

1 Corinthians 2:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Analysis

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. Paul describes apostolic communication method: *lalōmen* (λαλοῦμεν, "we speak") indicates ongoing proclamation. The negative contrast—**not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth** (ouk en didaktois anthrōpinēs sophias logois, οὐκ ἐν διδακτοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις)—rejects both philosophical jargon and rhetorical artifice. Positively: **which the Holy Ghost teacheth** (en didaktois pneumatos, ἐν διδακτοῖς πνεύματος) claims Spirit-taught vocabulary.

The phrase *pneumatikois pneumatika synkrinontes* (πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual") is notoriously difficult. Options include:

1. "interpreting spiritual truths to spiritual people" (taking first term as masculine)
2. "explaining spiritual realities in Spirit-given words" (both neuter)
3. "comparing Scripture with Scripture" (OT with NT).

Option (2) fits context best—Paul emphasizes Spirit-inspired content requires Spirit-inspired expression. This undergirds verbal plenary inspiration: not just concepts but words themselves are Spirit-chosen (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).

Historical Context

Greek rhetoric distinguished logos (content) from lexis (style). Sophists mastered both to manipulate audiences. Paul insists Spirit controls both message and medium. Jewish scribal method emphasized precise wording—every letter sacred (Matthew 5:18). Paul applies this reverence to apostolic teaching: the very words matter. Later Gnostics would claim Spirit-revelation while denying apostolic authority; Paul preempts this by binding Spirit-teaching to apostolic proclamation. Inspiration extends to vocabulary, not just ideas.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the Spirit's choice of biblical vocabulary guard against redefining Christian terms to fit cultural preferences?
2. What happens when preachers prioritize contemporary relevance or eloquence over faithfulness to Scripture's own language and categories?
3. How can you grow in letting Scripture's words shape your thinking rather than translating Scripture into more comfortable terminology?

Interlinear Text

α	καὶ	λαλοῦμεν	οὐκ	ἐν	διδακτοῖς	ἀνθρωπίνης
Which things	also	we speak	not	in	teacheth	which man's
G3739	G2532	G2980	G3756	G1722	G1318	G442
σοφίας	λόγοις	ἀλλ'	ἐν	διδακτοῖς	πνεύματος	ἀγίου,
wisdom	the words	but	in	teacheth	Ghost	which the Holy
G4678	G3056	G235	G1722	G1318	G4151	G40
πνευματικὰ	πνευματικὰ	συγκρίνοντες				
spiritual things	spiritual things	comparing				
G4152	G4152	G4793				

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 2:4 (Spirit): And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

1 Corinthians 1:17 (Word): For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

1 Corinthians 2:14 (Spirit): But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Colossians 3:16 (Spirit): Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 2:1 (Parallel theme): And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.