

# First Corinthians 2

## Introduction:

1. Paul left rebuking Corinth for their preacher factions at 1:17, and he will return to it at 3:1; the intervening verses are for his preaching style, the need of regeneration, the divisive nature of the gospel, its hidden wisdom, and the glory of God.
2. Paul's purpose is the humbling of the Corinthians and the proper perspective of preachers, the gospel, and understanding.
3. It is important to consider soberly how much you would know without gospel preachers and the word of God – nothing!
4. Consider aborigines, Inuit Indians, Zulus, Incas, Mohawks, Mongolians, Japanese, Hindus, Buddhists, and Europeans!
5. There is no human intelligence or analysis of the natural world to arrive at any meaningful knowledge of Jesus Christ, the answers to any of the universe's dilemmas, or the knowledge of the incredible inheritance prepared for the elect.
6. Our ambition in this study is to understand the sense of these sixteen verses and rejoice in their glories for the elect.

## Outline of Chapter 2:

1. Description of his preaching (1-5)
2. Hidden wisdom of the gospel (6-13)
3. Contrast between natural and spiritual men (14-16)

- 2:1 **Paul declared his lack of human eloquence or wisdom in preaching the gospel at Corinth.**
- A. He returned here to the thought he introduced in 1:17, where he began his gospel diversion.
  - B. If there was ever a city deserving of fine oratorical ability, it was Corinth; but Paul did not!
  - C. They, like their sister Athens, revered rhetoricians, logicians, philosophers, and orators!
  - D. He did not try to persuade or convince them by oratorical or philosophical presentations.
  - E. Paul's method was plain teaching of truth by Bible reasoning (Acts 17:2-3; II Cor 2:17; 4:2).
  - F. Paul reminded them that neither he nor the gospel was based in human ability or deeds.
  - G. The testimony of God is His record of Jesus Christ – the gospel (I John 5:9; Rev 1:9; 12:17)!
  - H. God had visited Paul, shown him great miracles, and introduced him to Jesus of Nazareth!
  - I. God testified of Christ in the Scriptures, and Paul declared this testimony as well (John 5:39).
  - J. The measure of preachers is their ability to simply present the truth in plain language for everyone to see and understand, not their ability to entertain or move the audience!
- 2:2 **Paul made careful choice to limit his content and style to the unvarnished gospel of Christ.**
- A. Paul determined his methods and content – it was a conscious and deliberate choice of his.
  - B. What a contrast to methods and seminary training today, the very opposite of brother Paul!
  - C. Churches and ministers do all they can to incorporate worldly methods to enhance the gospel.
  - D. Many today will say or act by “the end justifies the means” in “saving the lost at any cost.”
  - E. Why do men fill their sermonettes with anecdotes, jokes, illustrations, and sappy stories?
  - F. Why do men preach sermonettes after nightclub-style entertainment? To attract the flesh!
  - G. Why do churches have gymnasiums and “family life centers” and such? To attract the flesh!
  - H. But he made a spiritual and deliberate choice to avoid enhancing carnal appeal of the gospel.
  - I. This verse does not mean Paul only preached sermons about the crucifixion exclusively, for where is the resurrection? Let us not stumble at the **sound** of words; let us seek the **sense**!
  - J. This verse does mean Paul excluded worldly wisdom to preach Christ's gospel only, which includes everything contained in the Scriptures, with the emphasis on His mediatorial work.
- 2:3 **He admitted that his personal and physical presence was not that of a powerful preacher.**
- A. Paul confessed his personal weakness and fearful intimidation as a preacher of the gospel.
  - B. He was the opposite of a confident, fiery, persuasive orator the Greeks prized and honored.
  - C. Paul was opposite man's idea of a polished, eloquent, confident, and charismatic preacher.

- D. Elsewhere he will reference his base appearance and contemptible speech (II Cor 10:10).
- E. Paul was not afraid of any man when it came to the gospel of truth, but he was not an orator.
- F. His weakness, fear, and trembling were related to pleasing the Christ Who had called him.
- G. If the great apostle, chosen directly by Christ, had such an humble attitude and consciousness of his frailties (II Cor 4:7), how much more should those ministers far inferior to him!

