The Holy Spirit And The Bible
1 Corinthians 2:9-16
Pastor John Miller

In 1 Corinthians 2:9-16, Paul says, “But as it is written…”—that means that he’s going to quote from Isaiah 64:4—“…‘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.’ But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received…”—notice that—“…not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man…”—or the “unbelieving man” or the “unregenerate man”—“…receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.”

The Bible comes from God, it centers on Christ and it is inspired by the Spirit. The Christian understanding of the Bible is thus Trinitarian. We believe that there is one God in three persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Our view of Scripture is Trinitarian; we actually believe that the Bible is the witness of the Father, to the Son and it comes through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

I want to talk to you today about the Spirit and the Bible. I don’t believe the two can be separated. But before we look at this text, I want to ask the question, Who is the Holy Spirit? Not what is the Holy Spirit. There is a false teaching going around that the Holy Spirit is a force; that it is God’s power, but it is not a divine person. Again I remind you that the Bible teaches there is one God. That’s known as “monotheism”; that the one God is eternal, self-existent, all-knowing, all-loving, everywhere present, holy, righteous, good, gracious, merciful, kind, etc. The list could go on of the attributes of God. But there is only one God.

But the Bible also teaches that the one God is manifested in three persons. We use the term “Trinity” to describe that. It’s actually better pronounced as the triunity of God. We believe in the unity of God; that there is one God, but He’s three persons. Not three gods, but three persons. One God—that they are one in essence—and they are in three persons; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. You say, “Pastor Miller, you just got started, and I’m totally confused. First you tell us there’s one God, and then you tell us there are three gods.”

“No, I didn’t tell you there were three gods. I told you there is one God and three persons. Each of them divine, but only one divine being.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Welcome to the club.”

If God were small enough for my brain, He wouldn’t be big enough for my needs. Aren’t you glad that God is more than we can fathom or comprehend? And we can only know about God what God chooses to reveal to us.

So we believe that the third person of the Godhead is the Holy Spirit. When I say the “third person,” I mean that the Holy Spirit is God. He has all the same attributes as God the Father and God the Son. He is a person. He thinks and He feels. He can be lied to. He can be grieved. He can be quenched. He wills. He distributes to those whom He chooses. God the Holy Spirit is actively involved in the Bible, the Word of God.

In Ephesians 6:17 we learn that we have “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” Taking up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. How interesting that he would actually tie the Spirit with the Word. I call that the “dynamic duo” of the Christian life. We need the Word of God, and we need the Spirit of God. We need them both, because the two work together to transform the child of God into the image of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. You can’t grow and you can’t develop into being more like Jesus unless the Spirit is using God’s Word to shape you and mold you into His image.

There are five points I want to share about the work of the Holy Spirit as it relates to the Bible. The first couple are repetitious, but it is important that we remind ourselves. Number one, the Holy Spirit came to give us revelation. The Holy Spirit is the revealing Spirit. We see that in our text in verses 9-11. We have here what is called “the doctrine of revelation.”

Paul opens with a quote from Isaiah 64:4, in the ninth verse of our text. “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.” You hear that verse so often misinterpreted and misapplied. You have it out of context. Reading it out of context, it is often interpreted as referring to heaven. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man” all the beauty and splendor and majesty of heaven. The problem is that that is not what it’s referring to.

Is heaven going to be awesome? Yes. Heaven is going to be amazing. There are going to be sights and sounds in heaven that are going to thrill us. It’s going to be amazing; the colors, the sounds, the glory. Jesus is going to be there. It’s going to be amazing. But that’s not what this verse is referring to. You say, “Pastor, you just ruined a good verse for me.” Maybe some of you have been quoting that verse for a long time as referring to heaven.

But I believe in the context here, he’s referring to revelation. If you go back to chapter 2, verse 1, Paul is contrasting his preaching of the Cross with the wisdom of the world. He’s basically saying that the preaching of the Cross is foolishness to the wisdom of the world. There is a worldly wisdom, and there is a spiritual wisdom. The Cross is to those who perish foolishness. But the wisdom of God is the power of God. So Paul is actually warning the believers at Corinth that they don’t actually need worldly wisdom. You don’t need worldly philosophy. That’s not to

say that all knowledge of things outside the Bible is wrong or bad. It basically is saying that there is a Spirit of wisdom that comes from God, revealed to us by the Spirit in His Word that cannot be known with the naked eye, that cannot be known through the ear gate, that cannot be known through the heart—or in this case, the heart represents the mind, that inner person. So he's talking about the natural senses: the eye hasn't seen the things of God, the ear hasn't heard the things of God, the heart cannot conceive of the things of God.

"But…"—notice the very next verse, verse 10—"…God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." This is why I say He's the searching Spirit. Thus He's the revealing Spirit.

When I opened this series two weeks ago, I pointed out that God cannot be known apart from revelation. That's just a fact. That's what Paul is saying here again; your eyes can't see God, your ears can't hear God without being regenerated by the Holy Spirit and seeing God in His Word.

Romans 11:33-34, as Paul comes to the end of the doctrinal section of this great epistle to the Romans, he says, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" Notice that His knowledge is unsearchable and His judgments are past finding out. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor?" The answer is "No one." We cannot know the mind of God, and we cannot counsel God. But notice that God has revealed them, verse 10 of our text, "by His Spirit."

