

I CORINTHIANS 2

WHEN THE GOSPEL COMES TO TOWN

STUDENT GUIDE

DAILY BIBLE READING

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CORINTHIAN CULTURE

Corinth blossomed with artistic beauty. Famous paintings, elaborate architecture, and sophisticated sculptures filled the ancient city. Known for academic excellence, they took pride in their academies. But when we read the letters of the Apostle Paul to Corinth, mention of the city's fineries are conspicuously absent. . . . Paul came as soul-winner! He offered no new philosophy to debate, but a message to declare. Today, our lesson focuses on what happens when the Gospel comes to your town.

OUTLINE

1. When the Gospel is Declared (vv.1-5) - Someone once said of preaching, "Hell fears it but Heaven ordains it." We could add, but earth requires it. In the synagogue the apostle unapologetically defended Jesus as the coming Messiah.

A.) *Passion of a Gospel Preacher* - Notice Paul's words in vv. 1-3: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God . . ." Paul's heart burned with passion to preach.

B.) *Power of a Gospel Preacher* - Believe it or not, there are dangers in presenting the Gospel. One danger is attempting to present the Gospel with human persuasion. Paul cautions about the "enticing words of man's wisdom." Declaring the Gospel in the power of God's Spirit liberates the message to spiritually connect to the hearer.

C.) *Purpose of the Gospel Preacher* - John Wesley once said to a group of preachers, "You have only one thing to do — win souls!" Paul said at Corinth, "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (v.5).

Question - *Do you think there has been a change in preaching today? Why or why not? What is the most significant aspect of preaching the Gospel? Be specific.*

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2. When the Gospel is Discerned (vv. 6-13) - The church at Corinth divided because they were enamored with human wisdom, failing to see the simplicity of God's wisdom.

A.) *We Discern the Gospel by Spiritual Revelation* - Paul writes, "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. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (vv. 9-10).

B.) *We Discern the Gospel by Spiritual Illumination* - God reveals Himself to us by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the Holy Spirit moves upon our hearts and minds to understand the things God reveals.

C.) *We Discern the Gospel by Spiritual Inspiration* - Spiritual inspiration may be described as verbal. That is, the very words of the Scripture are inspired. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit inspired the Bible systematically. Paul's phrase "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" is indicative of harmony. No part of the Bible contradicts another part. Scripture sheds light on Scripture.

3. When the Gospel is Declined (vv. 14-16) - As the Gospel is declared, the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to discern its deeper meaning. NO doctrine can be known apart from the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Even so, the Scripture the Holy Spirit reveals to us can be side-stepped and even dismissed. Paul gives three categories of listeners in this section of Scripture:

A.) *Natural Listener* - The natural listener is an unsaved person. He or she has never met Christ. And even though the person may be noticeably refined, highly intellectual, morally sharpened, or extraordinarily gifted, he or she nevertheless is conceived in sin, shaped in iniquity, and totally undone before God.

B.) *Spiritual Listener* - Paul describes this person as one who "judgeth all things" and even possessing the "mind of Christ." Contrary to the unsaved man, the spiritual man is a saved man. The Holy Spirit not only abides in this person's life, but He also presides over this person's life.

C.) *Carnal Listener* - Paul shocks the Corinthians with the category of the carnal listener. While the carnal person is a saved person, in many respects, he or she acts similarly to an unsaved person. In essence, the carnal person is a spiritual freak, a hypocritical attempt to live a double life. The carnal person lives by the wit of the old nature, declining much if not most of the godly wisdom available by spiritual illumination. In essence, the carnal person lives a self-enthroned life.

Question: *Reflect for a moment concerning your personal attitude toward spiritual realities. What listening category would you consider yourself fitting? Be very honest with yourself.*

Wrap Up: While Gospel wisdom is declared by faithful witnesses today, declaring wisdom is not enough. People must respond to what is declared. Hence, the Holy Spirit's role is to illumine what He has inspired - the Word of God. Without His illumination, our hearts cannot receive Divine truth. With His illumination, however, we are enabled to decide for Christ or dismiss His revelation to us. What is your response to God's revealed Word?