

I Corinthians

Chapter 2:14 -3:23

¹⁴ But a **natural** person does not **accept** the things of the Spirit of God, for they are **foolishness** to him; and he **cannot understand** them, because they are **spiritually discerned**.

Natural > (Strong's) From *psuche* > *breath, the soul*; **sensitive**, i.e. **animate** (in distinction on the one hand from *pneumatikos* > *spiritual*, which is the higher or renovated nature; and on the other from *phusikos* > *natural, according to nature*, which is the lower or bestial nature) -- **natural, sensual**. (The word for *natural* is translated as such 4x > here and I Corinthians 15: 44 and 46; and then 2x as *sensual* > James 3:15, and Jude 1:19)

Precept Austin > *Natural* > (*psuchikos* from *psuche* = soul) is literally "soulish" with affinity to natural sinful propensities, the person in whom the *sarx*, the flesh, is more the ruling principle. *Psuche* is the nonphysical element which makes one alive, conscious of the environment, and is to be distinguished from *pneuma* or spirit, which is a distinctive of man as the element of communication with God.

Accept > (Strong's) to receive

Foolishness > (Strong's) *moria* ... from *moros* > *dull, stupid, foolish*

Cannot > (Strong's) to be able or possible

Accept > (Precept Austin) *dechomai* > means to accept with a deliberate and ready reception that which is offered, receiving it kindly. For example, *dechomai* conveys the idea of welcoming one as a teacher, a friend, or a guest into one's house. *Dechomai* pictures the accepting of something or someone with an open arm, mind, and heart, even going beyond normally expected gracious hospitality (e.g., Acts 21:17). The term was often used of welcoming honored guests and meeting their needs with special attention and kindness.

Understand > (Strong's) *ginosko* > to "know" (absolutely)

Vance Havner > You might as well try to describe a sunset to a blind man, play music for a deaf man, talk to a dead man, as to discuss the deep things of God with an unconverted sinner. "... the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ...

Discerned > (Strong's) *anahrino* > from *ana* > *a preposition denotes upwards*; and *krino* > *to distinguish, i.e. decide* ... therefore > to scrutinize, i.e. (by implication) investigate, interrogate, determine

Robertson > The word means a sifting process to get at the truth by investigation as of a judge. These *psuchikoi* men are incapable of rendering a decision for they are unable to recognize the facts. They judge by the *psuchē* (mere animal nature) rather than by the *pneuma* (the renewed spirit).

¹⁵ **But the one who is *spiritual discerns* all things, *yet he himself is discerned by no one.***

Spiritual > (Strong's) *pneumatikos* > *spiritual*

Discerns ... discerned (same word as we saw in verse 14) > (Strong's) *anakrino* > from *ana* > a preposition denotes upwards; and *krino* > to distinguish, i.e. decide ... therefore > to scrutinize, i.e. (by implication) investigate, interrogate, determine

Constable (referencing **Ryrie**) > One of the things the spiritual person is able to do is appraise or make judgments (Gr. *anakrino*) regarding all things. In other words, the spiritual person has discernment. This affects his values and decisions. For this very reason he is a puzzle to the natural man. The profane person cannot understand holiness, but the holy person can understand the depths of evil. Even carnal fellow believers cannot fully understand the spiritually mature person. That is all right, in one sense, because the spiritual person's judge is ultimately God, not other people.

Yet he himself is discerned by no one > (Robertson) > Men will pass judgment on him, but the spiritual man refuses to accept the decision of his ignorant judges. He stands superior to them all as Polycarp did when he preferred to be burnt to saying, "Lord Caesar" in place of "Lord Jesus."

¹⁶ **For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ**

For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? > (Barnes) This passage is quoted from **Isaiah 40:13** (Septuagint) > *Who has known the mind of the Lord? and who has been his counsellor, to instruct him?*

But we have the mind of Christ > (Barnes) But the Christian is influenced by God. He has his Spirit. He has the mind of Christ; who had the mind of God.

