



## Sermon Transcript

### October 3, 2021

## An Appeal for U.N.I.T.Y.

### “I” - Impart the Mindset of Christ

#### 1 Corinthians 2:6 - 3:4

This message from the Bible was addressed originally to the people of Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on October 3, 2021 at 511 Maple Street, Wethersfield, CT, 06109 by Dr. Scott W. Solberg. This is a transcription that bears the strength and weaknesses of oral delivery. It is not meant to be a polished essay. An audio and video version of this sermon may also be found on the church website at [www.wethefc.com](http://www.wethefc.com)

## Sermon Text

### 1 Corinthians 2:6-3:4

**6** 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. **7** But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. **8** None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. **9** But, as 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—

**10** these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. **11** 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. **12** 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. **13** And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

**14** The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. **15** The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. **16** For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

**3:1** But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. **2** I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, **3** for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? **4** For when one says, I follow Paul, and another, I follow Apollos, are you not being merely human?

## Introduction

Paul begins our passage this morning with this opening phrase in verse 6, “*Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom.*” It begs the question, “who are the *mature*?” Who are the spiritual “grown-ups” in the room? What does it even mean to be “spiritually mature?” The irony in all of this is that Paul is writing to a church that thinks they are spiritually mature, but they are not acting like spiritual “grown-ups.” In fact he says to them in 1 Corinthians 3:1, “*But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people [mature spiritual grown-ups], but as people of the flesh, as infants [babies] in Christ.*”

It seems to me that when we think of someone who is *among the mature* we tend to think of someone who is a “cut above” the rest of us. Perhaps we think of someone who knows a lot, or someone who is very active at the church, or someone who has a rather regimented discipline to living out their faith. Often times, the thought of becoming spiritually mature seems inaccessible to the average Christian. Perhaps we try hard, but we feel like we never fully get there. Dane Ortland has a great way of describing it. In our quest for maturity, we often feel like “we are constantly running up a descending escalator.”<sup>1</sup> Do you ever feel like that?

This past week, Dave Zimmer, who has been a missionary to Myanmar, was sharing with a group of us some of the tenets of Buddhism. He indicated that in Buddhism, the more devout you become the more rules you need to keep. As you “move up the escalator” of Buddhism, the five basic “precepts” of Buddhism turn to eight precepts and then to ten. And if you aspire to become a monk—nothing could be more “spiritual” than that—you begin with 75 “rules” which in time become 227 “precepts” to follow. And so for the fully formed and mature Buddhist monk, there are rules that govern how they eat their rice and when they can gather around a fire for warmth—all of this is demonstrating how “mature” they are in their faith.

In sharing this example, it became apparent to us that we are prone to add all kinds of things to our understanding to what it means to be *among the mature*. That was the problem in the church at Corinth. They wanted more than what Paul was offering. In fact, they are the ones who thought Paul was just serving up “milk” when they wanted “the solid food” of wisdom. They were wanting to move on from Paul to something higher than what Paul was teaching. We saw last week that they wanted to move on from the cross to more lofty things. And yet, the irony of it all was that “they were pursuing ‘wisdom,’ yet missing the very wisdom of God.”<sup>2</sup> We heard Paul say last week that we never leave the cross because Christ is *the wisdom of God*.

And so as Paul comes to the end of his argument in 1 Corinthians 2, he sums up what it means to be *among the mature*. It is to *have the mind of Christ*. He says in verse 16, “*But we have the mind of Christ.*” Another way to say it is that “*we have the mindset of Christ.*” In other words, we don’t just have thoughts or beliefs about Christ, but we have a way of life that is shaped by Christ. Last week we described this way of life as a life that is lived under the shadow of the cross.

Perhaps, the most profound thing that Paul does in this passage for us is to demonstrate that to be *among the mature* is not something inaccessible to the average follower of Christ. It is not a list of rules or a call to try harder to work your way up the “spiritual” escalator. As so this morning, I want to unpack what Paul means when he talks about having the *mindset of Christ*.

