

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9–16

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, August 4-6, 2018

Smith

GOD REVEALS HIS WISDOM TO US

9 However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived”— the things God has prepared for those who love him— 10 these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. 14 The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. 15 The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, 16 for, “Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

Have you ever listened to music without knowing the language? With music, there is a certain amount of pleasure that can be had simply from the music itself. Music evokes emotions. But if you look at a book in a strange language or listen to a speech or a conversation in a strange language, there are no emotions that are evoked. There is no true meaning. There is only a mystery.

Paul says: The person without the spirit faces this like a brick wall with the teachings of the Bible. The person who is only in the physical world, and thinks nothing at all about the spiritual world—this is a person who cannot understand what God is saying.

Let’s listen to Paul and notice some key things that he teaches. If I don’t follow the sermon card exactly, please forgive me. I have taken six or seven key points in our text and boiled them down to these three things:

- 1, No one can understand God’s word apart from faith.
- 2, God’s wisdom is taught by the Holy Spirit in his holy word.
- 3, The spiritual person understands and judges all things.

Let’s look at these things together:

1, No one can understand God’s word apart from faith. Paul sets the unspiritual person, *the unbeliever*, side by side with the spiritual person, *the believer*, so that we can see them and compare them. For the Christian, this is a look back in history: what we were compared with

what we are. The **unbeliever doesn't get it**. There's a story by William Faulkner in which a little side-plot is a wife who has no interest in her husband's books, except that she's constantly rearranging them according to size and color. Titles, subjects, authors, series—they mean nothing to her at all. Only the shape and shade of the spines matter, so that the long rows of volumes on the shelves in the hallways look beautiful to her. The unspiritual man has this view of God's word. Parts of it might be attractive, but only from his very limited perspective, and he cannot understand why anyone else would see these things in a different way. That's what Isaiah means by, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived." Paul unpacks this verse from Isaiah by showing us that God has revealed these things to us by his Spirit.

Faith comes through hearing the message, and faith is a gift of God. Your faith, your key to understanding everything that the Bible says; everything God has revealed to us for our benefit—all of this comes as a gift from God. It comes through the Gospel in the word, and through the Gospel in the sacrament. Are you baptized? You have the Spirit of God. Do know that Jesus died for you on the cross? You have the Spirit of God because the Gospel has been uncovered for you, revealed to you.

2, God's wisdom is taught by the Holy Spirit in his holy word. The doctrine of Divine Inspiration is one of the very first teachings of the Bible we visit when we teach Catechism or our adult instruction classes and reviews. The communication we have received from God is the Bible—the 66 books of God's Holy Word—and it did not come from the spirit of the world. The worldly spirit of fallen mankind embraces sin and doubt, and it is incapable of knowing God. The spirit of the world is steered and manipulated by an outside source; because it is fallen, it is in coercion with the devil and hardly even realizes it.

But what we have in the Bible is good in the purest sense of the word 'good.' It is flawless. It is without error. It is without contradiction. It stands the test of being able to be translated and understood. Here is what God the Holy Spirit has given to us "**explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.**" or put another way, "combining spiritual thoughts and truths with just the right spiritual words."

Sometimes I am asked what Jesus would have said in his native Aramaic while he was on the cross, or giving the Lord's Supper, or preaching the Sermon on the Mount. Well, God the Holy Spirit saw fit to give us the words of Jesus in Greek, not in Aramaic, so that we would not think that only the Aramaic text is to be used or understood. The Holy Spirit took spiritual, godly concepts like baptism, forgiveness, grace, the resurrection from the dead, and heaven, and he made them comprehensible to us by means of our language.

Thirdly: **3, The spiritual person understands and judges all things.** It is such an easy thing for an enemy of the Gospel to say, "It's all a matter of interpretation." Or: You see the Bible your

way, and I see the Bible my way. Don't let yourself be bullied by irrational statement like that. If the writer of the text says that "Jesus Christ died on the cross," what you think he means? I know that the simplest, clearest way to understand those words is to take them at face value, and that it that they mean: Jesus Christ died—ceased to live—on the cross," that is, at the end of his crucifixion. And in the same way, when the text says that "Jesus rose again from the dead," that, too, is exactly what it means.

The wonderful truth of the Bible is that we have forgiveness of all of our sins through the blood of Jesus shed on the cross. And you, **spiritual person**, you can understand **all things**—all of the other teachings of the Bible—by starting there, at the cross, and applying the rest of the word of God to every concept, every teaching, every doctrine, for the good of your eternal soul.

The **second commandment** teaches us not to misuse the name of God or the word of God. And therefore the **second commandment** teaches us to love to use God's name correctly—to pray, praise, and give thanks—and to love to use God's **word** correctly, not abandon it or shun it. This also means that we will learn what our church teaches about the Word of God—we will want to study it, to learn it, to commit it to memory so that it's there, ready for us, when we need it.

If you had a glass of water to drink, how much poison could be added before you would no longer want to drink it? This is what happens when we let the world or even the opinions of other churches taint our pure drink from the Word of God. If you don't think you know the word of God well enough—welcome to the club. We all need to learn it better, to treasure it more dearly, to commit it to memory more precisely.

If you have avoided the word because it stings sometimes, because it points out sins sometimes—welcome to the club. But how will I know how much I have been forgiven unless the Holy Spirit has shown me how much of my sinful life sent as covered by my Savior Jesus to the cross? **All of it**. All of my sins, all of your, wiped away forever.

The unbeliever, the doubter, and the heretic do not know who their Savior is, or what he has done for them. You are here to share the good news with them. You can judge everything, but you don't need to judge the life of the unbeliever, the doubter, or the heretic. God's word will do that in their very hearts when you have shared Christ with them.

Let the word of God, the wisdom of God, live in you and thrive in you. You know your Savior, the one who forgave you. All of your understanding of the rest of God's word begins there, and ends there at the cross. That good news is the very best news. Commit yourself to learning it more deeply, plumbing its depths, applying its truths, exploring its breathtaking beauty and richness. It is there that God reveals his wisdom to us. Amen.