

“The Deep Things of God”

1 Corinthians 2:10-16

In some translations of the Bible, the word (all one in the Greek) translated “deep things” is seen as only one word – “depths.” “Metaphorically meaning greatness, immensity...Depth, profoundness, inscrutability... (‘the secret, unrevealed purposes of God’)” (Zodhiates). This points back to verse 7 where the Apostle Paul is writing to the Corinthian believers and letting them know that what they know of Christ, as has been revealed to them through His Word, and, as we will see in this text, through His Spirit using the Word, was a hidden mystery both before the Age of Grace we live in now by the writers that spoke of it, as well as hidden to those that would reject the truth of the Suffering Messiah.

As will be seen in the message, we have the privilege from the Lord to know the “depths of God,” those “deep things” that are knowable, “freely given to us of God.” What a wonderful thing that should be to us that are believers in Christ, born again by the Spirit of God. Not only can we know Him through that salvation, but we will see that we can know all that is knowable about Him, from His Word, as revealed through His Spirit.

On the other side of that, we will also see that those without a saving knowledge of Christ will not be able to understand those “deep things of God” because they don’t have the Spirit of God indwelling them, guiding them to that knowledge. How sad for us to know them and for those around us not to, and how sad for them that don’t know, can’t see, can’t understand them!

NOTE: One thing of note here is the way some theologians interpret this text. They say the “we”

and "us" in this verse (and in verses beginning with verse 6) refer to the Apostles and the inspiration of Scripture. Although it was, initially, speaking of the Apostle, and his team, that came to Corinth to teach them, and was referring to what was taught (and, by extension, the inspiration of Scripture), it goes beyond that in the text. It goes, as we will see, to what we do with the Word of God today through the Spirit of God. The "we" and "us," compared to the use of the personal pronouns "I" and "you" in the previous sections, show that he is referencing the work they did in Corinth as a team, and how that work was inspired by, and anchored in, the ministry of the Spirit of God. So, as we look at this text, consider the "we" and "us" being that which began with the Apostle (his team, as well as other writers of Scripture) as he taught the inspired Word of God to the people, and continued on today through the teaching ministry of the church.

There's a progression of revelation (things revealed to us of – from – God, through His Spirit) of the "deep things" (depths) of God seen in these verses:

I. THEY ARE KNOWN BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD – VS. 10-11

A. These verses show us a doctrinal truth of the Trinity – specifically the connection between God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit were not part of the Godhead (equally), then He would not know the "deep things of God." That's made clear here.

B. As pointed out in the last message that the first part of verse 10 is showing that the hidden wisdom of God that to the world is a mystery but to the believer is glory, was revealed to us by the Spirit

C. The latter part of verse 10 is where the text for this message begins – it shows the “deep things of God” are “searched” by the Spirit

1. The word for “searcheth” does not merely mean that He was looking for something, as we think of the word today, but rather “to search accurately, diligently, so as fully to understand” (Barnes).
2. The Spirit searches “all things” as they relate to God, specifically the “deep things,” the depths of Who He is in order to convey that to mankind. “The Spirit is the organ of understanding between man and God.” (quote of Findlay by RWP)
3. As God, the Holy Spirit doesn’t need to “search,” as we think of it, but in order for us to understand the Spirit’s ministry in the heart, mind, and life of the believer (specifically here) the Bible puts this in a way we can comprehend – vs. 11 bears this out

D. Vs. 11 gives an argument, or an analogy, of the ministry of the Spirit as He relates all that can be known of God (the Godhead)

1. The first part of the verse sets the framework for the Spirit’s work – the only part of man that is fully and only known by man is the spirit of man, and the only one that can describe or demonstrate who that man is IS that man, and only him
 - a) The word for “knoweth” here is one that means “to see with perception” (Zodhiates)

- b) Not just to have a head knowledge (intelligence), but to know from experience (hence, the word used here often translated as "see" or "saw") – points back to vs. 9
- c) The spirit of man is the only part of us that knows us, in the fullest capacity – and it is there that the Holy Spirit fellowships with us, because it is there that we are most fully known

Romans 8:16

(16) The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

- 2. So, the only way anyone can know the "depths of God" is to know the Spirit of God because He's the only One that can truly know God (for He is to God what man's spirit is to man). The only way to know the Spirit of God is through the redemptive work of Christ.

Romans 8:9

(9) But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

John 3:5-6

(5) Jesus answered, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

(6) *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

- 3. Notice the phrase "but the Spirit of God" – there is a contrast here that is important to the doctrine of the Trinity. The phrase in the first part of the verse, "which is in

him," speaking of man's spirit, is missing in relation to the Spirit of God. That is not a coincidence – the Spirit of God is not "in God," it IS God.