In order to help us see what Paul is saying, I want to show you something about how this passage is put together. It will help us follow what Paul means when he talks about having the *mind of Christ*. He begins in verse 6 by saying, “*Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom.*” I want to zero in on the word *impart*. The word used here, literally means *to speak*. In fact, that is how most English translations (KJV, NAS, NIV) translate this verse . . . “*Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom.*” This same word comes up again in verse 13, “*And we impart [speak] this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit.*” And it is the same word you find in 1 Corinthians 3:1, but in the ESV it is translated as *address*. “*But I brothers, could not address [speak to] you as spiritual people.*” These three verses are the handles we grab to help us make our way through what it means to have the mindset of Christ. Paul is saying to them, “I speak wisdom from God to you . . . And this wisdom I speak is taught to you by the Holy Spirit . . . But because of the way you are acting, I can’t speak to you as spiritual people.” All of this clues us into what it means to have *the mindset of Christ*.

Now the word *impart* is a good word to use here. It means “to make information known.” Besides, I need a word that begins with “I” for the sake of our acronym that helps us understand how to live in U.N.I.T.Y. with each other. The letter “I” stands for “Impart the Mindset of Christ.” As we grab onto these three handles in this passage, we are going to discover what it means to live with the mindset of Christ. The first handle will tell us “**what we mean**” by the mindset of Christ. The second handle we grab will tell us “**where it comes from.**” The third handle will tell us “**what it looks like**” when we have the mindset of Christ. You should be able to anticipate by now that the *mindset of Christ* is seen in our U.N.I.T.Y.

## Impart the Mindset of Christ: What do we mean?

So what is the *mindset of Christ*? What is true about the “mind” that is “set” on Christ? That is the issue Paul is addressing at the beginning of our passage this morning. As he begins to address this issue, it seems like he is using “biting” words to redirect the mindset of the Corinthian church. Words like “mature” or “wisdom” or “spiritual” were words the Corinthians would use to describe themselves. But Paul is redirecting their thinking by first telling them what true “wisdom” looks like. He starts in verse 6 by saying, “*Yet among the mature we do impart [we speak] wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away.*”

Paul begins by saying that the *wisdom of God* is “*a secret and hidden wisdom.*” He says that the wisdom he “speaks” or the wisdom he “imparts” to them is “*a secret and hidden wisdom of God.*” I think this would get the attention of the Corinthians who seem to be enamored with “secret” things and they are in constant pursuit of lofty notions of wisdom. But when Paul is talking about “*a secret and hidden wisdom of God*” he is not talking about something that is inaccessible or something that requires an extra keen mind to discern. What Paul is talking about here is something that was hidden in God but has now been clearly revealed and made known. This is an important distinction that Paul makes about the wisdom of God. It is not something we come to know by our own ability to reason. The wisdom of God is something that we know because God in his grace has revealed it to us.

Back in Daniel 2, King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and he knew that the dream meant something important and so he called his wisemen to interpret the dream for him. If you recall, he didn’t tell them what he saw in his dream. To ensure that they understood what the dream meant, he gave them the impossible task of first telling the king what he dreamt and then they could tell him what it meant. Long story short, Daniel inquires of God and it says that “*the mystery was revealed to Daniel.*” In response, Daniel gives praise to God who *gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.* The wisdom of God is revealed, it is given by God. Daniel goes on to sing, “*God reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.*” Deuteronomy 29:29 puts it this way. “*The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and our children forever.*” This is why every Sunday we say, “open your Bibles” to whatever passage we are looking at. God’s wisdom is accessible because it has been revealed to us.

What was it that was hidden in the past and has now been made known? It is Jesus!

Paul said that if the *rulers of this age* would have understood the wisdom of God, they *would not have crucified the Lord of glory*. So Paul is saying here that the wisdom of God is God's plan of salvation through the cross of Christ. It is what we saw last week. God's wisdom is presented to us in *the word of the cross*. This is why Paul said that "*we preach Christ crucified . . . Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God*." So if you are looking to encounter the wisdom of God, you don't have to go any further than the cross of Christ. It is at the cross where salvation is obtained and God shares his glory with his people. The wisdom of God is a person—Jesus. The wisdom of God is found in the Son of God dying on the cross for our sin.

Perhaps you are tempted to think that the cross and the plan of salvation is basic Christianity—the milk of the faith, if you will. Shouldn't we be moving on to some solid food? I think that is the misunderstanding we have when it comes to the milk and solid food of our faith. I read this week in the devotional called *Tabletalk* that "the difference between spiritual milk and spiritual solid food is one of degree, not kind." As John Calvin said, "We do not grow beyond the gospel, but we go deeper into it."<sup>3</sup> The accessible wisdom of God is Christ crucified. It is something simple enough for a child to hear and receive (milk) and yet it is something you can never fully plumb the depths of (meat).

