or scholars to share the gospel effectively. What we need is faith in God who empowers the gospel as we proclaim it.
- What we learn from this passage:
 - The proper state of mind in which to preach the gospel is the opposite of self-confidence. The gospel should be preached with a sanctified sense of weakness or inadequacy, so that our confidence will be completely in God.
 - The success of the gospel does not depend on the skill of the preacher, but on the work of the Holy Spirit who impacts hearts.
 - The foundation of saving faith is not reason, but the power of God that impresses truth upon the heart. (See Hodge, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*)

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II. The wisdom we need is the wisdom of God, which is imparted by God's Spirit. 2:6-15

- A. 2:6 Paul is not denying our need for wisdom. He is only pointing out that human wisdom has no eternal benefit.
- B. 2:7-8 **God's plan is eternal – and has eternal benefit.** God's "secret wisdom . . . that has been hidden" was his offer of salvation to all people. Originally unknown to humanity, this plan became clear only when Jesus rose from the dead. His resurrection proved that he had power over sin and death and could offer us this power as well. God's plan is still hidden to unbelievers because they refuse to accept it, choose to ignore it, or simply haven't heard about it. (See *The Handbook of Bible Application*)
- C. 2:9-10 We may sometimes hear v.9 used to emphasize that we can't imagine how wonderful heaven is going to be.
 - i. First of all it is true that we can't imagine how wonderful heaven is going to be, but that's not the main thing this verse is saying.
 - ii. What it is focusing on is that there is no way we would ever have understood God's plan of salvation if the Spirit of God had not made it plain to us. This is perhaps easiest to see by going back on verse to v.8.
 - iii. The "deep things of God" (v.10) refers to God's unfathomable nature and his wonderful plan—Jesus' resurrection—and to the promise of salvation, which is revealed only to those who believe that what God says is true. Those who believe in the resurrection and put their faith in Christ will know all they need to know to be saved. This knowledge, however, can't be grasped by even the wisest people unless they willingly accept God's message. (See *The Handbook of Bible Application*)
 - iv. Additionally, we may add that **we can't imagine all that God has in store for us, both in this life and for eternity.** He will create a new heaven and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:1), and we will live with him forever. Until then, his Holy Spirit comforts and guides us. Knowing the wonderful and eternal future that awaits us gives us hope and courage to press on in this life, to endure hardship, and to avoid giving in to temptation. This world is not all there is. There are many wonderful surprising things ahead in our future. "The best is yet to come", is a wishy-washy understatement.
- D. 2:11-12 **that we might know** God's Spirit reveals God's heart to us. No one but you and God really know what's going on inside of you. Only God knows what God is thinking or feeling. Therefore we need God's Spirit to reveal God to us. Further:

John 14:25-26 NKJV ²⁵“*These things I have spoken to you while being present with you.*” ²⁶“*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*”

- i. The Holy Spirit ensured the validity of the New Testament. The disciples were eyewitnesses of Jesus’ life and teachings, and the Holy Spirit helped them remember without taking away their individual perspectives. We can be confident that the Gospels are accurate records of what Jesus taught and did.
- ii. The Holy Spirit can help us in the same way. As we study the Bible, we can trust him to plant truth in our mind, convince us of God’s will, and remind us when we stray from it. (See *The Handbook of Bible Application*)

E. **2:14 the natural (soulish *psuchikos*) man (human, *anthropos*)** The non-Christian has at best only the aid of human intellect and emotions, which often run counter to the Spirit of God.
they are foolishness to him—The communication of God’s Spirit is like a foreign language to the natural man. Since the non-Christian thinks he or she is seeking wisdom, and God’s plan sounds foolish. The natural response is to blow it off.
nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned The natural man simply lacks the necessary equipment for receiving the message.

- Consider the change to Digital TV. Analog units can’t get the new channels.
- Consider sitting in a coffee shop with your computer, but having no wireless card with which to access the WIFI. People around you are communicating with friends worldwide, catching up on the news, paying bills, shopping on Amazon, trading stocks, watching nonsense on YouTube. You don’t have the capability.
- Alas, such is the plight of **the *psuchikos anthropos* natural human being.**

F. **2:15 he that is spiritual** “the *pneumatikos* spiritual man,” the man in whom the Spirit of God now rules.
Judges all things, yet ... is rightly judged by no one “Discern” or “appraise” would be more accurate than “judge” (the same Greek word is “discerned” in 2:14). The spiritual man, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, has practical insight into the realities of the spiritual realm and Christian life. But those who do not have the Spirit are not qualified to discern the internal workings of the Spirit in the Christian’s life. (See *New Commentary on the Whole Bible*)

G. **2:16 Christians should have the “mind of Christ.”** As the Holy Spirit gives us insight into God’s plans, thoughts, and actions, the mind of Christ grows gradually within us. As we spend time consistently in his presence and in his Word, we will begin thinking more like Jesus.

Conclusions:

Faith and Reason: Three approaches in the history of the church – avoiding extremes

1. **Fideism** Christian belief is totally contrary to reason.

“I believe because it is absurd” – Tertullian

- a. Honestly, that statement is so absurd I don't think Tertullian himself even believed it.
 - b. He actually said a lot of sensible things, so we can let him slide on that one.
2. **Understanding precedes faith** This view holds that reason is necessary in order to truly believe anything important.
 - a. John Locke and others involved in the Enlightenment took this view. These guys were all really smart. Maybe this was OK for them.
 - b. This can be a trap. There are certain biblical beliefs that are hard for most people to understand even when we accept them by faith: the resurrection, the Trinity, salvation through the cross of Jesus Christ. We can rightly spend a lifetime trying to wrap our heads around this stuff. If we had to understand it, we might never come to saving faith in Christ – and never grow if we did.
 3. **Faith seeking understanding** Augustine, Anselm This says that all human reasoning begins with faith of some sort. We will then learn so that we can understand, express or defend our Christian beliefs.

“Help us, O Lord, to understand that you are as we believe.” – Anselm

- a. Somewhat Related View: **Presuppositionalism** Van Til, Dooyeweerd What goes on in the name of reason is always based upon prior faith commitments.
 - i. An atheist, a Hindu, a Muslim and a Christian can all look at the same evidence and “reason” their way to entirely different conclusions. To say that it is all about logic is to influence and impact of our very real beliefs.
- b. Our understanding and our faith both always need to grow, but mere human wisdom is not the answer.
 - i. We need the power of God to work within us. That power only begins to work when God confronts us with the truth.
 - ii. We need God's wisdom in order to grow in our faith. He imparts that wisdom to us – after we believe. Think digital TV. Think wireless card in the computer.
 - iii. We need the mind of Christ – but that is the result of the Holy Spirit's work within our head after He takes up residence in our heart.