Wuest Expanded Translation > **1Co 2:14-16** > *But the unregenerate man of the highest intellectual attainments does not grant access to the things of the Spirit of God, for to him they are folly, and he is not able to come to know them because they are investigated in a spiritual realm.*

But the spiritual man investigates indeed all things, but he himself is not being probed by anyone. For who has come to know experientially the Lord's mind, he who will instruct Him? But as for us, Christ's mind we have.

¹ *And I, **brothers and sisters, could not** speak to you as **spiritual** people, but only as **fleshly**, as to **infants in Christ**.*

Brothers and sisters > This would indicate these individuals are Christians

Constable > (The Greek grammar) indicates that he was addressing the whole church, not just a faction within it (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10). The actions of many in the congregation had defiled the whole body.

Could not > (Strong's) not able to

Spiritual ... Fleshly > The comparison is made between "spiritual" (*pneumatikos* ... Strong's > *pneuma* > non-carnal, a spirit) and "fleshly" (*sarkinos* ... Strong's > *sarx* > similar to flesh).

Utley > The ending *ikos* means "characterized by" (in this case > the Spirit). The *inos* ending means "made of" or "derived from" (e.g., "hearts of flesh,") so this would mean "made of flesh."

(**Utley** > In some early Greek manuscripts (i.e., P⁴⁶, D, and the Syriac translations) there is an additional descriptive term, "divisions," which is also found in Gal. 5:20.)

Fleshly ... infants in Christ > (Robertson) as men of flesh > It is not wrong to be (The Greek word) for we all live in the flesh, but we are not to live according to the flesh (Romans 8:12). It is not culpable to a babe in Christ, unless unduly prolonged (1 Corinthians 14:20; Hebrews 5:13.).

Constable > Immaturity is not blameworthy if one is very young. However, if a person has been a Christian for some time and is still immature, his or her condition is blameworthy

Barnes > But as unto carnal (KJV) - The word "carnal" here (*sarkinois* ... *fleshly*) is not the same which in 1 Corinthians 2:14, is translated "natural" (*psuchikos* ... *soulish*).

Wuest Expanded Version > *As for myself, I also, brethren, was not able to speak to you as I would to those dominated by the Holy Spirit, but as I would to those dominated by the evil nature, as I would to those in Christ who are still immature spiritually.*

²*I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to consume it. But even now you are not yet able, ³for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like ordinary people?*

For since there is jealousy and ... > If this ... then this

Macarthur > Because self-centeredness is at the heart of fleshly behavior, jealousy and strife are always found in an immature congregation. Jealousy is the attitude, and strife is the action that results from it. One is the inner emotional condition, the other the outward expression of selfishness.

Walking like ordinary people > (Strong's)

Walking > *peripateo* > *peri* > *about, around*; and *pateo* > *to tread or tread on*

Like > *kata* > *down* (but used in the sense of *controlling, controlled by*)

Ordinary people (mere men) > *anthropos* > *a man, human, mankind*

(**Utley** > The grammatical form of this question expects a "yes" answer.

(**Constable** > Various students of this section of the epistle have understood Paul as describing several different kinds of people.

- Some believe he saw only a difference between unbelievers (natural) and believers (spiritual).
- Others have seen three kinds of people in view: unbelievers, spiritual believers, and carnal believers.
- Still others have seen four: unbelievers (*psychikos*), mature believers (*pneumatikos*), immature believers (*sarkinos*), and carnal believers (*sarkikos*).

⁴For when one person says, "I am with Paul," and another, "I am with Apollos," are you not ordinary people?

Constable > Partisanship is a manifestation of human wisdom. All the philosophical schools in Greece had their chief teachers. There was keen competition among these teachers, and there were strong preferences among the students as to who was the best. However this attitude is totally inappropriate when it comes to evaluating the servants of Christ. It is completely contrary to the mind of Christ who Himself stooped to raise others.

⁵What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.

What then > (Robertson) (Referring to the Greek words being used) He does not say "who", but, rather, "what".

So then neither ... nor > (Robertson) Paul applies his logic relentlessly to the facts. He had asked “what” is Apollos or Paul? The answer is here > *Neither is anything ... the one who plants nor the one who waters*. God is the whole and we are not anything.

