



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Corinthians

“The Secret Wisdom of God”

TRANSCRIPT

I wanted to mention to you before we begin that I still would like to answer some of the questions that you may have, and I want to say that I think it's necessary for you to write them out. If you just write them out on a piece of paper, or scrap for that matter, I'll be happy to answer them at the end of the hour. But I haven't received any questions. Maybe it's because you have no questions at all. Dr. Ironside used to say at the seminary when he lectured there that since he didn't have any questions afterward, he presumed that he had been so plain that it was not necessary to ask any questions. But he also said at the two o'clock hour in the afternoon that he would not speak loud so as to disturb those who wanted to sleep after having eaten [laughter]. But he smiled when he said that about the fact that he'd been so clear. And when I hear Rush Limbaugh occasionally talk about himself with tongue in cheek, the liberals have a hard time understanding that. I give politics before I begin the message, you understand [laughter]. But he loves to make out that he's the great one. And Dr. Ironside occasionally would do something like that, too. But I am interested in having your questions. If you would write your questions out on a piece of paper, I would like to answer them. And we will not take any extra time. I'll stop a little before time and answer your questions to the best of my ability.

Of course, the questions -- first of all, we’re interested in questions concerning 1 Corinthians, and the things we are talking about. But anything -- there’s nothing off limits so far as the Scriptures are concerned, if you want to ask them. I -- of course, there are many things I don’t know about the Bible, but I’ll try to do the best I can to answer them. Let’s bow in a word of prayer as we begin our evening study.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the greatness of the word of God. We thank Thee that this is truly the word that has come to us through the prophets and the apostles and others, who have been the writers of holy Scripture. And we recognize Lord, as we read this word through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, that it is truly the Scriptures of God. Enable us to treat them that way and to respond to them that way and to, as those who are creatures, pray to the infinite God that, Lord, Thou wilt through the Holy Spirit who has inspired the word, illumine our minds and hearts.

We thank Thee for this great epistle that we are studying, for its practicality as well as for its doctrinal teaching. We ask again for guidance and direction as we seek to think through parts of that epistle. We ask Thy blessing upon us this evening in Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for tonight is 1 Corinthians 2, verse 6 through verse 13. And I’m going to read the passage now. And again I say to some of you who may not have been here earlier, I’m using the New King James Version as our text. It’s a generally accurate text, but occasionally I’ll feel free to make some changes if there are some better renderings of certain parts of it. But verse 6 the apostle writes:

“However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have

crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man. The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

The apostle has been talking about wisdom. And of course he has had in mind not simply the wisdom of God, but the wisdom of the world. If you want to know what Paul thinks about worldly wisdom, this is one of the great passages, and it is reflected here that he thinks of worldly wisdom as someone today might think of the Siren epyllion makers of our day, filled with ostentatious display and cheap manipulation. People who love pomp and power and prestige.

In verse 20 of chapter 1 he has said: “Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”

And then in verse 26: “For ye see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.”

We know, of course, when we listen to the wise men of our day, that is, the ones the world thinks of as wise men, that one of the things that a biblical Christian thinks about immediately is, “Oh, if they just had an understanding of the great principles of the word of God, if they just understand what Scripture says about human nature, and what Scripture says about the need of divine redemption, how different things would be.”

The Corinthians, especially perhaps as F. F. Bruce suggests, after hearing Apollos and other visitors who were outstanding preachers and teachers were inclined to dismiss Paul’s preaching and teaching as elementary, A-B-C stuff. And so the apostle now will assure them that there is a wisdom of God, which he talks about. He is not a person though he has discounted the wisdom of the world; he’s not discounting or depreciating wisdom itself. For he says in verse 6: “How be it we speak wisdom among those who are mature?”

In other words, if to use an expression that’s very popular today, if we get it right, then of course wisdom is something that we should think a great deal of because what Paul speaks about is not man’s wisdom but God’s wisdom. As he says in verse 6, We speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age but -- nor of the rulers of this age who are coming to nothing.

