

1 Corinthians 2:12-14 Walk in the Spirit

1 Corinthians 2:12-14 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, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*. ¹⁴ But 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 appraised.

It seems that the Holy Spirit of God is the One person in the Godhead who is really misunderstood. It's not like He's the Father who we associate with a caring and loving parent who is always there for us, or that He is like Jesus who came into this world physically and secured our salvation through His shed blood on the cross and resurrection.

The Holy Spirit is kind of viewed by some like the third wheel who doesn't quite know what His role is. Like the free-safety in football who roams the field without a specific role until the play comes his way and then he steps up to assume his responsibility.

Others just see the Spirit as the power source in their lives that they can tap into like a generator, and in that sense relegate the Spirit to some impersonal force for our benefit. And yet, as we saw last week the Holy Spirit of God is the One person whose ministry is to actually open man's eyes to the truth of his need as He regenerates the heart of sinful, spiritually dead people.

The Holy Spirit is God, and as such has the ability to give life where there was no life. The Holy Spirit is the One person in the Godhead whose responsibility it is to not just point to Jesus but to personally introduce us to Jesus as He brings us into His presence and regenerates our spirits so that the life which was purchased by Christ is actually appropriated through the Spirit.

We could not have this free gift of salvation were it not for the life-giving ministry of the Holy Spirit who takes our dead spirit and gives it the life we need to raise us up out of the grave and take the hand of Jesus.

This is what Paul meant earlier in this letter to the Corinthians when he said, "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's

power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.” (1CO 2:4-5)

The Holy Spirit cares deeply for us and desires that we seek the Lord and walk in His ways so that we might bring glory to the Father and the Son. But, He’s not simply the coach who barks out commands, but like the Father and the Son is our loving and caring God.

In the context of believers not walking after the Lord we are told this about the Holy Spirit.

EPH 4:29-32 “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

How can anyone grieve an impersonal force? This is God Himself whom we grieve when we seek our own ways and do our own thing. To grieve God is no small thing and yet how often we place ourselves in that position.

Israel also found themselves in a position of grieving God through their attitude toward Him by not trusting Him and following Him.

PSA 78:40-43 “How often they rebelled against him in the desert and grieved him in the wasteland! 41 Again and again they put God to the test; they vexed the Holy One of Israel. 42 They did not remember his power - the day he redeemed them from the oppressor, 43 the day he displayed his miraculous signs in Egypt, his wonders in the region of Zoan.”

How often we forget His power, that power that brought us from death to life, that power that enabled us to see our sin and to reach out to our Messiah by faith and find eternal life.

This is the ministry of the Holy Spirit who only loves us and desires that we would turn our eyes upon our Savior, not only for our salvation, but for our everyday walk with Him and get past the temporalness and carnality we are all prone to.

And this is where we pick up this morning in our text.

1CO 2:12 “We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.”

Let’s start with the first part of this verse because it really needs to be emphasized. It’s a reminder that every one of us needs to hear again and again. “We have not received the spirit of the world”.

What is the spirit of this world in the context here this morning? The spirit of this world here before us is not Satan or the spiritual forces associated with him. In fact, Satan is never referred to as the spirit of this world anywhere in the bible.

What is being referred to here is not some mysterious spiritual force, but the very nature of sinful man and how that manifests itself through sinful people. Our flesh desires to be self-centered and focused upon the things of this world. It is what makes the world secular, opposed to God. It is what is already at work in man to keep his eyes blinded to the truth. It is what every believer has been delivered from.

And yet, Paul makes the point clear when he essentially says to these believers in Corinth, ‘look, if when you were saved you received the spirit of this world, then you actually received nothing at all, since it was the spirit of this world you were meant to be delivered from.’

‘If, when you were saved, you received the spirit of this world, then God is nothing more than a cruel jokester who gives a false hope. No, you did not receive the spirit of this world when you were saved.’

And yet, what Paul is trying to convey here by even bringing up the issue is, ‘why does it seem that that is what you have received, as your behavior and lack of faith show that you are walking according to the spirit of this world?’

He’s trying to shock them into reality, not unlike what he did with the Romans when he said to them, “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear,…” (ROM 8:15)

Why would Paul have to say this at all unless there was a tendency for the church to walk in a way that shows that the spirit they are walking after is the spirit of this world, from which they were supposedly delivered from?

The fear that Paul talks about in Rom.8:15 is a fear of having to place your trust in a God whom you can't see and are therefore forced to trust Him and place your faith in Him completely based on what He has revealed through His word and His Son.