Servants > (Strong’s) an attendant, i.e. (genitive case) a waiter (at table or in other menial duties); specially, a Christian teacher and pastor (technically, a deacon or deaconess)

Barnes > The original word denotes properly "servants" ... and denotes those of course who are in an inferior rank of life. They did not have command, or authority, but were subject to the command of others. It is applied to the preachers of the gospel because they are employed in the service of God; because they go at his command and are subject to his control and direction. They did not have original authority, nor are they the source of influence or power. The idea here is, that they were the mere instruments or servants by whom God conveyed all blessings to the Corinthians; that they as ministers were on a level, were engaged in the same work, and that therefore, it was improper for them to form parties that should be called by their names.

Wuest Expanded Version > *What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? We are ministering servants through whose intermediate agency you believed, servants in each case in the manner as the Lord gave to each of us.*

6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. 7 So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

Vincent > *Planted - watered - gave the increase*. The first two verbs are in the aorist* tense, marking definite acts; the third is in the imperfect*, marking the continued gracious agency of God, and possibly the simultaneousness of His work with that of the two preachers.

(**Aorist* > The aorist tense is the Greek grammarian’s term for a simple past tense. Unlike the other past tenses (imperfect and perfect), the aorist simply states the fact that an action has happened. It gives no information on how long it took, or whether the results are still in effect.)

(**Imperfect* > The meaning of the imperfect tense is straightforward > Past time – Imperfect always describes something that happens in the past. Continued action – Imperfect always describes something that is continued, repeated or habitual.)

Wuest Expanded Version > *As for myself, I planted, Apollos watered, but God has been causing that which was sown to grow. So that he who plants is not anything, nor he who waters, but God who causes things to grow.*

8 Now the one who plants and the one who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. 9 For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.

Now the one who plants and the one who waters are one > (Robertson) If no one planted, the watering would be useless. If no one watered, the planting would come to naught.

Own > (Strong's) one's own; by implication, private or separate

For we are God's fellow workers > This refers to Paul and Apollos. This is the Near Eastern metaphor of a family working together in the field (cf. II Cor. 6:1). This verse has three (Greek grammar showing "ownership" or "possession"): Paul and Apollos belong to God the Father, as does the church in Corinth.

Wuest Expanded Version > *Now, the one who plants and the one who waters are one. But each one of us will receive his specific pay appropriate to his specific work, for we are God's fellow workers. You are God's land under cultivation, God's edifice.*

¹⁰ *According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise **master builder I laid a foundation**, and another is building on it. But each person must be careful how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, **which is Jesus Christ**.*

Master builder > (Strong's) *architekton* (from *arche* > a commencement, or (concretely) chief; and *tekton* > a craftsman in wood -- carpenter.)

I laid a foundation ... which is Jesus Christ > And Paul's foundation was ...? > ² *For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*

Wuest Expanded Version > *According to the grace of God which was given to me, I as a skillful master builder laid a foundation, but another builds upon it. But let each one be taking heed how he builds; upon it, for an alternative foundation no one is able to lay alongside of the one which is being laid, which foundation is a person, Jesus Christ.*

¹² *Now **if anyone** builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, ¹³ each one's work will become evident; for **the day** will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each one's work.*

If anyone > (Utley) This is the first in a series of (Greek grammar) sentences which are assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purpose (cf. vv. 12,14,15,17,18). There were (and are) fruitful and precious leaders ... and hurtful and destructive leaders!

(As we see these (**if anyone**) in the following verses we need to remember that in every case the translation can be read as > "If this is true ... and it is")

Wiersbe > "The usual explanation of this passage is that it describes the building of the Christian life. We all build on Christ, but some people use good materials while others use poor materials. The kind of material you use determines the kind of reward you will get. "While this may be a valid *application* of this passage, it is not the basic *interpretation*. Paul is discussing the building of the local church, the temple of God."

The day > (Constable) This is a reference to the day when the believer will stand before God and give an account of the stewardship of his or her life at Christ's judgment seat. (cf. Luke 19:11-27; 1 Corinthians 1:8; **2 Corinthians 5:10**; Philippians 1:6; Philippians 1:10; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 1:18; **2 Timothy 4:8**; Revelation 22:12; et al.).