This passage is one of the greatest of the passages in the Bible on divine illumination. In fact, there are several teachings of the word of God that come to our mind here. The ones that come to my mind are Revelation, Inspiration, Illumination. In fact, next month I’m going down to Tallahassee, Florida, for a conference in the Calvary Presbyterian Church of that city, an Orthodox Presbyterian church, a seminary of that particular denomination as Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, very sound Christian theological seminary; and the topic is the word of God. And we’ll be talking about, all of us who are participating, talking about revelation and inspiration.

Well, illumination goes right along with it. Revelation is, as I’m sure you know in Believer’s Chapel, the unveiling of God’s word to men and also the truth that is unveiled. So it is a reference to the act of unveiling, and then what has been unveiled may also be called revelation. Inspiration is the means whereby God has secured an infallible or inerrant communication of the truth. In other words, it’s by means of inspiration that we have an infallible revelation in the word of God. Illumination is the work of the Holy Spirit in giving us enlightenment in the reading and understanding of the word of God.

Now, it is illumination, particularly, that is before us in the section that we’re looking at tonight, illumination. Luther had some very interesting things to say about illumination. I collected a few of them, thinking about tonight. He said once, “Surely a person can preach the word to me, but no one is able to put it into my heart except God alone who must speak to the heart or all is vain. For when he is silent, the word is not spoken. Hence, no one shall draw me from the word which God teaches me.”

I think that’s very interesting because it illustrates the fact that Luther fully understood that it isn’t sufficient just to preach the word of God for those who hear it to understand it. We are absolutely necessarily dependent upon the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Luther also, in some of his writings, makes it very plain, he doesn’t approve of the indiscriminant concatenation of Bible texts without due respect to their meaning in context.

You know, I often talk to people, like any Bible teacher, and they frequently will say, Have you read such and such? I may say, No. I’m sorry I haven’t read it. Well, in this particular book, certain things are said, and they’re usually asking me so that they want to find out if I agree or not with what they have been reading. And frequently, in order to bring the discussion around to a definite answer, they will say the person who writes this quotes Bible texts. They use the Bible. This is frequently said even of people like Jehovah’s Witnesses. They use the Bible. Or Charismatics they use the Bible, and that’s supposed to mean their interpretation is probably correct.

Luther has some things to say about that, too. He says with -- he is aware that heretics were fond of such proof as Irenaeus complained, that is just citing strings of biblical text. Heretofore he said, “I’ve held that where something was to be proved by the Scriptures, the Scriptures quoted must really refer to the point at issue. I learned now that it is enough to throw many passages together helter-skelter, whether they fit or not. If this is to be the way, then I can easily prove from the Scriptures that beer is better than wine.” Now, being a beer drinker, of course, that would have been an interesting thing

for him to try to prove. I would love to have his proof that beer is better than wine. I don’t know that he bothered ever to give such a proof. But his point was that when we cite the Bible, it’s necessary for us to cite it in context and in harmony with what the Scriptures do say at that particular point. Those who go to theological seminary use the term exegesis, or that’s just another term for interpretation. Texts are not good unless they are properly interpreted in the sense that their teaching is not to be followed unless they’re properly interpreted and understood.

So what we’re talking about then is the way in which the Holy Spirit unfolds the truth of the word of God. The Jesuits had a very strange response to the matter of illumination. There is a famous instance in history in which one of the Jesuits put the Scriptures to his ear and claimed that he couldn’t hear the Holy Spirit speaking, sort of like a child taking a seashell and putting it by their ear to hear the roar of the ocean. And so the Jesuit put the Bible to his ear, he’d heard the Lutherans and others talk about illumination. He said, “I cannot hear the Spirit talking.” Some of the Jesuits denied illumination outright. Ultimately the meaning of the text is not determined by the Holy Spirit speaking to the individual believer as he reads the Bible, but it’s determined by what the church authorities say. The apostle, as you can see from this passage I’m sure, did not hold such views.

Now, we want to look for a few moments at what Paul says in verse 6 through verse 9 which I just entitled, “The Secret Wisdom of God.” The progression of thought is reflected in this opening statement of verse 6 because he’s just said my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit in power. Someone might say, Well, Paul, if you’re saying your speech is not in persuasive words of human wisdom, then you’re expecting us to just follow you regardless of whether you’re giving us something that is worth following or not.

