

**Lesson 9: “The Mind of Christ” 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 Craig Crawshaw**

**1 Corinthians 2:14-16** *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. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For “Who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ.*

**THE MYSTERY OF THE MIND OF CHRIST**

Today we come to what I consider to be one of the premier passages of the Bible – where God, through the apostle Paul unveils the amazing truth that “*we have the mind of Christ.*” And this is the only place in our Bible where this particular phrase is used, so it is especially worthy of our careful consideration.

In context, Paul has been speaking about “*God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory*” (2:7). And he has also been saying “*who knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him*” (2:11a) and “*the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God*” (2:11b). This makes sense to us – that every being’s deep thoughts are there’s and there’s alone.

But then in 2:12 Paul tells us “*we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we might know the things freely given to us by God.*” Putting this all together, we understand that God’s hidden mystery from ages past is that He predestined a time when His children would receive the Spirit of God, and thereby have access to the very thoughts of God.

This amazing plan of God was prophesied long ago by the prophet Jeremiah, and it is commonly called “the new covenant.” We find it in Jeremiah, chapter 31.

**Jeremiah 31:33-34** *But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart, I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”*

This covenant was fulfilled at the Pentecost feast following the resurrection of Jesus, when the Holy Spirit came upon the 120 disciples that had been waiting in the upper room. This significant historical event is recorded in Acts, chapter 2. Jesus had told his followers to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of God to come upon them (Luke 24:49) and come upon them He did in the form of the indwelling Holy Spirit. This is the “Comforter” who Jesus had promised would replace Him by being “in” them, not just “with” them. (John 14:16-19)

This indwelling Holy Spirit has been in every believer since, which Paul affirmed in his letter to the Romans.

**Romans 8:9** *You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.*

Clear translation: if you do not have the Spirit of Christ in you, you are not a Christian; every

true believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling within.

Now all this doctrinal and experiential truth is essential to understanding Paul's words to the Corinthians, *"you have the mind of Christ."* For since the Spirit of God is within the believer, and the Spirit of God knows the thoughts of God, then it makes sense that the believer has access to the thoughts of God, and to the "mind of Christ." In no way is this saying that the believer now has the full mind of God and thereby IS God – that would be blasphemy. But the believer does have access to the formerly hidden wisdom of God, specifically revealed through the life and ministry of His son, Jesus the Anointed One. In a phrase, *"we have the mind of Christ."*

Now let us examine our three verses of consideration for today and see what we can glean.

### **VERSE 14 – THE NATURAL MAN**

Here Paul speaks of the man who is *psuchikos*), or "natural." This is the person who lives only in the physical realm, valuing only what can be experienced by the senses. He has a propensity for God, and perhaps seeks outside the physical, but lacks the spiritual discernment to access that dimension. Note the characteristic of the natural man that Paul mentions. (Note: "man" can be man or woman)

1. Does not and cannot accept the things of the Spirit
2. Considers the things of the Spirit "foolish," not worthy of much if any attention

This is the natural man's "appraisal." We see this word "appraised" or "appraises" used three times in this verse, and we must know its meaning. To "appraise" is to understand or judge something, particularly as relates to its value. An "appraiser" of a house is judging its value, relating to the current market. Likewise, the appraiser of a painting determines its value to the art world.

So, it is not that the natural person doesn't understand or recognize spiritual things. They are not as "gibberish" to him. He might well recognize them as existing. They simply don't hold much if any "value" to him. Therefore, he ignores and disregards the importance of the spiritual around him. "Church and God and the Bible" are fine for you, but not my thing" would be their thought, if not so expressed.

And why does he not "appraise" spiritual things being of value? Because he cannot. The Spirit has not (yet) energized and "quickened" his spiritual sensitivity and discernment. He is essentially "dead" to spiritual things. This is why it makes no sense to try to implore the natural person to engage in spiritual behavior, for he is truly unable.

You can't make a dog quack like a duck. And you can't make a natural man act like a spiritual man. Only an animal created as a duck can quack like a duck. And only a person born by the Spirit can truly understand spiritual things and will determine them to be valuable to his life. We lead the natural man to the waters of life, but we cannot make him drink. We can, and should, invite and encourage him to do so, but he must choose to drink by the Spirit's prompting.

### **VERSE 15 – THE SPIRITUAL MAN**

On the other hand, the spiritual man (person) is the one who appraises spiritual things as being of great value to his life, because the Spirit has given discernment. This is the one who has been "born again" as Jesus taught to the Pharisee Nicodemus in John, chapter 3.