This mystery of God made known in Jesus is what informs our unity. In Ephesians 3, Paul describes this *mystery—the secret and hidden wisdom of God* as the very thing that makes the Jew and Gentile one. In fact, Paul says that it is *through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known*. This is why Paul was so concerned about their division. In their quest for higher wisdom, it led to their pride and to their division—their lack of unity. But the true wisdom of God—Christ crucified—is the very thing that makes us one and reveals to the world the wisdom of God. This is the very *mindset of Christ*. "It is God's profound wisdom regarding salvation through a crucified Messiah, which was hidden but now revealed."<sup>4</sup> Who is the one who has the mind of Christ? Who is the one who is mature? It is the one who keeps pressing in on the cross. It is a maturity that is accessible to the most simple of us.

### **Impart the Mindset of Christ: Where does it come from?**

How is the *mindset of Christ* imparted to us? That too is a work of God's grace. It is through the work of the Holy Spirit that we come to embrace the wisdom of God: Christ crucified for our sin. Paul says of this in verse 10, *these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit*. At the end of verse 12 he says that because of the Holy Spirit *we*

*might understand the things freely given us by God.* And then he says, “*And we impart this [we speak] in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit.*”

Jesus speaks to this in John 3 when he is speaking to Nicodemus about what it means to be born again. He said, “*The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.*” It is the work of the Spirit that works in our hearts to receive the wisdom of God: Christ crucified for our sin. To some it is folly—nothing but foolish talk. For others, the cross is a stumbling block, “why would I need someone to atone for my sin.” But for us who are being saved, “*it is the power of God.*” It is the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit that regenerates our hearts and brings us alive to God. I have seen it happen right before my eyes. Someone comes into our worship service not really knowing Christ, and in time, you can see in the expression of their face that their hearts are being strangely warmed to the truth of Christ, the wisdom of God.

This truth says two things to the Corinthians that help us understand the mindset of Christ. First of all, the pride they feel in pursuing lofty thoughts is eliminated when it comes to the true wisdom of God. Why? Because the wisdom of God is not something that can be discerned by the natural man. It is a work of the Spirit and so it produces within us a certain humility that humbly recognizes that it is only by the grace of God that I embrace the wisdom of God: Christ crucified for our sin. That is what Paul is getting at with that rhetorical question at the end of chapter 2, “*For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?*” The answer to such a question is “no one!” And yet, in the next breath, he asserts with confidence, “*But we have the mind of Christ!*” How can that be? It is the gracious work of the Holy Spirit.

But the second thing that Paul clarifies about the mind of Christ with this truth is what gets to the heart of what it means “to be spiritual.” We have taken that phrase and applied it to the “super-saint,” the one who is a cut-above the rest. Some are “more spiritual” than others. But the corrective Paul brings here is that those who have the mind of Christ are those who have the Spirit. There is no way you come to see the wisdom of Christ—Christ crucified, without the Spirit. By virtue of having the Spirit, you are “spiritual.” And he treats them as such. He distinguishes them from the natural man. He acknowledged in his opening greeting that they were *sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together . . . for they, called upon the name of Lord Jesus Christ.* Gordon Fee says that what Paul is trying to do here is to “get the Corinthians to understand who they are—in terms of the cross—and to stop acting like non-Spirit people.” We are spiritual because we have the Spirit. This is the very *mindset of Christ.*

“It is God’s profound wisdom regarding salvation through a crucified Messiah, which was hidden but now revealed by the Holy Spirit.”

Do you hear what I am saying this morning? To have the mindset of Christ—to be “spiritual” is not a call to strive harder, it is not a call to work against the flow of a descending escalator . . . It is not about achieving “super-saint” status, a status that is rather elusive to all of us, if we are honest. It is something more accessible than you may realize. Those who are spiritual—who have the mindset of Christ—are those who go over and over to the cross. It is the person who does what we just did when we took communion. We confessed our faith in Christ and our belief that in his body and in his blood he has redeemed us from our sin. They press in deeper to the cross. That is evidence of the work of the Spirit because it leads to our humility—the essence of our unity. So with the power of the Spirit, Paul imparts to us the mindset of Christ.

