

Sunday, November 22, 2015—I Corinthians 2:13-14: The Natural Man and the Spirit of God

Introduction/Review

- Last week during our time together, we considered verses 9 through 12. In summation we considered the following points about each verse.
- Verse 9— Paul follows up his discussion of “the wisdom of God in a mystery” in verses 7 and 8 with a contrast “but” and an allusion to the Old Testament “as it is written” (Is. 64:4). Paul is saying that the glory that God ordained and prepared for the body of Christ (verse 8) is beyond anything that we have ever seen with our eyes, heard with our ears, or conceived in your hearts. This is glory that cannot be known through the normal function of man’s reasoning faculties.
- Verse 10—those things that man was utterly incapable of knowing via his own wisdom have been revealed and made known unto us by the Spirit of God. God at a point in time in the past revealed that which was before unknown, through the instrumentality of the Spirit of God. God the Father moved to reveal or disclose the information, whereas God the Holy Spirit is the active agent whereby the information was disclosed. Only the Spirit of God who is capable of searching the “deep things of God” can reveal, uncover, and make known the glory that God has prepared from those who love him.
- Verse 11— the only hope we creatures of dirt have of knowing the things of God is via the revealing/teaching ministry of God the Holy Spirit.
- Verse 12—we received “the spirit which is of God” in verse 12 for the purpose and intent of knowing “the things freely given us of God.” In other words, we cannot know these things in any other way. In addition, just because someone does not know about them does not mean that they did not receive them.
- In the context, “the things freely given of God” in verse 12, relates to “the deep things of God” in verse 10, which corresponds with “the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom” in verse 7, which constitutes the wisdom Paul was speaking among the perfect in verse 6.
- This morning we want to move on and consider verses 13 and 14.

I Corinthians 2:13

- **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.**
- *Which things also we speak*—note the present tense on the verb “we speak.” In the context, what things was Paul actively speaking? It would be “the things that are freely given to us of God” in verse 12.

- *Not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth*—in seeking to make these things known Paul was not utilizing man's words or man's wisdom. The fact that Paul was not using man's wisdom to teach these things corresponds with the fact that believers have not received “the spirit of the world” in verse 12. How many times in the opening chapters of I Corinthians has Paul stated that he was not conducting his ministry in this fashion?
 - I Corinthians 1:17, 18-21, 24-25, 27
 - I Corinthians 2:1, 4-5
- *But which the Holy Ghost teacheth*—note the contrast “but” at the head of this portion of the verse. On the negative side, Paul was not using man's words or wisdom to teach about the things that are freely given of God in verse 12. Rather on the positive side, Paul was teaching using the words by “which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”
- Where did Paul get the words or the content of what he was speaking? From the teaching ministry of God the Holy Spirit. Theologians have called this present and active ministry of God the Holy Spirit illumination. Pastor Richard Jordan in Grace School of the Bible defines illumination as:
 - “. . . the process whereby the truth of Scripture gets off the page and into the soul of the believer. . . Illumination is the spiritual process that occurs in the inner man of the believer as God the Holy Spirit takes the written word of God that the Spirit wrote, and communicates it to the believer's inner man. This is how spiritual growth and learning take place and how sound doctrine is stored up in the believer's soul.”
- *Comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*—here Paul identifies the methodology by which the Holy Ghost teaches i.e., comparing “spiritual things with spiritual things.” This is what we have elsewhere, in other studies, called the comparative principle of Bible study. Comparing scripture with scripture is our second fundamental principle of Bible study from our series on Right Division 101.
- God the Holy Spirit teaches today through the written word of God as believers study and compare verses. Consider the following example from Israel program in time past.
 - Matthew 28:19—“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . .”
 - Luke 24:47—“. . . beginning at Jerusalem.”
 - Acts 1:8—“. . . and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

- If and when these verses are read in isolation from each other mistakes in thinking and theology are made. When all three verses are compared to one another and taken together a full and total picture and understanding is developed.
- Colossians 1:25—now that the word of God is complete, the only way the Spirit of God teaches any many anything, is by comparing scripture with scripture.
- This is such an important point that should not be overlooked. The only way you know that God has spoken to you or anyone else is through a written objective standard outside of yourself. You need to be on the lookout for believers who claim to have had special knowledge or revelation from God. Inspiration and revelation have ceased and God only speaks today through his word.
- I Corinthians 2:13—Paul was speaking and teaching about the things freely given of God using the words and the method by which the Holy Ghost teacheth.

I Corinthians 2:14

- **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.**
- *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*—the contrast “but” highlights the fact that the teaching ministry of God the Holy Spirit explained in verse 13 is not going to work for the “natural man.”
- The “natural man” is a reference to an unregenerate or unbelieving person i.e., a person who has never believed Paul’s gospel.
- Ephesians 2:1-3—man by nature is a child of wrath who has God’s wrath abiding upon him.
- I Corinthians 15:22—a person is either in Adam i.e., the natural state or they are in Christ and made alive to the life of God.
- I Corinthians 2:14—asserts that the “natural man” is not capable of receiving the things of the Spirit of God. The things of the Spirit of God are fooliness unto him and he cannot know them.
 - I Corinthians 1:18, 20-21, 25, 27
- The natural man’s problem is that he has not received “the spirit which is of God” in verse 12. Therefore, he is incapable of knowing “the things of the Spirit of God” in verse 14 because those things can only be “spiritually discerned” i.e., “distinguished; seen; or discovered.” (*Webster’s 1828*)
- One cannot know via natural means what is only knowable and discernible through the teaching process and ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

- Genesis 1:26-27—God made Adam in his own image. I believe this refers to the fact that God created Adam as a trinity possessing a body, a soul, and a spirit.
 - I Thessalonians 5:23—every human being possesses a body, a soul, and a spirit.
- Genesis 2:17—God warned Adam that if he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that he would “surely die.”
- Genesis 3:6-8—when Adam ate of the fruit did he die physically? No, he did spiritually.
- Genesis 5:1-3—notice that Adam’s children are born in the image and likeness of Adam not God. In other words, they are born with spirits that are dead to the life of God. This is why the natural man is incapable of knowing what can only be spiritually discerned in I Cor. 2:14.
- Titus 3:5—when you trusted Christ, God the Holy Spirit conducted a spiritual cleaning process in your inner man and brought the life of God into your formally dead spirit.
- Romans 8:9-11—God the Holy Spirit now indwells the believer thereby giving that believer the ability to know what can only be spiritual discerned.
 - I Corinthians 3:16
 - II Timothy 1:14
- II Peter 1:21—God the Holy Spirit was the active agent in the process of revelation and inspiration.
- The same Spirit of God that moved upon the Biblical writers thereby causing them to record God’s words dwells within the believer. The indwelling Holy Spirit establishes a connection point between that believer and God almightily. Now when that believer read the Bible they are capable of discerning and understanding God’s word.