And he’s saying, No, that’s not the point. He said, We do speak wisdom, but our wisdom is among those who are mature. It’s not the wisdom of this age. It’s not the

wisdom of the rulers of this age who are coming to know it. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery. So he wants to say, we have a wisdom, God has a wisdom – as a matter of fact, he has the supreme wisdom. It’s the wisdom concerning the word of God. It’s not any esoteric advanced truth, although he will point out there are degrees in which in this unfolding of the mystery of God or the wisdom of God, there are simple things that are called the wisdom of God, and there are things that are deeper, more mature things. They are also found in the word of God. The difference is not in kind but in degree, as we shall go on to say.

Now, I want you to notice of few things in this 6th verse, he says that we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age. Not secular wisdom, in other words. He speaks the wisdom of God. It’s not what the world thinks of as wisdom. Now, if you know anything about the ancient world, if you know anything about the Romans or the Greeks, if you took ancient history in college, you know, of course, that there was a great sense among the Greeks as well as among the Romans that they had wisdom, particularly among the Greeks, particularly in Greece itself. So the apostle then is going to talk about the wisdom of God as over against this. And he says it’s not like the secular wisdom with which you’re acquainted. This is not the wisdom of this age. But notice he says that that wisdom is coming to naught. It’s coming to nothing.

Now, that’s rather interesting because you might wonder, Well, when is the wisdom of this world coming to naught? Paul said it was coming to naught in the first century, that that wisdom is actually coming to naught. Well, if you read through the epistle of the Corinthians and do what Luther urges us to do, look at the sense of the passages that are in it. If you’ll turn over to chapter 15 in verse 24, I think we have a text that tells us when the wisdom of this age is going to come to naught. It’s still with us, the wisdom of this age. We can find it in books. We can find it on the radio. We can find it on the TV screen. We can find it in the lectures that are given in our educational

institutions. But Paul says he’s not talking about the wisdom of this age; he says that that’s going to come to naught.

Chapter 15 in verse 24 he writes, “Then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when he puts an end to all rule and all authority and power for he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet, the last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For he has put all things under his feet,” he is citing Scripture there. “But when he says all things are put under him it is evident that he who is put all things under him is accepted.” Now when all things are made subject to him, then the Son himself will also be subject to him who put all things under him that God, our great Trinitarian God, may be all in all.

That’s when the wisdom of this world will come to naught. It’s in process of that now, but it’s completed at the completion of the saving program of God in heaven. Now, he goes on to say in verse 7 and 9 that this wisdom of God is in a mystery, but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before there were ages for our glory.

Now, “mystery” is an interesting word, and the apostles use it, Paul particularly uses it. It means “secret.” It does not, as Bible teachers frequently tell us, it does not mean something mysterious. It’s not something that has anything to do with Agatha Christie or that kind of literature. The word does not mean mysterious. He’s talking about something that is to be revealed by the Lord God. It’s something unfolded by the Lord God. That’s a secret. That’s a *mysterion*, the word that is used. So he speaks the wisdom of God in a secret; that is, it’s something that has been revealed which could not be known were it not revealed by God in heaven. That’s the truth of the word of God. We would never know anything about the God in heaven were it not for the fact that he has revealed truth concerning himself. He’s not a God who must reveal himself because we ask him to. He’s a sovereign God, and, consequently, he only may be known if he makes himself known. So Paul says we talk about the wisdom of God in a secret.

Well, now Paul has used this expression in a number of places. I’m going to ask you to turn over with me to Ephesians chapter 3, and we’ll see some part of the secret mystery or the secret wisdom of God. And what Paul talks about in Ephesians 2 is the remarkable transformation of the program of God by which now the truth is going out to the Gentiles in a most significant way with the apostle Paul as the supreme minister of that mystery at the time of the writing of the Ephesians letter. Notice chapter 3 of Ephesians, I’m going to read the twelve verses that begin the chapter:

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles - if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the secret of Christ or the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.”

