

First Corinthians 1:26-2:16

The division of these verses:

- 1) 1:18-25 – the message of the cross (text verse Isaiah 29:14)
- 2) 1:26-31 – the people who heard the message (text verse Jeremiah 9:3-24)
- 3) 2:1-5 – the person who brought the message
- 4) 2:6-16 – what really is spiritual and what really is wisdom (text Isaiah 64:4)

The Corinthians are currently relying on powerful messages (1:18-25) to powerful people (1:26-31) or messages of great wisdom (1:18-25) to people with great wisdom (1:26-31).

The other thing they were looking to besides a great a message of worldly wisdom and worldly power and to their own worldly self-sufficiency was a great messenger with great wisdom and power.

God's message didn't match the world's message.

The people God called (the Corinthians) didn't match the people the world seeks.

Now, the messenger God used (Paul) was not the messenger the world would seek an audience with.

1:26

“Brothers” is the start of a new point in Paul's writing. It will be a new point but a continuation of his theme. In the eyes of the world and its pursuit of greatness, wisdom and stability the Word of God and the Kingdom of God are not understood.

The world sees all of God and his plan as:

- Simple message,
- Simple people,
- Simple preacher.

Boasting becomes the new theme:

- 1) the Corinthians were boasting one leader verse another
- 2) Paul goes to Jeremiah 9:23-24 for his text verse in this second point

“Called” is a reference to their point of salvation. When they were “called” to receive the offer of salvation none of them were called because they deserved it.

“Called” is from the word **kalew**. The root word is “kal” and so our English word “call”.

The word means “to call anyone, to invite, summon”.

Theologically it is used of the Divine call to partake of the blessings of redemption.

It does not mean the call or invitation cannot be rejected.

Throughout scripture men have rejected God's call.

“Not many” is not exclusive but it is limiting. Meaning there were among them some considered by the world to be wise, influential and noble.

“Human standards” is the word **sarka** or “flesh”. It the first use of this be Paul.

They themselves have nothing to boast about in the natural but yet they are judging Paul by this Human standard. Paul is simply turning it around and applying it to them.

Their only strength is the fact that they accepted God's call.

“Wise” is “Sophia”

“Influential” (“powerful) is the word for power *dunamis*

Both these terms have already been used.

Jeremiah 9:23 uses two of these but Jeremiah uses “rich” as the third word

Paul instead chooses to use the word “well born” which refers to born into the upper class of wealth. Many of the Corinthians were probably wealthy, but few were born into the noble class.

Some of the Corinthian believers were of the upper class by birth: Crispus, Gaius, Erastus, Stephanas

Paul’s point was it did not take special qualifications to receive the call to the gospel.

1:27

1:28 - “the things that are not” (μη οντα) There is not a more contemptible expression in Greek thinking that was possible for Paul to use. The lack of “being” was the worse it could be.

“nullify” (*katargeo*) is an eschatological term. It means “to put out of action, to make inactive, to reduce to nothing”

1:29

1:30

1:31

Section 2:1-5 is made up of two parts:

- 1) 2:1-2 “and I come to you” (καγω ελθων προς υμας) – This section speaks of the content of his message (similar to 1:17-25)
- 2) 2:3-5 “and I in weakness and in fear and in trembling much” (καγω εν ασθενεια και εν φοβω και εν τρομω πολλω) – This section speaks of the man and his style of preaching
 - These things combined prove it was not man (man’s power, man’s wisdom, man’s presence) that changed the Corinthians.
 - Yet, a change did take place. There was a power and a wisdom that manifested in the Corinthian church.
 - It was clearly a change caused not by a man, but by God himself.

2:1

Verse begins with “and I” making Paul’s argument continue to include his own experience

“Brothers” is used again to draw attention to Paul’s third point.

The second point began with “brothers” at 1:26.

Paul came with no reliance on his wisdom or on his own power.

The circumstances surrounding the Corinthians receiving the gospel had been stripped of anything that man could boast in.

