**Growing in Grace, Growing in Community: Life Lessons on Maturity with the Corinthians**

***Christ Crucified: The Foundation of Spiritual Maturity --*** 1 Corinthians 2:6–--3:4

 The Corinthians were overcomplicating things, as we humans often do. But Paul directs them back to the simple message of the gospel. He is not suggesting that he had two teaching agendas, one for the mature, and another for baby Christians. He is saying that the message of the Cross IS his message, and contains the mysteries of God’s wisdom. But the immature, following the world’s wisdom, miss the point that God’s wisdom is not about overt power and politics, but serving in humility and weakness, which means God gets the glory, not people. Let’s see how Paul draws the Corinthians to see that in their show of worldly wisdom, they are acting like children. . .

❖ The mature believer, unlike the world, understands and values God’s wisdom as revealed in Christ crucified. 2:6, 7

❖ (Because) The mature believer, unlike the world, has received God’s Spirit, Who teaches us of God’s blessings to in Jesus. 2:8-13

❖ (And) The mature believer, unlike those who don’t have God’s Spirit, readily receives and applies what the Spirit communicates. 2:14-16

❖ But the immature believer, like the world, does not understand and apply God’s wisdom in Christ crucified, and so resorts to the world’s way of handling conflict and manipulating others. 3:1-4

**Growth Principle #3: The spiritually mature Christian values the Cross of Christ as the highest expression of**

 **God’s wisdom and revelation.**

The Corinthians, at least their leadership and majority, had not applied the implications of the Cross (and its example of humility, service, and selflessness) to their relationships. THAT is their immaturity, not a deficit of knowledge but a failure to apply it. Embracing weakness is counterintuitive. We learn that. . .

***1. There is no “higher” or “deeper” or “secret” wisdom.*** The Gospel is there for all to see, but only the mature grasp and value it. The Cross is both milk and meat, the beginning and end of God’s wisdom. The mature believer is not the one with more knowledge, but the one who lives what he knows. See Hebrews 5:11–-6:12. Think you have “outgrown” the simple message of the Cross?

***The Cross of Christ is foundational because it establishes God’s righteousness,***

***exposes our need, proves the seriousness of sin, demonstrates God’s grace,***

***is a pattern for our obedience, is the grounds for forgiving and being forgiven,***

***guarantees the death of death and the eternal freedom of the redeemed,***

***destroys the religion of works, and gives God all the glory for salvation.***

***2. Spirituality means having and walking in God’s Spirit.***All believers are spiritual because all believers have the Spirit. Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 2:12, 15. However, all believers are not always filled with the Spirit, or walking in the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:25). Paul uses the Corinthians’ terms against them, in order to set them on the right path. Are you walking in the Spirit?

***3. “Carnality” as a perpetual state of some Christians is NOT a teaching of Scripture.*** Paul says the Corinthians are acting “like men” and so, are carnal in the matter of disunity. He is not dealing with flagrant lifestyle sins, as in chapters five and six. See 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Romans 2:5-11; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5, 6, and Matthew 7:12-27. Have you been excusing a pet sin while all the while chalking it up to being “carnal”?

***Going Deeper--For Growth Groups:***

1. Why is the idea of “secret wisdom” so alluring? Many sects and even Christian cults have prospered by drawing believers away under the guise of possessing some new or hidden doctrines. What is it that some find so hard to resist? How do we find contentment in the Cross of Jesus?

2. How, exactly, does applying the Cross to our lives draw us deeper into godliness? What do we learn from Jesus’ example in becoming one of us to die for us? How do we apply this attitude? Philippians 2