

9 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. 10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 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. 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. 15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. 16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

As we saw two weeks ago, Paul not an illiterate who condemned knowledge and taught nonsense. This is what he was accused of when he insisted on the preaching of the cross of Christ. Instead, he divides the human race into two classes of people: those who receive the wisdom of the world, and those whom he called “perfect” in verse 6. There are many words used in the New Testament to describe Christians—they are the called; they are “spiritual”; they are “in the light.” Although the word “perfect” can mean mature, it does not mean that in this context, as if the Gospel of the Cross of Christ was only for mature Christians. Instead, it is another adjective that is used to describe Christians: Throughout the passage in I Cor. 1 and 2 the difference is made between the called and the uncalled. Those called to Christ are counted complete in Him, and the perfection spoken of here is that which is obtained through the cross of Christ and nowhere else. But I commented on this last time.

This passage has to do with the revelation of the things that God has prepared for them that love him. These are the things that God prepared in eternity for the glory of the church, as He said in verse 7. We ought not to stagger at the idea that these are things from eternity, as if we were incapable of receiving them. Instead, this passage teaches us that they are revealed and that they belong to us and to all the people of God. The things spoken of are the things of the Gospel. These things have been revealed to the church. But how have they been revealed to the church? That is an important question, and it is very important that we think clearly about it, for the answer will affect the way we view the rest of Scripture. Who are the “us” in 10?

The word knowledge itself can have several different meanings. I would concentrate on two of these meanings today, not to be tedious or pedantic, but because your understanding of this passage will depend upon how you understand what sort of knowledge is spoken of. The commentaries themselves are divided, and I think it is because they do not make this important distinction.

- I. In the first place, “knowledge” can be taken objectively for a body of truth. For instance, a book can contain knowledge about chemistry. When we say that a library contains all sorts of knowledge, we are using the word in an objective sense. If by the knowledge of the Gospel, we mean the things that can be contained in creeds and in the Bible, then the revelation was not to all people, nor even to all Christians. The “us” would be to the apostles and the prophets, for the content of the Gospel was not revealed to all men, but was historically revealed through the apostles and the prophets, and the church is built upon the foundation of their teachings. Jesus Christ Himself in his earthly ministry was chief among those who laid down the foundation of Christian truth. Or you could take the word “us” to mean the entire human race, because the writings of the apostles and the prophets belong to all men—and the truth of the Gospel has been revealed. If Paul is speaking of the content of the Gospel, then the meaning of the passage would be this: The Gospel was not dreamed up by men, nor did

it come from the imaginations and the clever constructions of men. The Gospel was revealed by God through the agency of men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. We have dealt with this subject before, in four messages I brought from Galatians 1.

II. But the word “knowledge” can be taken in a subjective sense. Do you have the knowledge of God? These questions do not mean “do you have a book about these things,” but do you have this knowledge in you, in your mind and in your heart. Do you know the Lord? is not the same question as “Do you know about the Lord?” I think that Paul touches upon this kind of knowledge, but I think His main reference here is to the former—the substance of the Gospel that he preached. He denies that it originated among men, but that it originated from God. But let us look at the words.

Vs. 10, 11. Paul argues from man to God. His point is this: that only a person knows what is in himself. Only you know what you are thinking, no other human does. Dog’s don’t; chickens don’t. You must not push the figure of speech too far and begin to speculate about the Holy Trinity from this image or you will get into error: this is a good rule to follow for images in the Bible. Jesus is the good shepherd, but doesn’t mean that you can get a good leg of lamb from Him. It simply means that He cares for His people the way a good shepherd cares for his sheep. Don’t push the figure too far.

The teachers I used to get most irritated by when I was a kid were the teachers to thought they knew what I was thinking, and would make accusations based on that. The teachers I respected, and they were few and far between, were those who tried to talk to me and tried to find out what I thought. I knew they didn’t know if I didn’t tell them, and I didn’t want to waste time with arrogant people.

Proverbs 20:27 says The spirit of man *is* the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly. The God who created the eye surely knows everything about seeing and understanding. He who made the ear certainly knows everything about hearing and comprehending. He who made the soul of man certainly knows about knowledge and discernment. The mind that created the universe certainly penetrates and discerned everything that is in the universe, and man’s mind was created to be an image of that all-seeing, all-knowing mind. Your soul is an image of the soul of God, but our candle is so dim and dark because of our fall into sin. We must pray with the Psalmist, “Light my candle, enlighten my darkness.” Jesus is the true light that lights every man that comes into the world, but without the Gospel, man’s dim and natural light is darkness, as Jesus said. If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness.