II. THEY ARE MADE KNOWN TO THE SAVED – VS. 12-13

A. As pointed out in the previous point, the only way for man to know all that can be known of God is through the ministry of the Spirit – that is shown in more detail in these verses

B. Vs. 12 – going back to the argument that began in chapter one, the Apostle tells the Corinthians, again, that it is not the "spirit of the world" that matters – the spirit, or knowledge that lost man's spirit has, is not going to benefit in eternity

C. Vs. 12 then says that we have, in comparison or opposition to the worldly spirit, been given the "spirit which is of God"

1. The word for "but" here is not the normal word in the Greek used for this contrasting conjunction. The word "serves...to mark opposition, antithesis, or transition" (Zodhiates) – in complete contrast to the spirit of the world, and all it holds, we have been given ("have received" as a gift involved with grace – it's in the verb tense pointing to a specific event in the past that happened once) the "spirit which is of God."
2. Notice, in some versions of the Bible, the word "spirit" is with a lowercase "s" rather

than marking the Holy Spirit – that is because it's pointing to our spirit being indwelt by His Spirit and being changed from the spirit of the world. This is seen in the phrase "of God" – or "from God" – the spirit that we have now is no longer the spirit we use to have – it's been created new.

2 Corinthians 5:17

(17) Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Ezekiel 11:19

(19) And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:

Ezekiel 36:26

(26) A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

D. Vs. 12 ends with the reason we have been given the Holy Spirit (at least in part) – "that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God"

1. "We" – the believer – "might know" – again, the word used here is to know from experience. Let me make this point – keeping with the context begun in verse 6, and the issue brought out there of the wisdom being spoken of among the "perfect" (mature believer), the "we" here is most specifically dealing with those mature believers, represented by the Apostle and his team. To know the "deep

things of God" is going to require a continued maturity in the things of God, as found in His Word.

2. "The things" – points back to the "deep things of God"
3. "That are freely given to us of God" (or "by" God)
 - a) The phrase "that are freely given" are one word in the Greek and come from the root word the word "grace" comes from – by definition it means "to give graciously, to give freely" (Thayer)
 - b) This is speaking of, first of all, and most importantly, the free gift of God's grace "the great privileges of the gospel, which are the free gift of God, distributions of mere and rich grace" (Henry)
 - c) But, considering this passage was written to the believers in Corinth, and the whole context here is dealing with the comparison of man's wisdom with that of God's, and what we have in Christ when it comes to wisdom, the "things" given "freely" to us are all the things that the depths of knowing God through His Spirit can teach us. That's the ministry of the Spirit.

John 16:14-15

(14) He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.

(15) All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.

Romans 8:32

(32) He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he

not with him also freely give us all things?

1 John 2:27

(27) But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

E. Verse 13 goes to the ability that the Apostle Paul had when he was in Corinth to teach was given to him by the Holy Spirit

1. "Which things also we speak"
 - a) Goes back to vs. 10 and the "deep things of God"
 - b) Again, we see the Apostle Paul referring to their ministry when they came to Corinth, and then as he was writing back to them in this letter, he is pointing out that what he was writing was not from man, but from God
 - c) As we teach the Word of God today – as we literally "speak" it out loud, we are doing the same thing – making the inspired Word of God relevant to the believer – this is what matures them as spoken of before in this message.
2. "Not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth" – what we have to teach – what was revealed to the Apostles that were inspired to write Scripture, and then given to us in the form of the written Word of God – is not based on the world's ability to understand through their wisdom. It

wasn't given initially that way, and it isn't to be taught that way today.

3. "But which the Holy Ghost teacheth"

- a) It was initially given by, and through the Spirit – we call that "inspiration"

2 Timothy 3:16

(16) All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

2 Peter 1:20-21

(20) Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

(21) For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.

- b) And it is still, today, given by, and through Him – we call that "revelation"

John 16:13

(13) Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

1 Peter 1:10-12

(10) Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace *that should come* unto you:

(11) Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and

the glory that should follow.

(12) Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

4. "Comparing spiritual things with spiritual"

a) Much debate has been given to this phrase over the years, and much of it is based on an overall view of this passage, as well as what text of the Bible one uses

b) "Comparing"

(1) *There are only two times in the NT this word is used – here and in 2 Cor. 10:12*

[2 Corinthians 10:12](#)

(12) For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

(2) *In the Septuagint, it is the Greek word used for the Hebrew word translated "interpreter" in the book of Genesis*

(3) *Zodhiates says of it: "Literally, to compare one thing with another by noting similarities and differences" – that's where we get the principle of comparing Scripture with Scripture – using the Bible as the best commentary on itself*

(4) *Some versions translate this as*

"combining," "judging," "interpreting," etc.

