

## I Corinthians

### Chapter 2:1-13

<sup>1</sup>And when I came to you, **brothers and sisters**, I did not come as someone **superior** in **speaking ability** or wisdom, as I proclaimed to you the **testimony** of God.

It is very important that we understand what Paul is doing in this chapter. Even though he is addressing a church that is very shallow in its thinking ... Paul lays out some deep doctrine. The chapter appears to divide into interconnected thoughts.

- Vss. 1-5 Paul's determination to not approach them with man's wisdom
- Vss. 6-8 God's wisdom ... hidden
- Vss. 9-13 God's wisdom ... revealed
- Vss. 14-16 God's wisdom ... not understood

**Brothers and sisters** > (Barnes) Keeping up the tender and affectionate style of address.

**Superior** > (Strong's) prominence, i.e. (figuratively) superiority (in rank or character)

**Speaking ability** > (Strong's) *logos*

**Testimony** > (Utley) There is a Greek manuscript variant here. The Greek term *musterion* (mystery) appears in (a number of the manuscripts). The word *marturion* (testimony) appears in (other of the manuscripts). If it is "mystery," this concept is described in 2:7; Eph. 2:11-3:13; and Col. 1:26-27, which is the union of Jews and Greeks through Christ into one family (i.e., the church). If it is "testimony," it is linking back to 1:6, which would be synonymous with "the gospel."

The term "mystery" was used often in the first century Koine papyri found in Egypt in reference to the new initiate to secret knowledge available only to a special group (i.e., mystery religions). Paul takes this technical term and uses it in connection with those who have the Spirit (i.e., believers) and those who do not.

<sup>2</sup>For I determined to know nothing among you except **Jesus Christ, and Him crucified**.

**Jesus Christ, and Him crucified** > (Utley) This is a perfect passive participle. There are two theological aspects revealed in this participle:

1. the perfect tense reveals that Jesus remains the crucified One. When we see Him, He will still have the scars. They have become His badge of glory .
2. the passive voice reveals that Jesus' death was
  - a. by the Father's agency and was His eternal plan (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29) for redemption (cf. Isa. 53:10)
  - b. by human sin and rebellion demanded a sacrifice (cf. Rom. 5:14-15,18-19)

**Carson** > "What Paul avoided was artificial communication that won plaudits for the speaker but distracted from the message. Lazy preachers have no right to appeal to 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 to justify indolence in the study and careless delivery in the pulpit. These verses do not prohibit diligent preparation, passion, clear articulation, and persuasive presentation. Rather, they warn against any method that leads people to say, "What a marvelous preacher!" rather than, "What a marvelous Savior!""

**And Him crucified** > (Robertson) Literally, *and this one as crucified*

<sup>3</sup> *I also was with you in weakness and fear, and in great trembling,*

**I also was with you** > (Robertson) Rather, "I came to you"

**I also was with you in weakness and fear, and in great trembling** > (Barnes) Paul continued there at least a year and six months. (Acts 18:11)

<sup>4</sup> *and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,*

**Message** > (Strong's) *logos*

**Preaching** > (Strong's) *Proclamation*

**Persuasive** > (Robertson) This adjective has not yet been found elsewhere. It seems to be formed directly from (a word meaning) to persuade. The old Greek form is common enough and is used by Josephus (*Ant.* VIII. 9. 1) of "the plausible words of the lying prophet" in 1 Kings 13. The kindred word occurs in Colossians 2:4 for the specious and plausible Gnostic philosophers.

**And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom** > (Swindoll)

To understand Paul's description of his ministry, we need to remember that he lacked nothing in educational and intellectual ability. He had been a disciple of Gamaliel, a famous rabbi of the first century (Acts 5:34; 22:3). Beyond that, Paul could hold his own in a debate with detractors (Acts 19:8-10; 26:24-29).

**Demonstration** > (Strong's) manifestation (from a word meaning *to exhibit*)

<sup>5</sup> *so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of mankind, but on the power of God.*

**Barnes** > The blind man that was made to see by the Saviour (John 10), might have been wholly unable to tell how his eyes were opened, and unable to meet all the cavils of those who might doubt it, or all the subtle and cunning objections of physiologists, but of one thing he certainly could not doubt, that "*whereas he was blind, he then saw;*" (John 10:25).

