

“Now We Have Received“

Pastor Sam Richards

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Texts: 1 Cor. 2:9-15

We might think it encouraging to imagine that all people are born “natural” and then grow up “naturally” to become more “spiritual” but is neither how it happens and not our best comfort. Here’s what’s better, 1. our spiritual life is entirely dependent on God (not accident of birth, or genetic make-up); 2. God has already delivered the revelation truth to those he graciously has chosen to do so; and 3. regeneration is not bound to the natural. This means that the will of God is free, and God is more proactive, more benevolent—or, most commonly, more loving and kind than we may heretofore have imagined. This excess of benevolence is part of what we mean when we declare “God is good.” And because God is free, unlimited in his infinite being and his eternity, the future holds great possibilities for everything and everyone. Because of who God is he has done certain things, like sending his Son to redeem us, and then God has revealed to us through the Holy Spirit the full significance and blessing of his love towards us. This is the substance of what Paul is seeking to convey to us in our text. Let’s us consider it:

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 [a]For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11 For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, [b]combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.

14 But [c]a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually [d]appraised. 15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one¹.

.Our text starts off with citations from Isaiah 64:4 and 65:17 and then proceeds rather directly to contradict the thrust of the three opening disqualifiers: not eye, nor ear, nor has it entered entered the heart of man. Rather strange, a rather peculiar way to start a teaching on *what has actually entered the heart of the redeemed (them that love Him)*. So, as I seek to enlighten you, illuminate the passage, we should begin with saying something about the non-sensual and interior dynamics here. Paul is preparing to write about spiritual things, things that penetrate to the heart which by-pass the senses, the ordinary organs of perception (**eyes and ears**) in open communication between God

¹ Footnotes

- a. 1 Corinthians 2:10 One early ms reads *But*
- b. 1 Corinthians 2:13 Or *interpreting spiritual things for spiritual men*
- c. 1 Corinthians 2:14 Or *an unspiritual*
- d. 1 Corinthians 2:14 Or *examined*

and man. Sciences, and just our observation faculties, are useless here and yet God is able to communicate **the things which He has prepared** especially for the regenerate, the redeemed of the Lord. Put that way the citations from Isaiah make imminently more sense, now don't they? 10 [a] **For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.** The **us** here is emphatic as if to underscore that Paul is writing to the Corinthians as well as to us . . . we, taken together, **us!** Paul is writing to **us** about **what has been revealed**, disclosed, opened, shared or made known, **through the Spirit**, the operations of the third person of the Trinity, *who indwells EVERY TRUE CHRISTIAN* conveying to the believer certain aptitudes, or abilities which are **not** distributed to people in general, the world of unbelievers who live at large around us! They are *ignorant* of spiritual matters (including God!) lacking the capacity that only attends being born again. Yes, their eyes do not see, and their ears do not hear and that reality is not the least of our difficulties in relating to them spiritual truth, the nature of spiritual reality. Unbelief is disabling—like blindness, like deafness—but both are treatable, both upon the reception of the Holy Spirit are instantly, and totally healed. Of course, I am speaking to the capability and not to the performance of the senses.

Everyone can recall, some with greater exertion than others, that no one is born *walking*, no one is born *talking* and, though we seldom examine this matter, no one is born **thinking**. There is a learning curve involved in the acquisition of the motor and sensory skills necessary for walking, taking and thinking. We describe that process as maturation, or as “human development.” We are born with the essence of humanity, and with the potential of mastery (walking, talking and thinking) but these facts, mitigating by the complications of growing up—contribute to becoming an adult person.

Divine beings do not, apparently, have these concerns and those who attend to the historical features of creation also might have to acknowledge that Adam and Eve were “abnormal” in that they were created walking, talking and fully cognizant. They were cognitively intact and fully operational relationally. *They were unlike their progeny!* They were dealing with reality which included the near and apparent **deep things of God**—in person. ***They also had no need to be “regenerate” because, prior to the fall, sin, with its attendant blindness and deafness, had not yet appeared on the scene.*** We have to wait for Genesis 3 to learn about that.

Good thing. Given their divine parentage, Adam and Eve were rather fully developed human beings from the beginning! Created, not born. We begin life differently.

Well, at this point, we are solidly into our topic: received revelation (1 Cor. 2:12). Let's review verse 12: **Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.**

When we read/hear **Now we have received**, it should occur to us that something, hitherto “hidden” has been made known, unveiled and, most significantly, donated to us—a revelation has been delivered. Again, we are the recipients; this disclosure has been made to **us** (delivered to our indwelling spirit—the inbox, or mailbox at our home—by the Holy Spirit of God). That is why I stressed donated: it is a thing signed, sealed and delivered. It is sourced in God (**his counsel and sovereign will**), comes to us from heaven, or **from on high** and given to us. It is now fully ours. The Holy Spirit who

possesses a perfect knowledge of God has imparted, through the inspired word some of that knowledge to **us**. That impartation is inerrant and “inspired” both. *It did not come to us through human effort, neither through technique, nor through technology* (it certainly didn’t depend on the Internet, or on cell phones!). But it also didn’t come to us through analysis, study, experiment, or advanced research—the scientific methodology was not involved! Rather a peculiar spirit imparted peculiar knowledge in a peculiar manner to believers, who, amazingly, received peculiar knowledge of gospel truths in a similar, or like manner. (That is what I think Paul means by **the spirit God** in v. 12.) Part of the peculiar knowledge imparted to us that of God’s divine benevolence (Strong’s Greek. #2016) which forms the moral image of our God, **Love is of God and those who love are of God. . . God is love** is right up there with **God is Spirit** and **those who worship Him do so in Spirit and in truth**. Now this enlightened view of God comes by way of *a changed heart*, the Spirit purifies and purges the heart of its fleshly and carnal sin nature—preparing the heart of impartation much like a transplant—out with the old and in with the new!

