

## 1 Corinthians 2:6-13

Dear Fellow People Who Truly Believe:

Would you believe it if I told you that someone rode his bicycle 35 miles in one hour? To put it into perspective: that's a 1-hour bike ride from here to Menasha, or from here to West Bend. That's moving! **Chris Boardman** of Great Britain did that in 1996 -- still a world record.

Would you believe it if I told you that someone once rolled 47 consecutive strikes while bowling? We know that a perfect 300 game is 12 strikes. Just think -- that's like almost four 300 games in row! The odds of rolling one 300 game are about 12,000 to 1. And this was 3! **Tommy Gollick** did that in 2010 in Harrisburg, PA.

Would you believe it if I told you that someone once let himself be nailed to a big beam of wood, was then put in a rock tomb, rose from the dead, and then was seen by over 500 people at one time -- and in doing so, made it so that people could live forever? A Man named Jesus from Nazareth, Galilee, did that about 2,000 years ago.

All these things sound incredible and inconceivable, don't they: a guy riding his bike 35 miles in an hour, a man rolling 47 strikes, a man dying to give the world immortality? But we can't lump all those things together! The first two are amazing athletic feats. The third is a miracle and mystery far beyond the laws of nature and the capability of human minds to grasp. However, by God's grace, you and I do ***Believe the Inconceivable***. The Holy Spirit enables us to (1) ***Believe what God has done for us today***, and (2) ***Believe what God has prepared for us tomorrow***.

### 1

By nature we humans are skeptics and doubters. "*Show me, I'm from Missouri*" likely applies to all of us one time or another. It's curious, isn't it, how we can hear a juicy rumor and automatically accept it is truth, no questions asked. But then if a sign on a park bench says, "*Wet paint*," we have to go and make a personal investigation and touch it? We are a strange and curious sort.

This was certainly true of the Pharisees and religious leaders in Jesus' day. You can tell them you have to keep 611 specific laws to get to heaven -- which is what their book called the Talmud did -- and they swallowed it hook, line, and sinker. But tell them that a loving Savior came to give them, free of charge, the gift of salvation, and they spit it out like a sour lemon.

The Jewish leaders had their own kind of wisdom. They figured that they, Abraham's descendants, already had a ticket to paradise based on their bloodline and supposed adherence to God's Law. It was inconceivable to them that they would need Jesus to save them from sin. "*Sin? What sin?*" And because they felt they were perfect and much smarter than God, John writes about them: "***[The Messiah] came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him***" (Jn. 1:11). They rejected him.

Paul tells us that they rejected Jesus as the Messiah because they were *missing something* in their hearts. He tells us what that something is: "***The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.***" What were they missing? The Spirit of God. The whole life and work of Jesus seemed like a cockamamie scheme to the Jewish leaders because there was no Holy Spirit in their hearts. Why? They had kicked him out. They had the OT Word of the prophets, but in their pride they put their human reason and incorrect opinions above God's Word.

The result? Paul tells us: "***None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory***" (1 Cor. 2:8). They couldn't stand to hear the truth about Jesus, so they attacked and crucified the One who is the Truth.

Why are you and I believers? It is by God's grace that the Holy Spirit has moved us to believe the unbelievable and inconceivable. And in doing so, the Spirit has ended our war with God. We no longer have to fight him or run and hide from him. Jesus has given us hearts at peace with the Lord.

What a difference that makes in our daily lives:

- While we sometimes feel like storm-tossed ships steering our way through raging seas, we know we can find a tranquil harbor in Jesus and his Word of life.
- In a helter-skelter, wacky world that is becoming more bewildering all the time, God puts the jigsaw puzzle pieces together for us so we can see the big picture of his blessings.
- In a world often motivated by anger, hatred, vengeance, and vitriol, we have in Jesus the strength we need to live another way, a better way -- finding fulfillment and joy in serving others unselfishly and in love.

All this we have, fellow Christians, because the Holy Spirit has done the inconceivable: he has turned our stone cold, rock-hard hearts into fertile soil by the gospel -- the simple yet incredible message of Christ's forgiving, life-giving love!

## 2

The author of the letter to the Hebrews once defined faith this way: ***"Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see"*** (Heb 11:1). If you think about it, it doesn't really take faith to believe in what we can see. Tommy Gollick rolled 47 straight strikes. There were eye-witnesses!

But true faith says, *"I believe without seeing!"* That's like Noah building his ark on dry ground. Do you suppose he had a few moments of doubt, especially when the neighbors wondered what crazy Noah was doing? But he believed and built by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Well, if Noah was crazy, then you and I are too. You're not building an ark but you did come here to this church. All sorts of skeptics think you're just wasting your time. But just like Noah, you also believe what you can't see -- what is yet to come. Paul, quoting Isaiah, puts it this way: ***"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" -- but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.*** We can't even begin to conceive the beauty and glory of heaven. It's too far beyond our comprehension! Yet, heaven is just as real as the walls of this church and the fields and forests and homes you drove past to get here today.

The difference is, heaven is infinitely better! And because of Jesus, and *only* because of Jesus -- his life, his death, his resurrection -- it's all yours! No *"Maybe I'll go to heaven someday."* No *"I hope I'll go to heaven some day."* No *"If I go to heaven someday."* Rather, it's *"When I go to heaven."* And on that day *our eyes will see, our ears will hear, and our minds will fully conceive what God has prepared for those who love him* -- because we'll be there!

Thank the Lord for Jesus who has given us heaven. And thank the Lord for the Holy Spirit who gives us the faith to believe the inconceivable!

Amen.