- c) Where the problem comes in is with the part that reads "spiritual things with spiritual"

(1) Keeping within the context of revealing God's word, and the depths it holds, it would be most natural to consider the "spiritual things" those things revealed in the Bible, and then to compare those things to the other spiritual things in the Bible

(2) Matthew Henry says this: One part of revelation with another, the revelation of the gospel with that of the Jews, the discoveries of the New Testament with the types and prophecies of the Old. The comparing of matters of revelation with matters of science, things supernatural with things natural and common, is going by a wrong measure. Spiritual things, when brought together, will help to illustrate one another; but, if the principles of human art and science are to be made a test of revelation, we shall certainly judge amiss concerning it, and the things contained in it.

Ephesians 5:19

(19) Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Colossians 3:16

(16) 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.

Conclusion to part 1: We have been given much through the ministry of the Holy Spirit – the most important being the gift of the new life. Along with that greatest of gifts is that, as a believer, we can now understand the “deep things of God” as revealed through the inspired Word of God. Lost man can see the Godhead in creation, but only saved, regenerated man can see Him in Scripture, in the fullest way possible.

III. THEY ARE UNKNOWN TO THE LOST – VS. 14-16

We have looked at the first two points to this text in the last couple of weeks. The first point we looked at was found in verses 10-11, and that is that the deep things of God are known to the Spirit of God in their fullest. The only way anyone can know the “depths of God” is to know the Spirit of God because He’s the only One that can truly know God (for He is to God what man’s spirit is to man). The only way to know the Spirit of God is through the redemptive work of Christ.

Last week we saw that those deep things of God are made known only to the saved. The important truths of salvation may be known to all mankind through creation, and the simple things of the Word of God, but those deep things that we desire, as believers, can only be known to us, and only known by us if we search for them. This points back to verse 6 and the word “perfect.”

We have been given much through the ministry of the Spirit of God, the most important being new life. With that greatest of gifts is that we can know the deep things of God as revealed through the Scriptures.

That brings us to this final point – those deep things of God, all that is knowable about the

Creator of the universe, are unknown to the lost. As already stated, the important things of salvation and hope are easily understood, but the rest is not.

Scotfield outlines the three types of man that Scripture speaks of, and more specifically, that the Apostle Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians: Natural man – here, in verse 14 – unsaved man; Spiritual man – also in this text, in verse 15 – this is saved, regenerate man that walks with the Spirit; and Carnal man – 3:1 – saved man but one who walks after the world

(From Scotfield)

Paul divides men into three classes:

Greek, "psuchikos", meaning "of the senses" (James 3:15); (Jude 1:19) or "natural," that is, the Adamic man, unrenewed through the new birth (John 3:3); (John 3:5). – "the animal man, one who lives in a natural state, and under the influence of his animal passions" (TSK)

James 3:13-15

(13) Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

(14) But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

(15) This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish.

Greek, "pneumatikos", meaning "spiritual," that is, the renewed man as Spirit-filled and walking in the Spirit in full communion with God (Eph_5:18-20); and

Ephesians 5:18

(18) And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

Greek, "sarkikos", meaning "carnal," "fleshly,"

that is, the renewed man who, walking "after the flesh," remains a babe in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1-4).

1 Corinthians 3:1-2

(1) And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even* as unto babes in Christ.

(2) I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able *to bear it*, neither yet now are ye able.

The "natural" man may be learned, gentle, eloquent, fascinating, but the "spiritual" content of Scripture is absolutely hidden from him; and the "fleshly", or "carnal", Christian is able to comprehend only its simplest truths, "milk" (1 Cor. 3:2).

Adam Clarke: The person in question is not only one who either has had no spiritual teaching, or has not profited by it; but one who lives for the present world, having no respect to spiritual or eternal things.

A. He cannot know them without the Spirit – vs. 14 – "neither can he know them"

1. He chooses not to accept them – "receiveth not"
 - a) To "receive" means to accept an offer deliberately and readily. To take to oneself what is presented or brought by another (Zodhiates).
 - b) Someone who hears the gospel and chooses, for whatever reason, to reject that offer of grace, is considered to be "natural" man here, and, because of his rejection, does not, and cannot, understand the things of God as revealed in the Bible

John 3:3-6

(3) Jesus answered and said unto him, **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**

(4) Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

(5) Jesus answered, **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**

(6) **That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**

2. He considers them foolish (moronic, literally) – “for they are foolishness unto him”

a) As we saw from chapter one, the things of God, and the people that follow them, are senseless, absurd, or just plain silly to natural man

b) Until someone without Christ, without the Holy Spirit indwelling, receives the gift of grace, what the Bible says, and what the believer does in believing it, will just be foolish to them

3. He does not comprehend their importance – “because they are [only] spiritually discerned”

a) “They” – the deep things of God (vs. 10), the things only the Spirit can reveal

b) “Are spiritually discerned”

*(1) The things from the Spirit can **only** be understood by those that are spiritual, and not by those that are natural*