Romans 14:10-12 > ¹⁰*But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God. ¹²So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.*

2 Corinthians 5:10 > ¹⁰*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

2 Timothy 4:8 > ⁸*in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

¹⁴**If anyone's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.** ¹⁵**If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet only so as through fire.**

He will receive a reward > (Utley) This passage refers to rewards, not salvation. All of the people addressed are assumed to be believers! The NT concept of rewards must be distinguished from salvation by merit (cf. Rom. 6:23). In the OT rewards or blessings were connected to obedience (cf. Deut. 11:13-32,27-29; Psalm 1). In a sense, that is still true. However, salvation is a gift, not a reward. The life of faith and obedience is a result of salvation, not a means to salvation.

If anyone's work is burned up > (Utley) Oh, the tragedy of a fruitless, selfish, factious Christian life—a tragedy for the person, a tragedy for the church, and a tragedy for the unsaved!

¹⁶**Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?**

Do you not know > (Constable) The presence of the Spirit alone marked them off as God's sanctuary in Corinth. Ten times in this epistle Paul asked, "Do you not know?" (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:6; 1 Corinthians 6:2-3; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Corinthians 6:15-16; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 1 Corinthians 9:13; 1 Corinthians 9:24) and each time the question introduces an indisputable statement.

You are a temple of God > (Utley) There is no article with "temple". The pronoun "you" is plural, while "temple" is singular, therefore, in this context "temple" must refer to the whole church at Corinth.

Constable > The Corinthian church was a temple that God's Spirit indwelt. Paul was not speaking here of individual believers being temples of God, though we are (1 Cor 6:19), or of the church universal as the temple of God, though it is (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5). He meant the collective body of believers that made up the local church, as is clear from his use of the plural "you" in the Greek text and the singular "temple."

¹⁷ **If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.**

If anyone destroys the temple of God ... > (Constable) This is perhaps the strongest warning in the New Testament against taking the church lightly and destroying it with the world's wisdom and division.

Robertson > The church-wrecker God will wreck ... There is warning enough here to make every pastor pause before he tears a church to pieces in order to vindicate himself.

Wuest Expanded Translation > *If, as is the case, anyone morally corrupts the inner sanctuary of God, this person God will bring to the place of ruin, for the inner sanctuary of God is holy, of which holy character you are.*

¹⁸ **Take care that no one deceives himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise.**

Deceives > (Strong's) to seduce wholly -- beguile, deceive.

That no one deceives himself > (Utley) (THIS is why I love the Greek language!! It allows the writer to focus down on exactly what they want to say. Take a look!) This is a present imperative with the negative particle, which usually means to stop an act already in process

Robertson > A warning that implied that some of them were guilty of doing it (Supported by Greek grammar).

Wuest Expanded Translation > *Let no one continue to be deceiving himself.*

¹⁹ For *the wisdom of this world is foolishness in the sight of God. For it is written: "He is the one who catches the wise by their craftiness";* ²⁰ and again, *"The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are useless."*

The wisdom of this world is foolishness in the sight of God > Remember that the concept of "worldly wisdom" is tied to the world view of that wisdom.

He is the one who catches the wise by their craftiness > (Vincent) Cited from **Job 5:13**, but not following the Septuagint verbally. ¹³*"He captures the wise by their own shrewdness, and the advice of the cunning is quickly thwarted."*

The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are useless > **Psalm 94:11** (Septuagint) > *The Lord knows the thoughts of men, that they are vain.*

²¹ *So then, no one is to be boasting in people. For all things belong to you, ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come; all things belong to you,*

So then > (Constable) "So then" marks the apostle's conclusion. It is wrong to line up in cliques behind one or another of God's servants. In doing Song of Solomon, the Corinthians were only limiting God's blessing on them. They were rejecting God's good gifts by not appreciating all the people God had sent to help them.

For all things belong to you ...> I can't help but think of the Lord's promise to Abraham after Lot left > **Genesis 13:14-17** > ¹⁴*The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; ¹⁵for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. ¹⁶"I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. ¹⁷" Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you."*

²³ and *you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.*

You belong to Christ > (Utley) The "you" is emphatic and plural. This shows Christ's exalted position in the church (cf. 1:29-31). This also points toward their responsibility as believers.