Here is **Wuest's** expanded translation of verses 1-5 > *And as for myself, having come to you, brethren, I came, not having my message dominated by a transcendent rhetorical display or by philosophical subtlety when I was announcing to you the testimony of God, for, after weighing the issues, I decided not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and this very One as crucified. And as for myself, when I faced you, I fell into a state of weakness and fear and much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not couched in specious words of philosophy but were dependent for their efficacy upon a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, in order that your faith should not be resting in human philosophy but in God's power.*

<sup>6</sup> **Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away;**

**Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature** > The introduction of God's hidden (next verse) wisdom.

**Who are passing away** > (Utley) This term means "to be made inoperative" (cf. 1:28; Rom. 6:6). Paul uses this term twenty-seven times. **If** this refers to human authorities, they will die. **If** this refers to angelic authorities, this age will pass away into the new age of righteousness.

<sup>7</sup> **but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory;**

**We speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom** > (Barnes) the translation should be literally made, "We proclaim the divine wisdom hidden in a mystery."

**Utley** > The most comprehensive definition of this mystery is that Jew and Gentile are united in one new people of God (i.e., the church, cf. Eph. 2:11:-3:13).

**Mystery** > (Helps Word Studies) In the Bible, a "mystery" is *not something unknowable*. Rather, it is what *can only be known through revelation*, i.e. because *God reveals it*.

**Strong's** > From a derivative of (a Greek word meaning > *to shut the mouth*); a secret or "mystery" (through the idea of silence imposed by initiation into religious rites)

**God's wisdom** > (Swindoll) The wisdom spoken of in this verse is neither empirical fact-finding nor intuitive common sense, but insight—perception about people, problems, ourselves, life. Paul calls it "God's wisdom," "the thoughts of God," "the things of the Spirit," and "the mind of Christ" (2:7, 11, 14, 16).

**Predestined before the ages to our glory;** > (Utley) The term translated here "predestine" is a compound of the preposition "before" and "to set bounds"

<sup>8</sup> *the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;*

**Understood** > (Strong's) A prolonged form of a primary verb; to "know" (absolutely) - allow, be aware of, perceive.

**If** > (Robertson) Condition of the second class, determined as unfulfilled.

<sup>9</sup> *but just as it is written: "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And which have not entered the human heart, All that God has prepared for those who love Him."*

**Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard ...** > God's wisdom is about to be revealed! (This is a transition verse ... concluding the thoughts expressed in vss. 6-8, and introducing the revelation found in vss. 9-13)

**Isaiah 64:4** > *For from days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear, nor has the eye seen a God besides You, Who acts in behalf of one who waits for Him.*

**Swindoll** says that Paul "paraphrased" the Isaiah passage.

**Vincent** > Paul takes only the general idea from the Old-Testament passage.

**Guzik** > Most people wrongly take the things which God has prepared for those who love Him to mean the things which are waiting for us in heaven

**Vance Havner** > These things God has prepared (1Cor 2:9) refer not only to joys awaiting us in heaven but blessings available **NOW**.

<sup>10</sup> *For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.*

**Swindoll** > **God's Priority** (vs 10)

**Swindoll** > **God's Process** (vss. 10-11)

**For to us God revealed them ...** > (Wuest) "Paul proceeds to describe the three successive steps in the transmission of truth from the heart of God to the heart of man. These are, **revelation**, the act of God the Holy Spirit imparting to the Bible writers, truth incapable of being discovered by man's unaided reason (1Cor 2:10–12): **inspiration**, the act of God the Holy Spirit enabling the Bible writers to write down in God-chosen words, infallibly, the truth revealed (1Cor 2:13): and **illumination**, the act of God the Holy Spirit enabling believers to understand the truth given by revelation and written down by inspiration (1Cor 2:14–16)."

**Swindoll** > If humans can't discover the wisdom of God by human methods, understand it by human intellect, or believe it by human power, then how can anybody know and believe the gospel? Paul tackles this question next.

We can understand Paul's explanation in terms of the **priority** (2:10), the **process** (2:10-11), and the **purpose** (2:12-13) of spiritual revelation.

**The priority** (2:10). God chose those who trust in Him to receive His wisdom, as Paul explains: "*For to us God revealed them*" (2:10, emphasis added). God reveals His wisdom not to the world's erudite scholars, influential leaders, or super wealthy (1:27-30). Instead, He chose to reveal himself to those who come to Him by God's undeserved grace through simple faith (Eph. 2:8-9).

**The process** (2:10-11). Besides the Spirit's work in guiding believers to the truth of the gospel (John 16:8-13), the Spirit also dwells within believers from the moment they place their faith in Christ, beginning His work of transforming us into Christ's image (John 14:17; 1 Cor. 12:13; 2 Cor. 3:18). Through the Spirit's indwelling (Rom. 8:9, 11), He searches for us the "depths of God" (1 Cor. 2:10), communicating His thoughts to us as we draw upon His resources (2:11-12; John 16:13-15; Eph. 4:14-19). Paul argues that just as the spirit of a human knows the hidden thoughts and attitudes of that individual, so the Spirit of God knows the hidden mysteries of God. The Spirit's role in the world, then, is to reveal to believers the content of these mysteries.