(2) *The term "discerned" has to do with judicial examination, "to examine magistrates with a view to proving their qualifications; and to examine persons concerned in a suit, so as to prepare the matter for trial, as a grand jury" – "the fundamental idea of the word is examination, scrutiny" (Vincent).*

(3) *Not a common word (16 times) – only used by Luke (in his Gospel and the book of Acts) and in 1 Corinthians. Translated examined, judged, searched (in their various forms)*

- c) The things of the Spirit, the deep things of God, are only knowable to those that are spiritual, and only to those that are willing to put the effort in to searching the Scriptures to find them

[Acts 17:11](#)

(11) These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and **searched** the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

B. He does not understand why we know them – vs. 15

1. The first part of the verse shows that the saved, the "spiritual," those guided by the Holy Spirit into the deep things of God, examine them for more ("judgeth"), and consider all of the Word of God as of value
2. Natural, unsaved man tries to understand why that is, but, because he does not have the Spirit, and considers what we do with the Bible as foolish, he has no capacity to examine us and determine the answer

[Galatians 2:3-5](#)

(3) But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

(4) And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

(5) To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

C. He (natural man) cannot use them to instruct – vs. 16

1. This seems like an odd thing to say, but considering the background of Corinth, and the desire for knowledge and teaching by the Greeks there, Paul is telling the believers in the church that natural, unsaved man has no ability to teach us spiritual things; they have no input into what we do, why we do it, what the Bible says or means, because they cannot know them. There are a lot of people that want to tell us what the Bible says and why it is, or is not, right or wrong, but, unless they are believers, unless they are spiritual, and can know the deep things of God, they have nothing to offer the believer. We, in fact, should give them no venue for debate or teaching.
2. The only way to instruct anyone in the Scriptures, and specifically the deep things of God, is to know “the mind of the Lord” – the only way to do that is to be indwelt by the Spirit, to have the mind of the Spirit
 - a) The first part of this verse is a reference to Isaiah 40:13, which is quoted in Romans
[Isaiah 40:13](#)

(13) Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or *being* his counsellor hath taught him?

Romans 11:34

(34) For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

- b) The question as to who has known the "mind of the Lord" – and, as Isaiah shows, this is referring to the Spirit of the Lord knowing the mind, or things, of God – has already been answered previously – only the spiritual person can
- c) "That he" – this pronoun goes back to "natural man"
- d) "May instruct" – word comes from two words that mean to knit together – so, to cause to come together, to bring together – in this text, to put together mentally, as an instructor in a class room
- e) "Him" – spiritual man, and, by extension, God Himself

Natural men who judge spiritual men, living according to the mind of God ("We have the mind of Christ"), are virtually wishing to instruct God, and bring Him to another mind, as counselors setting to right their king. (JFB)

3. The last statement of the verse declares a truth the natural man in Corinth, and most likely those that had gathered in the church without salvation, has no ability to instruct anyone on Scripture because they did not have the mind of Christ in order to teach. Paul tells the church that "we have the mind of Christ" – maybe to the world

they were foolish and ignorant, but no matter natural man's intelligence, we have a far superior "mind" because we have the "mind of Christ."

- a) "The mind" – the intellect
- b) "Of Christ" – we do not know everything He does, nor will we, being finite, created beings. But we can know all the "deep things of God," and having the "mind of Christ" allows us the ability to teach those "deep things" of the Spirit of God to others.
- c) Hence Paul and all [spiritual] men are superior to those who try to shake their faith in Christ, the mystery of God. Paul can say, "I know him whom I have believed." "I believe; therefore I have spoken." (RWP)

2 Timothy 1:12

(12) For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

2 Corinthians 4:13

(13) We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;

Conclusion: Do you want to know more about Him? More of the depths of God, through His Word? The only way to do that is if you are "spiritual" (saved and growing). "Natural" man (unsaved, worldly) not only won't want to know about them, he cannot, for God has only prepared them for those that love Him and want to know more.

George Barna wrote *The State of the Church* in 2002. Barna conducted a survey of self-proclaimed Christians and here's what he found about their knowledge of the Bible. These are Christians.

- 48% could not name the four Gospels.
- 52% cannot identify more than two or three of Jesus' disciples.
- 60% of American Christians can't name even five of the 10 Commandments.
- 61% of American Christians think the Sermon on the Mount was preached by Billy Graham.
- 71% of American Christians think "God helps those who help themselves" is a Bible verse.

George Barna said, "Americans revere the Bible, but by and large they don't know what it says. And because they don't know it, they have become a nation of biblical illiterates."

What about you? Are you one of those statistics? The church at Corinth was, for the most part, as we will see from chapter three, just like modern churches – and they paid a dear price for it. They changed and grew spiritually – are we willing to do what it takes to do the same?