***John 3:5-7 [Jesus:] Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the***

*Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, "You must be born again."*

To be "born of water" is to be born physically by the water of your mother's uterus. (There is nothing about baptism here.) This is being born for the first time – the birth that you celebrate every "birthday." But this birth only gives perception and understanding of the physical. To be "born of the Spirit" is to be born spiritually, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This happens when one accepts Jesus sacrifice on the cross for sin as being in his place and receives the risen Jesus as Lord and Master of his life. Have you done this? If so, you are "born again" as a "new creature in Christ. If not, why not now?

**2 Corinthians 5:17** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

The spiritual person can "appraise all things," meaning assess all things of the Spirit as being of great value. But Paul goes on to say that the spiritual person is "appraised by no one," meaning that he cannot truly be understood by the natural man. Of course, the spiritual person is understood and valued by another spiritual person. But he is not understood, nor is his spiritual life valued by the unbeliever. Christian – is not this your experience in the world? Yes, it is – exactly as Paul has described it.

## **VERSE 16 – THE MIND OF CHRIST**

So now we come to the incredible verse 16, the climax of Paul's thought to this point in the letter. He begins by quoting from the prophet Isaiah.

**Isaiah 40:12-13** *Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and marked of the heavens by the span, and calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, and weighed the mountains in a balance and the hills in a pair of scales? Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has informed Him?*

The answer to all of these questions, of course, is "no one." No one could direct the Lord or inform or counsel Him. God knows all. And could we possibly know what He is thinking – the mind that is so far above ours? It just seems impossible. And yet ... Paul is "setting us up" for the blockbuster statement that follows. And I have a short video clip that will help illustrate the seemingly impossible task of accessing the mind of a far more intelligent being.

"I.Q." is a favorite movie in our family, and in it is one of my favorite movie moments that I am going to show you. A simple-minded young man (played by Tim Robbins), wants to date Kathryn, the super-intelligent niece of Albert Einstein (played by Walter Matthau). See how this short clip illustrates the wide gap between our mind and the infinitely greater mind of God.

*[ Robbins: Just lend me your brain for a couple of days.*

*Einstein: Are you thinking what I'm thinking?*

*Robbins: What would be the odds of that happening?]*

After the setup of God's mind being no way equal or accessible to ours, Paul makes the blockbuster statement: *"But we have the mind of Christ."*

First, notice how seamlessly Paul equates the mind of Yahweh (the word used in Isaiah) with the mind of Christ Jesus. That is because Paul was convinced that Christ Jesus was

and is Yahweh Himself, as the Son of God. To Paul, the mind of Yahweh IS the mind of Christ.

Second, notice that in Paul's thinking it is the mind of Christ that will lead us into the deep things of the Spirit and the correct appraisal of spiritual things. The mind of Christ is our wisdom for this age and for this hour.

Third, it is in Philippians 2 that Paul says, "let this mind be in your which was also in Christ Jesus." Now that is the Authorized Version translation. Many later versions use "have this attitude in yourselves" which is essentially the same, for the mind of Christ is largely an attitude: the attitude of "emptying yourself." In this Philippians passage the Greek word is "kenosis" = emptying, which in one word is "the mind of Christ."

***Philippians 2:5-7*** *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*

Fourth, and last for this consideration, I want us to know that the mind of Christ has already been revealed in the Bible, and specifically in the gospels in the very words of Jesus. There is no secret revelation of God that has yet to be given to mankind. God's complete revelation that He intends for us to know, until we make it to heaven, is given in His Holy Word, the Bible. Never has a being revealed His mind so fully as God has revealed His mind to us in the Scriptures. He reveals His mind about creation, sin, marriage, money, relationships, discipline, raising children, forgiving others, dealing with dysfunctions, and a multitude of other super-practical issues, as well as the deep personal issues of who am I?, why am I? and why do I matter? Virtually every "what God thinks about this?" question is answered in the Bible.

You don't know as much about your mother or father (or anyone else) as you can know about God in the Bible. And the Bible can reveal even more about yourself than you know. Amazing.

## **OUR CONCLUSION**

I could wrap this up by quoting some of the saying of Jesus, giving His mind. But I think you doing the same would be far more powerful. And so, I'm going to ask you each to take your Bible and find a meaningful saying of Jesus, revealing His mind, from one of the gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. If you have a red-letter edition that highlights the words of Jesus, that makes your task even easier. In our time remaining, let's hear dozens of you read aloud "the mind of Christ." Yes, praise God, we can access the very mind of God. We can know what He is thinking.