2:4 **Paul's preaching gave evidence of the Spirit of God rather than effects of worldly oratory.**

- A. There are captivating speakers in all venues of life, but Paul was not one of them, by choice!
- B. Enticing words of man's wisdom can be style – Paul rejected flourishes and embellishments.
- C. Enticing words of man's wisdom can be content – Paul rejected all philosophical pandering.
- D. So much for worldly training in speech, pulpit manner, and other carnal enticements of men!
- E. A simple presentation of the unvarnished gospel will bear fruit in all spiritually changed men.
- F. Paul's weak and pitiful delivery left the gospel to the work of the Spirit and power of God!
- G. It is certain powerful miracles by the Spirit's power demonstrated the truth (Mark 16:17-20; Mat 11:1-6; 27:54; John 14:11; Act 4:13-14; 13:6-12; Rom 15:17-19; I Thes 1:5; Heb 2:1-4).
- H. There is an amazing phenomenon – not even miracles can convince a natural man, as Israel!
- I. But the immediate context is Paul's preaching, which demonstrated the Spirit and power of God by convincing men of the truth and changing lives by an offensive message (1:22-25)!
- J. See also Matthew 7:28-29; Luke 4:32; John 7:46; Acts 6:10; I Thessalonians 1:8-10.
- K. There is a power working in believers, convincing them of the glory of God (Eph 3:14-21).
- L. Which was his goal, for he did not want a single convert trusting God by his persuasion only.

2:5 **Paul did not want a single convert turning to God by his persuasive preaching efforts.**

- A. God's power by the Holy Spirit is sufficient to convince the elect by a poor presentation.
- B. A powerful speaker, as the devil-possessed Adolph Hitler, can convert many to insane things.
- C. There are many such speakers in politics, education, business; and yes, of course, in religion!
- D. God's preachers are apt to teach (I Tim 3:2); but they do not use worldly methods or content; their aptitude is not approved by the world, as Peter's would have flunked (Acts 4:13).
- E. There is no room for Christian athletes, political discussions, scientific displays, musical presentations, conspiracy speculations, pagan religion studies, or other carnal attractions to excite the passions of the natural man or feed the carnal impulses of men.
- F. Every ministry that allows any of these or other additions attracts reprobates or carnal saints.
- G. These churches are filled with the "results" of salvation decisions that bear no spiritual fruit.
- H. How many "converts" of missionary-doctors result from reprobates "buying" medical help?
- I. How many "converts" of missionary-food programs result from reprobates "buying" food?

2:6 **Gospel preaching does convey wisdom to the elect, just not the fables of worldly wisdom.**

- A. After condemning worldly wisdom in preaching, Paul admits he indeed preaches wisdom.
- B. The apostles and preachers of Jesus Christ do preach wisdom, the glorious wisdom of God.
- C. Gospel preachers bring incredible wisdom to the table, just not the empty vanity of men.
- D. But only the perfect, the elect, receive the declaration of the wisdom of God by preachers.
- E. The word "perfect" describes saints taught in the gospel, which Paul used again (Phil 3:15).
- F. From the world's perspective, Paul called the elect base, weak, foolish, despised (1:26-28), just as from the world's perspective he had called the gospel foolishness (1:18,21,22,25).
- G. As he switches to affirm the wisdom of his preaching, he calls the elect perfect. The sense!
- H. A born again man has inward ability to judge, or discern, all things – he is perfect (2:15)!
- I. Wisdom is justified of her children! said Jesus. The saints wisely perceive the things of God.
- J. The world's body of knowledge – their educational scope-and-sequence – is very worthless!
- K. The world's princes – their educated and revered wise men – are idiots in the sight of God.