**The purpose** (2:12-13). God promises to give us the Spirit the moment we are saved. If we have trusted in Him, the Spirit communicates the divine wisdom of Christianity, because humans can never understand it on their own. The purpose of this revelation is twofold: "that we may know the things freely given to us by God" (1 Cor. 2:12) and that we may "speak" (2:13) these things to others, ministering the Holy Spirit through the very words He inspired (2 Tim. 3:16). These words of the Spirit—the words of Holy Scripture—are able to affect spiritual change because they are not merely human words, but words "taught by the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:13). Both the thoughts and the words themselves are given by revelation from God (2 Pet. 1:21).

**Revealed** > (Precept Austin) literally means to remove the cover from

**Searches** > (Precept Austin) (The Greek word) means to make thorough examination using careful effort to learn something. (The Greek word) in secular Greek described a professional searcher's report. A derivative was used to describe searchers or customs officials.

**Depths** > (Strong's) profundity, i.e. (by implication) extent; (figuratively) mystery

<sup>11</sup> **For who among people knows (1) the ~~thoughts~~ of a person except the spirit of the person that is in him? So also the ~~thoughts~~ of God no one knows (2), except the Spirit of God.**

**Knows** (1) > (Strong's) *oida* > to have seen or perceived, hence to know

**Knows** (2) > (Precept Austin) *ginosko* > means he has come to know by personal experience and the perfect tense signifies he "has come to know and still knows."

**Darby** > Two Greek words are used for 'to know' in the New Testament – *ginosko* and *oida*.

*Ginosko* signifies objective knowledge, what a man has learned or acquired. The English expression 'being acquainted with' perhaps conveys the meaning.

*Oida* conveys the thought of what is inward, the inward consciousness in the mind, intuitive knowledge not immediately derived from what is external.

The difference between the two words is illustrated in

- **John 8:55** > *ye know (ginosko) him not, but I know (oida) him,*
- **John 13:7** > *What I do thou dost not know (oida) now, but thou shalt know (ginosko) hereafter,*
- **Heb. 8:11** > *they shall not teach . . . saying, Know (ginosko) the Lord; because all shall know (oida) me.*

<sup>12</sup> **Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.**

**Swindoll** > **God's Purpose** (vss. 12-13)

**We** > (Leon Morris) Note that the *we* is emphatic (first in the Greek sentence for emphasis) which "contrasts Christians with 'wise' heathen. Whatever be the case with others, we are led by God's Spirit.

**Knows** > (Strong's) *oida* > to have seen or perceived, hence to know

**Bruce** > as a man's own spirit best understands his inner thoughts, so the Spirit of God alone can grasp divine truths ( 1 Corinthians 2:11), and alone can interpret to those within whom he dwells "the things that are freely given to us by God"

**Freely given** > (Robertson) (The Greek grammar) expresses purpose. Here is a distinct claim of the Holy Spirit for understanding (Illumination) of the revelation received. It is not a senseless rhapsody or secret mystery, but God expects us to understand "the things that are freely given."

**Freely** > (Strong's) to grant as a favor, i.e. Gratuitously, in kindness, pardon or rescue (The source word is usually translated as *grace*)

<sup>13</sup> *We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.*

**Taught** > (Strong's) *didaktos* > (subjectively) instructed, or (objectively) communicated by teaching

**Not in words taught by human wisdom** > (Vincent) Lit., not in the taught words of human wisdom

**But in those taught by the Spirit** > (MacArthur) 1Cor 2:13 is one of the strongest passages in the word of God on the subject of verbal inspiration.

**Wuest** > He (Paul) says that the words which the Bible writers used were **taught** them by the Holy Spirit. That is, as they wrote the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit Who had revealed the truth to them, now chooses the correct word out of the writer's vocabulary, whose content of meaning will give to the believer the exact truth God desires him to have.

**Combining** > (Clarke) The (Greek word), which we translate *comparing*, rather signifies conferring, discussing, or explaining;

### **Combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words**

**NASB** > "in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words"

**NKJV** > "which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual"

**NRSV** > "taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual"

**TEV** > "we do not speak in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit"

**NJB** > "in terms learnt from the Spirit, fitting spiritual language to spiritual things"

**Robertson** > Each of these words is in dispute.

**Tony Evans** > When the Spirit takes "*spiritual words*," the Word of God, and combines them with "*spiritual thoughts*," a mind and a heart in tune with God, the result is divine illumination. When you combine a spiritually receptive mind with the Word, you have dynamite on your hands. (I love it!!)