This is where it all starts. This is where the spirit of this world lives. It lives in fear and unbelief, which shows itself in more ways than doubts, worries or complaints. For fear and unbelief are the roots of those choices that we make for our own ease and comfort, or when our concern is for pleasure or reputation. We can even hide such choices under the guise of something good such as family, career, or health. But, that is not the spirit whom we have been given in Christ. This is the negative aspect of our text.

But there is a positive aspect that we don't want to overlook, because Paul is trying to show us that though there is the tendency to grieve the Holy Spirit as we walk after our own ways and not trust Him, we don't have to walk in that way which dishonors our God. In fact, we don't have any excuses to do so.

1CO 2:12 "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, ..."

Let me repeat this one more time.

1CO 2:12 "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, ..."

Let that sink deep into your spirit and believe it as you ask the Spirit to give you the power to live as God intends for you to live in salvation. Let Him show you any sin which must be forsaken because it hinders you from a life of obedience that results in Christlikeness and being used to extend His Kingdom in this world.

We don't have the option to think that we can live according to the spirit of this world. We don't have that much time. There is work that our Lord and Savior has called us to, but it will never be accomplished if we are living according to the spirit of this world.

We don't have time for the excuses which so easily entangle us and keep us from going forward. This is exactly what the writer of Hebrews points out as he gives the answer to the problem.

HEB 12:1-2 "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the

race marked out for us. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

1CO 2:12 “We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, ...”

The Spirit from God is the Spirit whom Jesus promised to us when He was about to leave this earth.

JOH 16:7-8 “But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:...”

This is the Spirit we have received. We have received a person, not just a power. We have received God Himself as the Spirit indwells every believer. What more can one ask for than God Himself residing in us and with us?

This is the same God who not only resides in us but also creates a new relationship with us as we are no longer seen as children of this world but children of the living God who we can know and love and have fellowship with.

ROM 8:15-17 “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs -heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

This is the Spirit who seals us for the day of redemption and the same Spirit who desires to work in us for the glory of God. We have everything we need to carry out the commission Christ gave us and to carry out His will which is not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Why?

1CO 2:12 “We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.”

What has He freely given us? He has freely given us the revelation of Himself and His free gift of salvation. Had not God revealed

Himself we would never know Him. But He reveals Himself through the Spirit of God. And He does it freely.

The phrase the NIV uses is “has freely given us” is actually one word in the Greek. It’s *charizomai*, and it essentially means to do something pleasant or agreeable (to one), to do a favor to, gratify; to show one’s self gracious, kind, and benevolent.

What Paul is alluding to here is that he was one of the apostles chosen by God to teach us those things which the Spirit revealed to him concerning this salvation of grace secured by Christ. This is what he means as he continues in the next verse.

1CO 2:13 “This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.”

Again, this is the beauty of salvation by grace through faith which is expressed by God alone. No one figured this out one day and came to the conclusion that we should really trust God as we throw off our self-seeking ways.

Paul says, “this is what we speak”. Notice he doesn’t hide it. He doesn’t cover it up and hopes someone will read his mind. He speaks it, he proclaims it. But, he speaks it because the Holy Spirit gave him the words which express spiritual truths concerning God and His salvation.

Now, in the context here, Paul is limiting this revelation to himself and the rest of the apostles. The “we” in this verse speaks of these others including himself. Only these chosen instruments of God are the ones who have received revelation from the Holy Spirit as they were inspired of God to reveal these truths and subsequently write them down for our benefit.

The Scriptures have been closed with the last revelation given to the chosen one to give us the very word of God. That’s what Paul is talking about here, the very word of God. Again, notice what this verse says.

1CO 2:13 “This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.”

These words were given to Paul, not as though he were some sort of robot and the Spirit was just using his hand to write them down, but through the agency of Paul and his own personality, the Holy

Spirit made sure that not only the thoughts of God would be conveyed through Paul but the very words themselves would be used to convey these thoughts. In Theological terms this is referred to as plenary inspiration. Plenary meaning full or complete.

And so, every aspect of this revelation from God, including the very words He wanted to use, are attributable to Him. No one, including Paul, could say that any part of this inspiration was from Paul. Why?

Because, it was taught to him by the Holy Spirit. It wasn't taught to him by human wisdom or from human beings who figured these spiritual truths out. Now, does this mean that the Holy Spirit's job was over when he revealed this information to Paul and the rest of the apostles?