The Greek says:

Came	not	according to	excellence	of speech	or	of wisdom	announcing
ηλθον	ου	καθ	υπεροχην	λογου	η	σοθιας	καταγγελλον
to you	the	testimony	of	God			
υμιν	το	μαρτυριον	του	θεου			

The NIV combines “excellence of speech” with “excellence of wisdom” to make “eloquence or superior wisdom”

The NIV makes “excellence” an adjective for “wisdom”

- 'υπεροχην Or “excellence” means prominence, superiority, excellency
- λογος or “speech” and refers here to an trained orator with an oratory education
- σοθιας or “wisdom” refers to cleverness in the speaking or in the presentation.

“Proclaim” – Paul did proclaim a message and so there was the use of speaking skills and a level of wisdom, but these were not the basis of his message.

2:2

“For” begins this verse which means it explains why Paul did not rely on speaking skills or cleverness in his presentation.

Paul knew the Word of God and the Truth of the Gospel could do its own work.

A fancy presentation would be a distraction later in their lives if they thought it was some fancy stage presentation or formula that made the change in their lives.

See Acts 16:16 – Satan planned to enter the church later.

“Resolved” means to judge, to decide. It emphasizes a deliberate act of the will. Paul decided not to fall into this trap when he arrived at Corinth.

He had learned at:

- 1) Thessalonica – 1 Th. 2:1-10 (verse 5)
- 2) Athens – Speaking at Mars Hill among the great speakers, debaters, philosophers.

2:3

See Acts 16, 17, 18 to read Paul’s weak and fearful position when he arrived in Corinth.

“weakness” – **astheneia** ασθενεια meaning “weakness.”

“fear” -

“much trembling” – **tromos** τρομος the word points to the anxiety of mind that arises out of a sense of his insufficiency and an understanding, of the infinite importance of his work.

2:4

“demonstration” means “demonstration, argumentation, proof.” In Greek rhetoric the word indicates a compelling decision demanded by the presupposition or premises (the obvious conclusions Paul had brought the Corinthians to realize.).

The “spirit’s power” is not in the form of signs and wonders but in the realm of logic, reasoning, persuasion.

The Corinthians came to faith without the power of man’s wisdom or speaking ability.

2:5
The result was that from that point on the Corinthians (and, Paul) would not be tempted to look for men but trust in God.

In this current age the Corinthians had the chance to look beyond what is seen and live by what is not seen.

2:6
Paul begins to describe the “wisdom” that is God’s and is available to the spiritual man. The Corinthian’s wisdom was mere appearance, style and conceptual. God’s wisdom is real, with substance and is from the age that is coming.

The Corinthians had dismissed Paul and his message because it was “foolishness” to them. They felt this way because they did not perceive Paul’s “wisdom”.

These people are described as:

- 1) “sanctified” (1:2),
- 2) “given grace” (1:4),
- 3) “not lack any spiritual gift” (1:6),
- 4) “brothers” (1:26; 2:1),
- 5) “in Christ Jesus” (1:30)

They are indeed the “spiritual” ones: “God has revealed it to us by his Spirit”.

But, Paul cannot talk to them as spiritual (3:1) because they cannot understand.

They are “spiritual” but they are acting “unspiritual”.

- 2:6-16**
- 1) 6-10, God’s wisdom is presented by contrasting those who understand and those who do not.
 - 2) 10-13, Why do some perceive it and others do not? It is the presence of the Spirit.
 - 3) 14-16, Explains things as the spiritual and the natural. Text verse Isaiah 40:13

The Conclusion

The natural man cannot hear the message of God as wisdom but the spiritual man (the saved man, with the Spirit of God) can hear, understand and make correct judgments.

The Problem

The Corinthians are the spiritual men, but they are not hearing nor understanding the wisdom of God so they are making incorrect judgments. They are evaluating wisdom and life just like the natural, unbeliever.

Some Confusing Words

These verses are difficult to interpret. This is true because proper interpretation is based on accurately defining and applying the words Paul uses. In these 10 verses Paul uses some very

“heavy” words. These words must properly be interpreted or else all kinds of strange doctrine and applications will arise. Some of the difficult words are:

- 1) Wisdom (***Sophia***)
- 2) mystery (***musterion***)
- 3) hidden (***apokrupto***)
- 4) rulers of this age (***archon toutou aion***)
- 5) deep things of God (***bathos theos***)
- 6) Spiritual man (***anakrino***)
- 7) Natural man (***psuchikos anthropos***)
- 8) The mind of Christ (***nous christos***)

Paul may be using the Corinthians vocabulary but applying his own “spiritual” meaning.