What is the mystery? What is the secret? Now, if you had only the Old Testament you would know that God chose Israel, and you would know that God gave to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, the great fundamental promises of the Old Testament and the remainder of the Old Testament is the unfolding of the significance of them. Of course there were some indications of the future, but that was the force of the program of God in the Old Testament times.

But now -- and incidentally, if you were a Gentile in the Old Testament, if you were to be blessed by God, you had to come into Israel, as you know, and become one of them. Now, Paul says, “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ through the gospel.” So now Gentiles as well as Jews upon conversion are brought into one body and the Gentiles share in the blessings of the

fulfilled promises of God in Christ. That’s the secret. That was something that was a tremendous, significant change.

That’s why in the Book of Acts we read the struggles that they had over those questions, in Acts chapter 10, 11, and then again in Acts chapter 15. And it had to be worked out in history as the Holy Spirit guided the early church to point out the Gentiles could be saved without being circumcised. That was something that was not true in Old Testament times. So that’s the mystery. Now it’s not all of it, but he goes on to say: “of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by means of the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.”

Notice that particularly because what he’s saying is that one of the things that the church is to accomplish is to make known to the heavenly bodies the wisdom of God. Isn’t that interesting? The angels are interested in what’s happening in Believer’s Chapel at this very moment, according to Paul’s statement. “To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be known, this is by means of the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.”

So I suggest to you then that when the apostle talks about the wisdom of God in a mystery, he is talking about the truth that has been revealed to him through the gospel and through the blessing of the unfolding of the revelation of God as it affects Gentiles today.

Now, one might wonder, in the light perhaps of what Paul has said in 1 Corinthians 2 in verse 2, for there -- remember he said to the Corinthians, I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And then in -- let’s see -- in verse -- what would it be? -- in verse 8, which none of the rulers of this age knew. For had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

So here we have, I determine not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified, but now he says we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, and we are talking about things that the rulers of this age have not known, for had they known they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. How is it possible for Paul then to say, I determine not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified and speak of the mystery as if it encompassed all that I’ve told you?

Well, if we just understand this, the saving message of the gospel that Christ died for sinners is a message that may be expanded and include all of the blessings that flow out of what happened on Calvary’s cross. All the truths of divine redemption are found in beginning -- in germ -- at the cross of Calvary. Our justification, our sanctification, the coming of the Holy Spirit, all of the blessings that are bound up -- Dr. Chafer use to talk about thirty-three things that happened when a person believes in Christ. All of these things, he’s adopted into the family of God, his sins are forgiven, he’s justified, he has the Holy Spirit indwelling, all of these things. Well, the cross is the beginning of it all.

And so when Paul says I determine not to know anything among you say Jesus Christ and him crucified, he’s not saying, I only preached Christ died for our sins. He’s saying that the truth that I gave you is all together and totally bound up in that magnificent event for everything flows from what Christ did on Calvary’s cross.

Well, all the truth is deeply embedded and enwrapped in Christ crucified, and what he says in Ephesians is just the development of it. The Epistle to the Hebrews, with all of its great truth of our Great High Priest in heaven who lives to make intercession for us always, that’s simply the outgrowth of Christ and him crucified.

Now, let’s notice a few more things here. He says in verse 7, But we speak the wisdom of God in a secret, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory. In other words, what I’m talking to you about is not something that has been freshly originated. It has been in the plan of God from the ages of eternity past. It’s just simply come to be known to me and to you relatively recently. But, as he said, it was ordained before the ages for our glory. The apostle evidently believed in predestination. He evidently believed in foreordination. He evidently believed in a sovereign God who has determined the events that transpire in his creation.

He’s not surprised any day. There is nothing that you can do that would surprise him. He wasn’t surprised that the Cowboys beat the Bills. As a matter of fact, theologically, he had already determined that that come to pass that way. I just wasn’t able to know that ahead of time. Because it says, He works all things according to the council of his power. I know, unfortunately, that sometimes he ordains that those Cowboys lose, and so you have to adjust to that and say, It was the will of God, and forget the sadness and how upset you were.