The things of the Gospel, the things that God has prepared for us for our glory, were hidden in the mind and heart of God, known only by the spirit of God, just as your inmost thoughts are hidden in your soul. Because the Spirit is God, He knows the deepest things of God, and what belongs to us, He has revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Man cannot penetrate the mind of God—God’s thoughts must be revealed, and they have been revealed. The Gospel is not a secret anymore, although it was a mystery until the coming of Christ, only dimly revealed in the Old Testament.

Vs. 12-13. This is the reason why I think that Paul is speaking of the content of the Gospel, rather than the subjective knowledge that a Christian has through the Gospel. “We speak” does not all Christians so speak, but those who were entrusted with the proclamation of God’s revelation: the apostles and the prophets. Paul is continuing the theme of verses 1-5: his teaching is not in man’s wisdom, or in cleverly chosen words of man’s wisdom, but those to whom the revelation of the Gospel was given are given the very words with which to convey this message to the world, words which the Holy Spirit teaches. There are “spiritual words” which God has given to convey the “spiritual things” of the Gospel. Paul denied that he taught by means of human wisdom, but by the power of the Holy Spirit, and in the wisdom of God. This is a very high and holy

claim, which Paul not only makes for Himself, but for all of the apostles and prophets to whom the message was given.

Sidelight: This doctrine is very important for what Paul will say later concerning spiritual gifts and revelations. These things greatly troubled the Corinthians and Paul is laying the foundation for what he will say in chapters 12-14 concerning the errors that were troubling them. But we will deal with that subject when we get to it.

Vs. 14. This is the reason why the gospel could never have originated with any son of Adam. “Natural man” means the man that is equipped with only his natural faculties, inherited from Adam our first father after his sin in the Garden of Eden. Man lies under a curse because of Adam’s sin and he is alienated from God. This illuminates what we said before about the spirit of a man being the candle of the Lord. Jesus put it this way, “If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness.” If that which God has given you is turned to deceive and mislead you, you are in great trouble. You and I have received great gifts naturally from God: intelligence, discernment, appreciation for beauty, natural love and affection, ability and desire for worship, and many such things. If these things are used by sin to keep us from God, how great is man’s sin and misery! Man is held in such bondage by sin, that he cannot deliver himself. No natural ability or wisdom is sufficient to break of the chains of sin. This is the reason why man could never have dreamed up the Gospel, and why no man can ever receive the Gospel apart from the power of the Holy Ghost.

This is the reason that natural men have always persecuted those who believed the gospel, from the time when it was only dimly discerned by promise, as Abel offering the first of the flock to God, and being slain by the hatred of Cain, who could not receive the Gospel because he was of that evil one and slew his brother.

The bondage of sin is because of one thing: the guilt of Adam’s first sin. The true terror of your bondage to sin does not lie within yourself, but it lies outside yourself, in the wrath and judgment of God. As natural men, we lie under the wrath and curse of god because of Adam’s sin. In Adam’s sin, we sinned all, is the way the New England Primer put it—and would that such things were taught in our schools once again.

Vs. 15: A man must be born of the Spirit to see the kingdom of God. The knowledge of God is beyond the reach of the natural man, the old man. There must be a new nature implanted in you before you can see and receive the things of Christ. This is also the work of the Holy Spirit. Not only the message of the Gospel must come from heaven through the instruments of the apostles and prophets, but you also must be born from above before you can see the kingdom of God. Paul could preach the Gospel because of the Holy Spirit, and you and I can receive and believe it because of the Holy Spirit.

Vs. 16. The quotation from Isaiah 40 is most apt. Can you and I climb up to read the mind of God and instruct Him? Of course not. And no one can dream up the Gospel, or improve upon it. Would you dare to add to the Gospel, as if the Holy Spirit only dimly understands? What will you add or subtract to make the Gospel more suitable to modern man? What will you or I do to make it more attractive to the spoiled sons of the modern world? Were not the sons of the ancient world spoiled and ruined? The gospel transformed them, and it will transform us.

There is an old, old message, which if received and believed will transform and change your life, and will transform and change the lives of those around you. The message is this: For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the [just for the unjust](#), that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. You young preacher, preach this message. Tell it to the world.