The Spirit

The Spirit of God and his presence is everything to Paul.

The Spirit is the one who got them saved.

The Spirit is the one who makes the spiritual.

The Spirit is the one who reveals the “wisdom” of God to them.

The Spirit is the one who empowers them to live the Christ like-life.

On the contrary, the lack of the Spirit is why the natural man has no hope of understanding the wisdom of God.

2:6

σοφίαν δε λαλουμεν εν τοις τελειοις σοφίαν δε ου
wisdom Howbeit we speak among them that are perfect the wisdom yet not

του αιωνος τουτου ουδε των αρχοντων του αιωνος τουτου των καταργουμενων
of this world nor of the princes of this world that come to nought

“**However**” – **de** means “but” indicates both a switch in focus but still a continuation of the argument.

“**We**” – Paul switches from singular “I” (2:1, 2, 3, 4) to the plural “we” (2:6, 7,13)

- 1) The first reason for this is to claim “wisdom” for him and his group. Though the Corinthians think that they have wisdom, Paul is saying “my group” do have a message of wisdom”
- 2) The second reason is that after having destroyed what they call wisdom, Paul is introducing them to a new group that has true wisdom. It is like saying, if you are really interested in wisdom I know a group that has what you are looking for.

“**Wisdom**” is left undefined here. For a definition we must return to:

- 1) The opening line of the argument in 1:18, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power (or ‘wisdom’ see 1:19) of God.”
- 2) Paul’s definition of his message in 1:23, “We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block . . . foolishness. . . the wisdom of God.”
- 3) The result of his preaching in 1:30, “It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God.”

“**The Mature**” – **teleiois** – means “having attained the end or purpose, full-grown, mature, adult, perfect”.

“**World**” is “aionos” – “age, eternal, the course and current of this world’s affairs, the world; specially (Jewish) a Messianic period (present or future)

“Rulers” – *archonton* – “first (in rank or power) -- chief (ruler), magistrate, prince, ruler”.

In context here we should think of these rulers as being the natural men of government and power. Look at verse 2:8 and here we see “rulers” who if they had understood the wisdom of God by the Spirit of God they would not have killed Jesus Christ but would instead have embraced him.

- 1) 2 Cor. 4:4, “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers. . .”
- 2) Ephesians 3:10, “rulers” = “archais”, “authorities”= “ekousiais”
- 3) Daniel 10:20

“Coming to nothing” καταργουμενων *katargeo* - means “to be entirely idle,” “to be rendered useless.” literally or figurative. The concept is “to put out of commission,” “to remove from power.”

- This verb is in the Present Tense which indicates a process that is already in progress.
- Passive Voice means that God is the one who is causing it to happen even today.

2:7-8

Verse 7 explains the nature of God’s wisdom and why it was not understood

Verse 8 gives an example of the result of the rulers (representing the wise men) of this age

2:7

αλλα λαλουμεν σοφιαν θεου εν μυστηριω την αποκεκρυμμενην
But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery even the hidden

ην προωρισεν ο θεος προ των αιωνων εις δοξαν ημων
wisdom which ordained God before the world unto glory our

“God’s Wisdom” is compared by contrast to the “wisdom of this age” of verse 2:6.

“God’s Wisdom” is described in four ways:

- 1) “**mystery**” is something that has always been true and was known to God, but not yet revealed to men through history or revelation. Mysteries are understood by the Spirit of God.
- 2) “**has been hidden**” –refers to the mystery of God’s wisdom. God’s wisdom (message of Christ, crucified Christ, Jesus Christ) was hidden. This verb is in the perfect tense which means this wisdom has been hidden since eternity until now.
 - a. Verse 2:8 tells us this mystery is still hidden today to the world’s wise men and rulers.
- 3) “destined for our glory before time began”
 - a. “destined” refers to God’s plan and purpose
 - b. “our glory” refers to the ultimate end, the eschatological goal of salvation which is to be with Jesus in his glory.
- 4) “None of the rulers of this age understood.”
 - a. This helps establish the who “us” or “we” are by comparing to “them”
 - b. The Corinthians are in the “we” group but are thinking and understanding like the “them” group.