### **Impart the Mindset of Christ: What does it look like?**

The final thing I want you to see is this. When you have the *mindset of Jesus* it shows up in our love for one another—our unity. A “mindset” is not just the thoughts that are inside my head. But that they are thoughts that shape how I live. And so Paul says at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 3 that he “*could not address* [speak] to them *as spiritual people*.” Instead, he said that they were acting as those who were without the Spirit. They were acting like they were of the flesh—like the natural man without the Spirit. How so? It was their “*jealousy and strife among you*” that was evidence that they were not living according to the *mindset of Christ*.

Paul said in Ephesian 3 that the church is the display—to the seen and unseen world—of the wisdom of God. How does the church reflect the wisdom of God? It is through our unity. This is why our unity is so important. This is why Paul spends four chapters talking about it. There are a lot of problems in this church for Paul to address, but this is of first concern. This is what is front and center. Why? Because the church is the presence of God in the world and we give testimony to what God is like through our unity. But you know, like I know, that there are so many things that can fracture that unity. These fractures come in many shapes and many sizes. If we don’t have the mindset of Christ . . . if we fail to keep coming to the cross . . . if we forget to press in deeper to the cross . . . if we squirm out from under the shadow of the cross we will be consumed by our pride and we will be divided. It is the mindset of Christ that keeps us.

The Bible Project video on 1 Corinthians identifies five major problems that Paul



addresses with the church at Corinth. I mentioned them at the beginning of this series: Division . . . Sex . . . How to get along when you disagree in your convictions . . . Differing opinions about worship . . . Doctrine: namely the resurrection. In the video, they say that Paul defines each of these five problems (like we are doing right now with the problem of division in the church) and then he responds to each problem. Do you know how he responds to each problem? He responds with the gospel: the mindset of Christ: Christ crucified for our sin.

I remember in his book *What's So Amazing About Grace* Philip Yancey describing the privilege it was for him to serve communion at his church. They come forward to receive the bread and the cup. (I love when we serve communion like that.) There is something powerful about looking a person in the eye and reminding them of what Christ has done for them on the cross. As Yancey described his experience of serving communion that way, he recounted the stories of the people he was serving. He knew their ups and downs, their joy and challenges, their disappointments and failures. But as the stories varied, the need was the same. Everyone comes to the table on level ground. No one has a leg up on anyone else. It is the mindset of Christ—Christ crucified for our sins—that unites us together and empowers us to love one another. It produces a systemic humility that marks us as people of the Spirit.

## Conclusion

Are you marked with the mindset of Christ? Are you *among the mature*? It may not be as elusive as you might think it to be. The mindset of Christ is first and foremost, “Christ crucified for our sin.” This is the pure milk and the solid food of our faith. Embracing this message is evidence that we are people of the Spirit—spiritual people. If that is what we are, then let this mindset so permeate our lives as a church that we be marked with the humility of Jesus. May Paul be able to speak to us—address us as “spiritual people” because our U.N.I.T.Y. is marked with the “I” of unity. We have “Imparted” within us the mindset of Christ. May it be so. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup>Dane Ortland *Gentle and Lowly* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020) 13

<sup>2</sup>Gordon Fee *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014) 105

<sup>3</sup>*Tabletalk* (Ligonier, January 2021) p. 61

<sup>4</sup>Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner “1 Corinthians” in *Commentary of the New Testament use of the Old Testament* ed. G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007) 702

<sup>5</sup>Fee, 107



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## COMMUNITY GROUPS



### Getting To Know Me Questions

1. How does God view you? What worship song or hymn conveys God’s love to you?
2. What burdens are weighing your life down right now? What brings your heart joy?



### Diving Into The Word

3. Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-9. What is the “secret and hidden wisdom of God?” (see v. 8 and Ephesians 3:5-6). What do you learn about God through the wisdom of the cross?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 2:10-16. According to this passage, how do we receive the revelation of Godly wisdom?

Can you recall when the Holy Spirit first “warmed your heart” to the gospel? What do you remember about that?

6. Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-4. Why couldn’t Paul speak to these people as those who were spiritual? What does that tell you about what it looks like to be spiritual?

What do you find to be the most difficult challenge to maintaining unity in the church? How does the “mindset of Christ” - Christ crucified – help you live in unity with the body of Christ?



### Taking It Home

7. What can you do to keep the “mindset of Christ: Christ crucified” in front of you.
8. As a group pray for the unity of the church.