He says that ordained before the ages for our glory. What does he mean by that, for our glory? You mean that we should prance around and say, We are Christians? Well, of course we do try to make known the fact that we are Christians, and we give our testimony. But when he says *for our glory*, he’s talking about one of the greatest of the doctrines of the word of God, The doctrine of glorification. That’s included in Christ died for our sins. Because what we get from Christ’s death is not simply a righteousness that is acceptable to God; it’s not simply the presence of the Holy Spirit forever within our hearts, but we are ultimately one day to have a glorified body. We are to be glorified. So this is ordained for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. That’s a very interesting statement, *which none of the rulers of this world knew*.

I wonder what is meant by the *rulers of this age*. Who are the rulers of this age? Well, if you’ll turn over to 2 Corinthians chapter 4 in verse 4, the apostle states here that the ruler of this age is not the Lord God in heaven. The ruler of this age is the God of this age who happens to be, as you know, the not eternal one, but infernal one. Look whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Many good Bible teachers and scholars believe that when Paul writes, which none of the rulers of this age knew, that he’s not talking about human rulers, but he’s talking about the angelic world in opposition to God. We’re talking, of course, about things that are beyond our kin, so to speak, but the Bible does give us some indication from that passage I cited in Ephesians 3, that the angelic beings above us, the demons and the angelic beings, they are angelic beings they belong to that company, they are very interested in what is happening down here. Hope you don’t go home and have some strange dreams. But it’s, nevertheless, true, according to the Bible, that the world that is invisible about us is filled with spirits, some who are interested in our welfare and concerned for us and by divine power are keeping us, but there are others who would be very, very anxious for us to fall and to suffer.

Well, I think you can see that Paul is talking about the wisdom of this world as being very man-centered. And with supernatural beings about -- this is just a little insight; it’s not fully treated here. The rest of the Bible would make that much plainer, and this is a bit difficult to understand, but let’s just take it that way with some of the finest of the biblical scholars today. Which none of the rulers of this age knew, for had they known they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, and now Paul cites from the word of God, it’s really an allusion; it’s not a specific text, but he does allude to it. And he says, eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love him.

Most of my Bible teachers in the past have gone out of their way to say what Paul is saying here is that the truth does not come to us through the five senses. That is, not through the eye, through the ear, through the nose, through the mouth, or through the hand, but by divine revelation. Dr. Chafer used to like to make that point plain. He said, “We would know by the things we see, by the things we hear, by the things we smell, the things we taste, by the things our hands touch, but divine truth is known by revelation.” Now verse 10, “But God has revealed them to us through his Spirit.” So revelation is the means by which we have come to understand them.

I think revelation -- and sometimes this is true, sometimes revelation is understood in the sense of illumination, and I think that this is probably the sense that we are to give the term *reveal* here. But God has *revealed* them to us through his Spirit. That is, he has illuminated the word of Scripture so we have come to understand it.

Laplace, the astronomer, swept the heavens with his telescope, but said that he couldn’t find anywhere any evidence of God. And Preston Sawyer, a Christian, said that he might just as well have swept the kitchen with his broom. God is not a material being, and so he cannot be apprehended by physical means.

We all remember the Russian astronaut, the first in space, who came back -- I think his name was Titov. He came back and he said he found no evidence of God or angels in space. And he rejoiced over that fact. He will find some evidence later on if he hasn’t found it already. God is known by revelation.

Paul goes on to say -- well, I should mention in verse 9 near the end, the things which God has prepared for those who love him. Isn’t that a marvelous statement? Of course, I don’t have to go beyond this passage. I notice up here in verse 7, Which God has ordained before the ages *for* our glory. So I know he’s prepared glory for us, but the Bible also speaks of other things he’s prepared for us. He’s prepared for us a city, for example. There are lists of things that we can go into the Bible, looking up in the concordance and see the things that God has prepared for those who believe in him.

But now in verse 10 through verse 12, he talks about his revelation by the Spirit: but God has revealed them to us through his spirit. Now, this is genuine, new-age truth, the truth that God has revealed to us by Spirit. This is the truth that Shirley McClain doesn’t know anything about. This is new-age truth, in the biblical sense. I read, not too long ago, that Shirley McClain is as confused as -- no, someone said that I think that confusion might be defined as Shirley McClain in the hall of mirrors [laughter]. Well, what we read here is that God has revealed this truth to us by his Spirit, open to and prepared for all believers.