- L. The wisdom of saints is eternal wisdom with most weighty considerations and consequences.
- M. In the revelation of all truth in the Day of Judgment, man's wisdom will entirely evaporate!
- N. The blessed God and His apostles ridiculed it on earth (1:19-20; 3:19-20; I Tim 6:20-21).
- O. All the attainments, accomplishments, thoughts, and opinions of men will disappear entirely!

2:7 **The gospel reveals mysteries of hidden wisdom ordained in eternity by God for the elect.**

- A. In the foolishness of the preaching of the cross are mysteries hidden from all natural men.
- B. They are mysteries and hidden wisdom, because the world does not and cannot know them.
- C. The great God has chosen His elect before the world began to wonderful blessing in life and eternity, and they are discovered, revealed, and magnified by the foolishness of preaching.
- D. Jesus Christ Himself, the greatest mystery of all, was ordained from eternity for our glory.
- E. Bible Christians are a cult – a body of worshippers – dedicated to Jesus and His wisdom.
- F. Bible Christians are a secret society – the world does not recognize them or their wisdom.
- G. Bible Christians have a body of knowledge that exceeds all the wisdom of the whole earth.
- H. The whole universe moves toward a climax for the glory of God and for our eternal glory!
- I. Natural men can hear the words, but they have no ability or desire to see the incredible truth.

2:8 **The princes of this world had no understanding of the glorious truth hidden in the gospel.**

- A. Even the best of the world cannot figure out the most obvious spiritual facts – Jesus Christ!
- B. It was the political rules, educated scribes, and religious leaders, from Pilate to Caiaphas, supposedly the teachers and defenders of truth and wisdom, who crucified the Lord Jesus.
- C. Even though the Son of God was standing before them; even though they had superior wisdom to the populace; even though there was documented evidence of His miracles; even though He conducted Himself perfectly; they crucified Him in their ignorant blindness!
- D. Though there was much visible about Him to prove He was the Messiah of God, it is only by the grace of God in regeneration that allows a man to see His kingdom (John 3:3; 8:43,47).
- E. God has chosen, for His own glory, to conceal the truth from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes (Matt 11:25-27). Thank you, dear and blessed Lord! We thank you!
- F. What more could Jesus have done to prove and vindicate Himself? Yet they crucified Him!
- G. Without the grace of regeneration, men greedily pursue sin to the damnation of their souls.
- H. Consider a blind idolater scorned by Isaiah. He cannot deliver himself from a lie (Is 44:9-20).
- I. Jesus even prayed for forgiveness of their ignorance on the cross of Calvary (Luke 23:34).
- J. If they had known He was the Creator God and coming Judge with eternal power, they would have submitted and obeyed Him out of even natural fear of death. But they were blind!
- K. If they had known He was the Just and Holy of God, they would not have slandered Him.
- L. But for the grace of God, we could easily be idolatrous sodomites and cannibals, naturally.

2:9 **Paul quoted from the Scriptures to show that natural men cannot know our blessings.**

- A. The quotation is from Isaiah 64:4, though the inspired penman does not quote it exactly.
- B. Natural man is unable to see, hear, or even imagine the glories of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- C. God hath prepared great things for His elect from before the foundation of the world.
- D. The natural man is quite blind, deaf, and dull to the beauty and glory and grace of Christ.
- E. The ability of God to do quite above our imaginations will be fully realized in heaven.
- F. What things are we talking about? Must you ask? Let's think of a few! Eternal life, a virgin birth, heaven, justification by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, mansions in glory, adoption as the sons of God, deliverance from the destruction of the world, the resurrection of the dead, being indwelt by the God's Spirit, our Brother on the throne of David, God visited earth in Jesus of Nazareth, names in the Book of Life, regeneration of our hearts, glorified immortal bodies, Gentiles grafted into the Israel of God, the marriage supper of the

Lamb, everlasting righteousness and peace, inheriting God, the Second Adam as our representative, everlasting love, a High Priest in God's presence, among many other things!