It is important to stress that the Spirit is **not the spirit of the world, but of God** so that we **might know the things of God. . . freely and fully know . . . the things donated by God (gifted) to the redeemed**. This makes sense if we know that the Holy Spirit is “the power of divine self-awareness, or self-knowledge—what we call omniscience as viewed, by revelation, from heaven’s, or God’s angle. The whole being of God, his purposes, plans, commandments, works, words and acts is the fullness in view. *It is not something cooked up, dreamed up, invented or imagined—not a human fabrication which is superimposed of reality: **it is reality***. This is saying a lot, if one were to grow in knowledge of God for ten thousand years or ten billion years, there would still be an infinite more to be learned! Eternal and infinite are vast fields of inquiry. But just as ignorance is peculiar to sinners in this arena, so is this knowledge of God peculiar to the saints. Among the things imparted are “justifying righteousness, remission of sins, adoption and eternal life” according to John Gil. Alfred Barne adds “pardon, justification, sanctification, divine favor/grace, protection, provision and hope of eternal life.” All of these are gospel truths. They were secret wisdom, but are now revealed—or made manifest in and to the redeemed in Christ. Substantial truth is unveiled in divine self-disclosure which links directly with the perspicuity of the word. This truth unveiled is still being illuminated by the Spirit—direct revelation, which we could liken to the interpretation of dreams by Jacob, Joseph, or Daniel, still happens, the Spirit’s work of **leading us into all truth** is hardly over.

Having said what it is, let me take it home by emphasizing what it is not:

1. It is not by mere inspiration (no tendency towards a heart change in it.)
2. It is not by moral suasion, or exhibition of power (signs, wonders and miracles).
3. It is not by conviction of guilt, fear of punishment, or hopes of happiness in some future glory.

If the aim of your life is happiness in the here and now, this caution is in order; if so, that happiness may be all you ever attain.

Which things we speak. Here we are faced with the contrast between worldly wisdom and divine revelation language directly. Paul says we are dependent on what the Holy Spirit teaches—as recorded by the prophets and teachers, apostles and

disciples of Christ, not antiquity and not the glare of modern times *because the mere wisdom of man is illusory/vain*. This includes all “lights” whether they be nature, science, reason besides antiquity and modern though all are fallible. And yet certain truths are needful for salvation and these the Spirit faithfully and truthfully imparts—both internal salvation and its application are without error or deficiency. This language (the language of doctrine) Paul describes as **sound words** which Timothy received and is bound to pass on as received. As I mentioned earlier, all of this is about communication—God graciously revealed to us things we would never know unless he did so. **Guiding us into all truth** reinforces this point. We advance the conversation by **comparing spiritual things with spiritual things**. In a similar vein our practice as benevolent beings introduces and familiarizes us with other, higher benevolent beings! Man’s natural wisdom is subsumed, as it were, in this greater, higher spiritual discourse that is ongoing. For instance seeing something before, both behind and after the “natural order”—even, apart from the natural!—is helpful. We notice trajectory, momentum, unfolding, tending and trending from the spiritual perspective making our understanding more realistic, not less. We embrace the world as it is, we ask, Why it was made? What is it? Whither heads it? Why is there land formation, wasting, upheavals erosion, faulting and fusing? *We ask questions about how to read the geological record as well as our historical records (the chronicles and annals of our kings and historians, clerks and secretaries).* **We do so with humility acknowledging that there are limits to the powers of human cognition especially when weighed against divine wisdom (which is profound, thorough, deep and complete!).** And, yes, we find answers revealed in the treasure house of the Bible under spiritual guidance. Revelation, not native, or natural endowment and not strength of faculties, addresses the gaps in human knowledge. Divine knowledge is complete, absolute, total and entire; biblical revelation is a chart of redemption, a handbook with the scope of all creation—all things, all stuff, all laws, all providence and lordship, dominion and domains.

What is the Bible to unbelievers? A story book? A moral tale, or treatise? A song? To them, there is nothing condemning, convicting, converting, sanctifying or saving about scripture—for they are blind and deaf to it. **Yes, they cannot know the things of God; let alone speak them.** Scripture cannot be accurate, historical, profound, complete or thorough to those who cannot, or will not read. Their unregeneracy is impoverishing, sad, and lamentable. Most folk, ordinarily, go about their lives reading their appetite, wants and needs, planning and calculating matters of supply, availability—“shopping” and handling commodities—with an economic market horizon. On this level everything is material, susceptible to sense, measure and distribution; their world is observationally, historically, and scientific. Perhaps they take an intelligent, holy, benevolent first cause into consideration and perhaps not—depending on taste and temperament—or perhaps they declare they are not “religious.” The whole scheme of things may exist in the eternal mind or God, as revealed in Scripture, or not; they are insensible to it—yes, and indifferent.

But we, the saints, we declare, “Praise God, the age to come is the Christian age!” We embrace the Scripture as a dynamic and open communication. We find all wisdom there. Therefore, **having been made alive to God in Christ**, we subordinate all other knowledge to this knowledge! We regulate all other knowledge by this knowledge. If you haven’t received it, and you are saved—you have mail.

Amen.