There is no inner ring of select initiates of human pseudophilosophers or anything like that. This truth is revealed to all believers. God has revealed these things that eye and ear, nose, throat, everything have not come to understand by means of the Holy Spirit. And, in fact, he goes on to say, yes, the deep things of God. What are the deep things of God? Well, I just suggest to you that probably what he has in mind are the things of the whole plan of salvation, which we find in the word of God.

Then he illustrates. He says, for what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of a man? Incidentally, he’s not talking about an illustration that might be used like this, I cannot understand what ants feel unless I should become an ant, or an ant cannot understand what I feel unless an ant becomes a human being. He’s not talking about different classes of things; he’s talking about one individual, and he’s talking about a man. And he says with reference to a man, for what man, singular, knows the things of the man except the spirit of the man, which is in him/ What he means is, You don’t know what I’m thinking right now. Only I know what I’m thinking right now. I may be thinking, Isn’t this an unresponsive audience? [Laughter] Could be. I don’t think that, but it could be, and you wouldn’t know. I may act as if you were very responsive to what I was saying, and then go out and say, they were like sticks and stones tonight, as far as I could tell.

No one understands the things of the man except the man himself, even Martha doesn’t understand [laughter] the things that go on down here. Occasionally she’s astonished and occasionally says, I think you’re thinking this, and she’s right. There is woman’s intuition, of course, and it’s very strong, I know. But what Paul is saying is that no one knows the things of the man except the spirit of the man which is in him, even so the things of God knows no one except the Spirit of God.

Incidentally, this is the great passage what has been called the *locus classicus*, the classical place for the deity of the Holy Spirit because it is stated here that only the Holy Spirit knows the things of God, clear reference to his deity. His personality is spoken of in passages like Romans chapter 8; he is the third person of the divine Trinity.

Now we -- verse 12: now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. What a marvelous statement. No one knows the things of the man except the man. No one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. But we, incidentally in the Greek text there is a little bit of emphasis on the word “we,” but *we* have received the things, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit is who is from God. We. We Christians. We have received the Holy Spirit as the one who permanently indwells in us to teach us, to guide us, to comfort us, to console us, to direct us, to meet all of our needs, the third person of the Trinity who personally indwells all believers.

Now, with reference to Paul, of course, he’s talking about understanding. And so if you want to know who is the perfect teacher of the word of God, it is the Holy Spirit who dwells within all believers. He’s the perfect teacher of the word. He’s the perfect judge of doctrine. The issue, therefore, is not what brains a person has, what natural endowments. It’s not the academic status of an individual. We like to think if a person has doctorate’s degree, he understands more. No, not at all in biblical things. He has stated very plainly. We, all believers. We have the Holy Spirit of God who understands all things.

Now of course Luther was right. We have to study the Scriptures and be sure we’re not quoting text helter-skelter, to learn how to read and respond to the word of God. But, nevertheless, the opportunity to know the word of God is ultimately unlimited for every single believer in Christ. We have received the Spirit of God. One of the things, of course, that the Spirit does is to make the word of God a personal letter for us.

Now, there is one final verse we want to take a look at. It’s verse 13: these things we also speak. He’s talking about himself, the apostles and others who are preaching the word of God. These are the things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches. That’s very interesting.

As you well know, there are all kinds of translations of the Bible. Most of us know that the one that was very commonly used by the Christian church for centuries is the Authorized Version. But there have been thirty or forty or fifty, I couldn’t name them, probably hundreds down through the years, but the Authorized Version was very popular and most Christians had a copy of that.

In the last century, the English Revised Version came out in this century, the American Standard Version, then the New American Standard Version, and all of the different kinds of versions in which -- many of which were very serious versions designed to give us the benefits of the discovery of some manuscripts and the discovery also, so scholars think, of a method of text or criticism that might be better than that which has been used historically.