The Point: By not understanding what was hidden by God the rulers (in their wisdom) acted foolishly and killed the Lord of Glory. By doing so the rulers of this age actually began the process of eliminating themselves and their current age and began the glorification of us who believe and the ultimate establishment of a kingdom that will completely nullify their world, wisdom, values, etc.

2:9

Scriptural support from the Old Testament is provided by the Jewish sage.

The point of this verse from Isaiah 64:4 is that people of this age do not understand what God accomplished in Christ.

People of this age who do not understand God's wisdom do not know what God has done for those of this age who do understand his wisdom.

Other translations of 2:9-

NASB:

but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." ([NASB ©1995](#))

GWT:

But as Scripture says: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined the things that God has prepared for those who love him."([GOD'S WORD®](#))

KJV:

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

ASV:

but as it is written, Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, And which entered not into the heart of man, Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him.

BBE:

But as it says in the holy Writings, Things which the eye saw not, and which had not come to the ears or into the heart of man, such things as God has made ready for those who have love for him.

DBY:

but according as it is written, Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man's heart, which God has prepared for them that love him,

ERV:

but as it is written, Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, And which entered not into the heart of man, Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him.

WEY:

But--to use the words of Scripture--we speak of things which eye has not seen nor ear heard, and which have never entered the heart of man: all that God has in readiness for them that love Him.

WBS:

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

WEB:

But as it is written, "Things which an eye didn't see, and an ear didn't hear, which didn't enter into the heart of man, these God has prepared for those who love him."

YLT:

but, according as it hath been written, 'What eye did not see, and ear did not hear, and upon the heart of man came not up, what God did prepare for those loving Him -- '

This is a combination of Isaiah 64:4 and 65:16

2:10-13 The emphasis is on the means of this understanding or revelation - The Spirit

2:14-16 But, those who it is revealed to are not forgotten or out of the picture - The Spiritual Man.

2:11

ΤΙΣ ΓΑΡ ΟΙΔΕΝ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΩΝ ΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΥ ΕΙ ΜΗ ΤΟ ΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΥ
what For knoweth man the things of a man if not e. the spirit of man

ΤΟ ΕΝ ΑΥΤΩ ΟΥΤΩΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΟΥΔΕΙΣ ΟΙΔΕΝ ΕΙ ΜΗ ΤΟ ΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ
which is in him even so the things of God no man knoweth but the Spirit of God

The key to Paul's argument is the presence of the Spirit of God in the born again believer.

To understand something you must be like that thing or "like is known by like".

So the only way to understand God (and the mysteries of God) is by the Spirit of God.

Man cannot understand God alone.

In his natural state man cannot perceive God except to know that there is a God (Rom. 1:18-19)

The Holy Spirit is the link between God and man.

The Holy Spirit has always been the link between God and man.

- 1) Genesis 1:2
- 2) OT prophets
- 3) OT anointed offices and service

The Corinthians have two problems with the Holy Spirit:

- 1) they deny his purpose of revealing to them the wisdom of God and pursue the wisdom of man
- 2) they consider the manifestation of spiritual ecstasy as a sign of maturity and the Holy Spirit.
(Along these same lines they are denying the physical resurrection (ch.1 5) and their responsibility to live holy in the physical realm.)

Concerning "the things of God" or "deep things of God" (2:10) Romans 11:33-36 refers to "the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

Paul uses a simple argument to prove his point. No other person knows what a man thinks nor can they understand who and what he is in his heart. You can only feel your own joy, your own pain, your own experiences at a deep level that no one else can.

Proverbs 14:10, "Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy."

We have received the Spirit of God so that we can understand what God is sharing with us.

2:12

ΗΜΕΙΣ ΔΕ ΟΥ ΤΟ ΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΤΟΥ ΚΟΣΜΟΥ ΕΛΑΒΟΜΕΝ ΑΛΛΑ
we Now not the spirit of the world have received but

ΤΟ ΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΤΟ ΕΚ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΙΝΑ ΕΙΔΩΜΕΝ ΤΑ ΥΠΟ ΤΟΥ ΧΑΡΙΣΘΕΝΤΑ ΗΜΙΝ ΘΕΟ
U
the spirit which is out of God that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God

This is the key to Paul's argument.

Paul points out again the contrast of this present age and the age to come.

Emphasis here is because we have received the Spirit we have an understanding (or a perspective, the divine viewpoint) that comes from God and is from eternity and is of the coming age.