Well, in the sense that it was revealed to these chosen instruments to complete the revelation from God, yes. The Holy Spirit does not reveal any more of the word of God to us. It is complete and therefore it does not need to be added to, nor should we ever take anything away.

But this does not mean that the Holy Spirit's job is over as it relates to how He illumines this information to our spirits and minds. We may not be getting new revelation, but we are certainly dependent upon the Spirit of God in opening our eyes to this revelation.

This is still spiritual information. And the carnal or worldly person will not be seeing with spiritual eyes. Notice what Paul says in the next verse.

1CO 2:14 "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Who is the man without the Spirit? The man who has not trusted Christ as Lord and Savior. In other words, every single person in this world, at some time in their lives, fell into this category of being a person without the Spirit.

And so, none of us can take credit for accepting the things of God by using our worldly understanding. That understanding had to be illumined to our hearts and minds and it was the Spirit of God who has done this.

But what Paul means in this verse is that the reason no one accepts the things of the Spirit is because the spirit of this world, which is what all of us are limited to in ourselves outside of Christ, cannot understand the things of God that only the Spirit can shine into the life of a person.

This is why Paul says, "... for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Foolishness? Yes, foolishness because these spiritual solutions don't answer the problem man is dealing with in the way he wants to deal with them. The natural man does not want to solve his spiritual problem with the ways of the Spirit because he's dealing with life on a natural or sinful level only, not on a spiritual level, which only the Spirit can give.

But, don't men seek spiritual things, thus making all men spiritual? Yes, to the degree that that spirituality involves only the desires of the flesh, (ie., creating a god in their own image or creating a spiritual endeavor to try and appease their god through their own efforts). One could certainly call this a spiritual or religious side of man.

Remember we were created in the image of God, both body and spirit in the garden as God first formed man from the dust of the earth, but then He breathed life/spirit into man and so He has built into man, an innate knowledge that God exists and that He is to be sought. Paul touches on this when writing to the Romans.

Romans 1:18-23 ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

That's the reason the natural man cannot understand the things of God. He is discerning, but only to the degree that he can discern on a heart-darkened level which is precisely why the things of God

are foolishness to him. But what are we told? The things of God must be spiritually discerned.

And this is where we started with the premise that since man cannot and will not seek the things of God outside of a change in his nature to hate God, being children of wrath, God Himself must intervene and give man a new nature, a nature born from above.

And this is precisely what the Spirit of God does and Paul explains this when writing to Titus.

Titus 3:5-7 ⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, *by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit*, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.

This renewing and regeneration is done “by” the Holy Spirit and by no other means that man could devise. This is precisely why salvation is entirely a gift of God to a people of His own choosing. Like Lazarus, God must first give life before anyone can respond to the call to “come out.”

Therefore, the natural man will always head toward the ways of this world without the intervention of the Holy Spirit. This is why Paul says in our text that the natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit. It doesn't say that he will not understand, but that he cannot understand.

Now the implication is that he will not because he chooses not to understand, but as we've said before, he will not because he cannot. It is a spiritual problem he chooses to solve with worldly ways.

ROM 8:5 “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.”

Jesus makes it even clearer when he speaks with the rebellious Jews of His day.

JOH 8:42-44 “Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. ⁴³ Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. ⁴⁴ You

belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Jesus doesn't excuse their rebellion because of the spiritual inability to hear spiritual truth, because despite their being unable to hear, their true desire is to carry out the desires of their father, Satan.

In other words, they are without excuse, despite the fact that they are without spiritual discernment. And this is why we ought to praise God every day that the Spirit of God has graciously revealed Himself to us and that we have eyes to see and ears to hear.

And yet, we must ask the question, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear, why is it that we will sometimes not seek the things of the Spirit? There's only one answer. It is selfishness as our minds are set on the temporal things. It is a fleshly pursuit in spite of the fact that we have the Spirit and that grieves the Holy Spirit of God.

And it should grieve us as well. We should not rest until we have sought to put off our fleshly ways and seek the Lord and rest in Him and trust that He is a faithful God who has given us a message of hope for the world. And unless we are preparing ourselves for this task we will be weak servants at best and stumbling blocks for other believers and the world at worst.

Ephesians 4:22-24 ²² that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

May God speak to every one of our hearts today. May we be willing to put off any sinful attitude or way and totally submit to God in faithful obedience and live as spiritual children of God who love Him with all of our hearts, souls and minds and our neighbors as ourselves to the glory of God and the advancement of His Gospel.