The other day I read of -- well, I had known about his for about a year because I saw it somewhere else but here in Dallas, there was a lady here who was pushing a New Testament called *Rapping with Jesus*, and it was the Bible in the language of the street people. I’m not going to suggest that there is no value in that, but I’d just like to suggest that it’s very easy for us, in seeking to translate the Bible in order to reach a certain type of people, there may be some very present, many opportunities to inaccurately translate the word of God.

Don Carson who is one of the finest of the evangelical New Testament scholars, a very spiritually-minded man, says that the spiritually-minded translator will want to use plain, clear, forceful, truthful, frank, compassionate, compelling, cross-centered speech, spiritual language that is appropriate to the spiritual message they’re bearing. It would, it seems to me, very possible for a person to translate the Bible in such a way as to really make the Bible opaque rather than clear. All translators, and I’ve been a translator, know that that is possible. It’s possible for us to miss the points that the apostles and others were seeking to make.

But Paul says here that we should compare spiritual things with spiritual. There are different ways in which that could be understood. I don’t want to go into the detail of it tonight, but it is possible for us to understand that last clause particularly in different ways. It may mean interpreting spiritual things to spiritual people. It may mean comparing spiritual things with spiritual. It may mean simply putting spiritual words together with -- putting the words of Scripture into spiritual words or comparing -- taking spiritual words and putting them with the truth and thus giving us the truth. My text says simply comparing spiritual things with spiritual and the problem is really the way in which the text should be rendered. Perhaps we will talk about that next time.

I’d like to close by just making some comments concerning something that I think is rather important. Wisdom, proper to this age, is one that arises out of and is marked by rebellion against God. And that kind of wisdom is, of course, the kind of wisdom we are not particularly interested in. We’re interested in the wisdom of God. There’s a very interesting statement made by one of the men whose writings I’ve read in the past who says, with reference to this particular text, that, “We are further driven to the conclusion that this spiritual perversity was part of the image of God.”

In other words, we have been prepared by the fact that we are created in the image of God to understand the things that are spoken to us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Levels of perception exist among men in various types of things. He goes on to say, “The

cultured person enjoys a concert which bores the farmer. The clever person sees the point of a barb or the force of a satire or the meaning of an illustration, which eludes the ordinary person. The sensitive, moral person sees the ethical issue in a situation which escapes the brutal man. The Scriptures also see man in depth. Man does have eyes of the heart, and these eyes of the heart must have been clear and unclouded in the days of man’s creation.”

He was talking about before the Fall. We were created in the image of God and we had capacity for understanding him. Our mind was not affected by sin, and so, consequently, we had clarity of understanding. Adam and Eve were taught by God without the problem of the knowetic -- the effects on the mind -- the knowetic effects of sin. He says, There are eyes that see pictures and landscapes. There are eyes which see relationships among concepts and sentences, brilliant, logical, analytical eyes. There are eyes which see beauty. There are eyes which see sublime in human experience of in nature. There are eyes which see the finer, moral points of our common life. And there are eyes which see God.

That’s what I would like to have, eyes that see God. I have his word. I have the Spirit to make me understand, to clarify and guide me. I want to be someone who sees God. And we see God when we read his word, ponder his word under our infallible teacher, the perfect guide for education in biblical things, the Holy Spirit. Every time you open your Bible, bow your head, ask the Holy Spirit to give you light. He has promised the Spirit as your teacher. Our responsibility is to be submissive to him. May God help us to become people who truly see God.

All of the other problems of life become so much easier to meet when we understand that we are individuals under the sovereign hand of a loving God who has given us the greatest gift he could ever give us, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the indwelling Spirit. We look forward to the Glory for which we have been prepared. Let’s bow together in a closing word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful and thankful for all that we have, and we thank Thee especially for the Holy Spirit who has come to continue the work of enlightenment to deepen it within the hearts of the people who name the triune God as their God.

We thank Thee for Jesus Christ and him crucified and marvel at what was bound up and included in the suffering that took place on Calvary’s cross. How unworthy we are. How thankful we are. Lord, if there should be someone here who does not know the Son of God, may they at this very moment as we are bowed together lift up their voices to him, thank him for dying for sinners. Acknowledge their sinful condition to him and receive the free grace of eternal life.

For his name’s sake. Amen.