The Holy Spirit is not of this *kosmos* or world.

The reason for having been given the Spirit by God is "that we might understand what God has freely given us."

"Freely Given" is χαρισθεντα "charizomai" means to grant as a favor as an act of kindness, pardon or rescue. It means to deliver, to forgive, to freely give or to grant.

1) This picks up the thought of verse 9 "what God has prepared for those who love him."

2) The Greek word is built around the word for "grace" or "charis" χαρις

"Know" or "Understand" is ειδωμεν "eido" means to see, to know. This verb is also used in verse 11.

2:13

α και λαλουμεν ουκ εν διδακτοις ανθρωπινης σοφιας λογοις αλλ
Which things also we speak not in teacheth which man's wisdom the words but

εν διδακτοις πνευματος αγιου πνευματικοις πνευματικα συγκρινοντες
which the Holy Ghost teacheth + spiritual things with spiritual comparing

After establishing his point Paul returns to his ministry of teaching and the message that he teaches. This is really what this argument is all about.

The Corinthians do not think Paul has a message for them.

Paul has been saying that he does and it is the only message.

The message and wisdom that they have been pursuing is of this world, from natural men and not comparable to Paul's message.

The end of this verse is interpreted three ways:

πνευματικοις πνευματικα συγκρινοντες
spiritual things with spiritual comparing

- 1) "expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words"
- 2) "interpreting spiritual truths to spiritual men"
- 3) "comparing spiritual things with spiritual"

Two questions:

- 1) What does "comparing" (συγκρινοντες *sugkrino*) mean? And, which of these meanings goes here along with "spiritual things" and "with spiritual"

- a. συγκρινοντες “sugkrino” means “to judge one thing in connection with another.”
 - b. It also means to bring together, to combine, compare, and explain to interpret.” Josephus uses it as “to measure oneself against.”
- 2) πνευματικοις *pneumatikos* means “spirit, supernatural, regenerate, religious, spiritual.”
- a. Does this word refer to “words taught by the Spirit”? So, if we understand it to refer to the previous verse then it is explaining Paul’s teaching or his spiritual words.
 - b. Does this word refer to “spiritual people”? If we read ahead into the next verse it may refer to spiritual people contrasted with the natural people of verse 14

I think Paul is saying that his teaching is an explanation of the spiritual truth from the God that was understood by him by the Holy Spirit’s empowerment. So, spiritual truth communicated by the spiritual power of the Holy Spirit.

2:14

ψυχικος δε ανθρωπος ου δεχεται τα του πνευματος του θεου μωρια γαρ
the natural But man not receiveth the things of the Spirit of God foolishness for

they are unto him neither + can he know them because they are spiritually discerned
εστιν αυτω και ου δυναται γνωναι οτι πνευματικως ανακρινεται

Paul now begins the negative side of the same argument.

The natural man is called *psychikio*. Usually, the flesh man is called *sarx* or “flesh”.

Paul may be using one of the Corinthian’s self-flattering words of the philosophy in a reverse fashion.

Or, Paul may be using a Greek word from the LXX that is used to translate the Hebrew word *nepes* that is used to say man’s natural, physical existence.”

The spiritual man is called *pneumatikoi*

The natural man or the *psychikio* is negatively described as:

- 1) They do not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God. The Greek word used here for “accept” does not mean they do not perceive these things they flat out reject them.
- 2) The things of the spirit are “foolishness” to them. Paul is still going after verses 1:18-2:5. People who reject the cross and the revelation from God are “foolish” in their hearts.
- 3) They cannot understand. They do not have the ability. Spirit can only be understood by spirit.

The reason the top three things are true is that spiritual truth is only “discerned” spiritually.

2:15

ο δε πνευματικος ανακρινει μεν παντα αυτος δε υπ ουδενος ανακρινεται
But he that is spiritual judgeth + all things yet he himself is judged of no man

2:16 These last two verses wrap up this argument but also lead us into chapter 3

τις γαρ εγνω νου κυριου ος συμβιβασει αυτον ημεις δε νου χριστου εχομεν
For who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him we But have the mind of Christ

Isaiah 29:11, 18

Isaiah 40:13

In Isaiah 40:13 it is “the mind of YHWH. Paul inserts “Christ” for YHWH