- 2:10 **The hidden things God has prepared for the elect are revealed by the Holy Spirit of God.**
- A. It is by the Spirit's blessing of preacher and hearer that we discover God's great preparations.
  - B. What the world cannot know due to blind ignorance, the elect can understand by the gospel.
  - C. The Spirit of God, which moved on the face of the waters, searches all deep matters of God.
  - D. The prophet truly said, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel" (Is 52:7).
  - E. God's revelation of mysterious things is certainly by His word (Ps 119:18; II Tim 3:16-17).
  - F. But we also need personal light of the Spirit of God (Ps 119:18; Ep 1:17-19; I John 2:20-27).
  - G. God's Spirit has perfect and absolute knowledge of even God's deep things, which things are free justification by imputed righteousness rather than the number of the beast (666).
  - H. When the Spirit of God moved upon men in the O.T, they knew, did, and spake great things!
- 2:11 **The Spirit of God knows the things of God like a man's spirit knows the things of that man.**
- A. We cannot know another's feelings, plans, thoughts; they are known only to him (Pr 14:10).
  - B. In a glorious sense, the Spirit of God is the mind and revealer of God's plans and thoughts.
  - C. The Holy Spirit, being God Himself, is able to reveal all the things of God unknown to man.
- 2:12 **God has given the Holy Spirit to His ministers and saints to know all the things of God.**
- A. There is a spirit in this world that does not know the things of God; we do not have him.
  - B. The devil is leader and mover of all sinners, especially liars, murders, and religious frauds.
  - C. There is a spirit behind all the hallucinating lies and fables of men, no matter how educated.
  - D. The apostles had the Spirit in great measure, revealing the true doctrine of Christ to them.
  - E. The saints had the Spirit in good measure, receiving and understanding the gospel of truth.
  - F. The Holy Spirit is sent into our hearts as part of regeneration (Romans 8:14-16; Gal 4:6).
  - G. We have been given a very different spirit from the God-rejecting, truth-hating spirit of men.
  - H. There are two blessings here: we have the Spirit and the Spirit reveals things prepared for us.
- 2:13 **Christ's apostles preached the wonderful things of God by the Holy Ghost and His words.**
- A. Paul, without enticing words of man's wisdom, spoke the hidden wisdom of God's mysteries.
  - B. The Holy Spirit gave Paul words directly, and He gives them to us indirectly (II Tim 1:13).
  - C. Paul's preaching was spiritual reasoning about spiritual things from Scripture (Acts 17:2-3).
  - D. The content of proper preaching is the things of Jesus Christ revealed by the Spirit of God.
  - E. We do not teach the things of Christ by man's words or concepts, but rather by the Spirit's.
  - F. We compare spiritual things with spiritual things – using the Spirit's own words of Scripture and not comparing spiritual things foolishly with earthly concepts or reasoning.
  - G. We let the Bible interpret the Bible; it is its own best commentary. We stay with the Spirit.
- 2:14 **True wisdom is far above and out of reach of natural men, who cannot understand it at all.**
- A. A natural man, born only of the flesh, has no ability to recognize spiritual truth (John 3:3,6).
  - B. Preaching of gospel truth cannot help a natural man at all, for he will reject the message.
  - C. Paul has already established this point, but now we are exploring it in more detail (1:18).
  - D. Without a new man and the presence of the Spirit of God, no man can understand the gospel.
  - E. There is a violent animosity between the flesh and the things of the Spirit of God (Gal 5:17).
  - F. There is violent inability for the flesh nature of man to agree with the spirit (Romans 8:7-8).
  - G. Neither the Spirit nor any preacher can teach a natural man! He must make him spiritual first!
  - H. Though the things of the gospel are glorious and terrible, natural men mock them as foolish.
  - I. Though all and every human effort is made to convince them, they lack ability to learn.

- J. Man's intellectual ability is very great, but his spiritual ability is brutish (Psalm 49:20).
- K. The defect is in his motives and affections – for he always hates God (Psalm 10:4; Gen 6:5).

- 2:15 **The gospel is easy to men born again, yet there is no visible difference in their constitution.**
- A. The spiritual man in this verse is contrasted with the natural man of the previous verse – it is a man born again by the Spirit of God, a called saint, a believer, as were the Corinthians.
  - B. The judgment here is the same with discerning in the previous verse; it is not condemnation.
  - C. A man with the Spirit of God can judge that the gospel is indeed truth and precious indeed.
  - D. A born again man, with the Spirit of God in him, easily grasps and loves Christ's gospel.
  - E. Not every saint judges all things perfectly, but rather to the degree of his own illumination, and according to the amount of the gospel ministers have preached to him.
  - F. Natural men have no clue to what governs, directs, instructs, and comforts the child of God.
  - G. Natural men think the gospel is foolishness, and they think Christians are fanatics and fools.
  - H. Though saints should be counted the noblest of men, natural men despise and resent them.
- 2:16 **The things of God are far beyond human intelligence, but we have the mind of God in us.**
- A. Paul quoted Isaiah's rhetorical question in mocking the intelligence of natural man (Is 40:13).
  - B. No natural man, regardless of intelligence or education, can know or instruct Jehovah at all.
  - C. There is an infinite distance between the natural wisdom of man and God's perfect wisdom.
  - D. By the gracious ordination and regeneration of God, we have the mind of Christ by the Spirit.
  - E. By the indwelling Spirit of Christ, we have an internal witness to the thoughts of Jehovah.
  - F. Natural men do not have a clue of divine wisdom, but the saints have a great measure of it.
  - G. A child of God walking in the Spirit has much glorious wisdom exceeding all natural men.
  - H. How can we even grasp such a glorious thing? Let us be filled with His fullness (Eph 3:19)!

**Conclusion:**

1. If the preaching of God's precious word does not move you, it is your fault alone; you cannot blame God.
2. If the preaching of the gospel does not move you, you are either a reprobate or a miserable carnal Christian.
3. If you are a miserable carnal Christian, then you need to humble yourself and seek the face of you Father.
4. You need to read, meditate, and pray for right understanding of I Cor 2:9 until filled with the fullness of God.
5. Consider the abbreviated list of God's blessings in Christ for the elect that is listed below. Bless the Lord!

**Additional study:**

1. See, "Mysteries of Hidden Wisdom": [http://www.letgodbetruer.com/Sermons/pdf/Mysteries\\_of\\_Hidden\\_Wisdom.pdf](http://www.letgodbetruer.com/Sermons/pdf/Mysteries_of_Hidden_Wisdom.pdf)
2. See, "Carnal Christianity": <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/Sermons/pdf/ContemporaryChristianity.pdf>

See Below

# Things God Has Prepared for Us

“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.”

I Corinthians 2:9 from Isaiah 64:4

Adoption as the Sons of God  
Angels are our Servants  
Bodies were Bought by Jesus Christ  
Citizens of the Kingdom of God  
Crown of Life and Righteousness  
David's Son, now ruling the universe, is my Brother  
Deliverance from the Destruction of the World  
Filled with the Fullness of God is a Possibility  
Gentiles grafted into the Israel of God.  
Great High Priest never fails in obtaining Forgiveness.  
Escape from the Lake of Fire  
Eternal Life and Immortality  
Everlasting Righteousness and Peace  
God dwells in our hearts by the Holy Spirit  
God is our everlasting Portion Forever  
God visited earth for 33½ years  
Heaven  
Immortal bodies glorified by God  
Joint-heirs of God with Jesus Christ  
Judge men and devils with Christ  
Justification by the Imputation of Christ's righteousness  
King of kings is our Friend  
Loved with an everlasting love by God  
Marriage Supper of the Lamb  
Mansions in glory  
Name in the book of life from before the world began  
New Heaven and New Earth  
New Name of our God  
Paradise  
Perpetual Kindness from God  
Preserved holy in Christ Jesus  
Regeneration of our hearts to love God  
Resurrection of the Dead  
Second Adam stood and stands for Us  
Spirits of Just Men made Perfect  
Tree of Life  
Virgin birth of a Man, a new thing in the earth  
White Stone