And then he gives us an illustration in verse 11. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." In other words, if you really want to know somebody, ask that person. I run into people all the time, and because I'm a pastor, they hear me preaching. They know me but I don't know them. They say, "I know you." I'm thinking, I don't know you. I say "Hi" and greet them, but I'm thinking, You don't really know me. My wife knows me a little better than people who just come to church. You know something? She doesn't really know me either. In a couple of weeks, we'll have been married 40 years, and she still doesn't know me. She's still probably scratching her head and thinking, Who is this guy?

If you want to get to know me, guess who you should talk to? Me. If you want to know me, you talk to me. I can tell you who I am, what I feel. And the more a person puts into words their thoughts, which are hidden, and their feelings, which are unknown, the better we know them.

So what has God done? God can't be known, so what He has done is God has spoken in His Word. We know His thoughts and His mind and His feelings. We know how God feels about subjects. We know how He thinks about issues. Now the world looks at that and says, "Who do you think you are? You think you know God? You think you know the truth? You think you know what God says about this and what God feels about that?"

“Yes, because God has spoken. He’s revealed Himself in His Word.”

The agency, the means by which God reveals Himself is the Holy Spirit. Why? Because who knows God better than God? Who knows about God better than God the Holy Spirit? So if you want to know about God, listen to God the Holy Spirit as He has spoken and revealed God in His Word.

The second thing that we see about the Holy Spirit in the Bible is that He is the Holy Spirit of inspiration. So He’s the Holy Spirit of revelation, and He’s the Holy Spirit of inspiration. We see that in our text in verses 12-13. Paul says, “Now we…”—every time in verses 12-13 that he uses the word “we,” Paul is not talking about Christians; he’s talking about the Apostles. Because “we” have received this inspiration from the Holy Spirit—“…have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit Who is from God, that we…”—that is, “Apostles”—“…might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we…”—that is, “Apostles”—“…also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” The whole context is Paul’s apostolic preaching of the Cross compared to the wisdom and the philosophies of the world. It’s a world philosophy, or it’s a divine wisdom that comes to us from God.

The revealing Spirit is also the inspiring Spirit. Notice in verse 12, he uses the phrase “we have received.” Then in verse 13, “we also speak.” What did Paul and the Apostles speak? Again, the context here is that they are Apostles who are given inspiration to write the Scriptures. What did they speak? Negatively, verse 13, not the words “which man’s wisdom teaches.” But positively, verse 13, that “which the Holy Spirit teaches.”

Did you know that when you’re reading the Bible, the Holy Spirit speaks? Did you know that when you read the Bible, the Holy Spirit is teaching? He’s a teacher. No one can teach you anything about the Bible. It has to be the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God to give you understanding. The Scriptures were given, first of all, as a revelation of God, and they were given by inspiration of the Spirit.

In John 14:26, Jesus said to His Apostles, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit…He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” So how is it that several years after the life of Christ, the Apostles could sit down, and Matthew could remember everything that Jesus said and everything that Jesus did? How could Mark remember everything that Jesus said and everything that Jesus did? Or Luke? Or John? They had the Holy Spirit to give them inspiration. Jesus promised them that the Holy Spirit would bring everything He taught them back to their remembrance.

Verse 13 of our text is one of the strongest passages in the Bible on the subject of what we call “verbal inspiration.” Why do I use that word “verbal”? Because the Bible is not only the Word of God; it is the words of God. We call the Bible the Word of God, but it is the words of God. That’s why I like the expression about the Bible that it is “God’s Word written.” Not only the thoughts or the concepts, but the actual words. And I believe in the original autographs; that

every single word was breathed by God.

2 Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is given by…”—what?—“…inspiration…”—not perspiration; they didn’t have to work it up. It wasn’t man’s ideas. It wasn’t the wisdom from the world. It was given to them. I like the idea that it’s “revealed,” verse 10, and that it’s “received,” verse 12. At the end of verse 12, you have “freely given to us by God.” So God reveals His Word; He superintended the human authors the very words they wrote, the words of God.

I believe that the proper view of inspiration is what’s called “verbal plenary.” It means that the very words, verbal, and plenary, means all of them. So we believe that the very words, and all of them, are given by inspiration of God.

There are those—and it’s a wrong view—who say that it was just God giving them the inspiration of broad concepts and ideas, and then the human authors put them in their own words. Well, how do you convey ideas without words? If the words are wrong, then the ideas are wrong.

I believe God superintended the human authors so the very words they wrote were the very words of God. And when the Bible says, “All Scripture…”—Old Testament and New Testament—“…is given by inspiration of God…” it’s an interesting Greek word. It literally means “God breathed out.” It’s referring to the very breathe of God—“…and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” That means that the Bible tells us what is right. The Bible tells us what is wrong. The Bible tells us how to get right, and the Bible tells us all how to stay right.

You know all this stuff in the news lately about Harvey Weinstein? They’re saying that this is really going to change things, and they better get their morals right. I’m thinking, Hollywood’s going to get their morals right?! Since when?! I’m thinking, You have rejected God and His Word, and we are reaping what we have sown. We’ve rejected God. We’ve rejected His Word. We’ve thrown His law away. We don’t know right from wrong. We don’t know what’s acceptable. We live in this relativistic culture; “Your truth is your truth, and my truth is my truth.” We live in a hedonistic culture where pleasure is the chief good of life. “Do whatever you want. Do whatever feels good.” Now we’re reaping the consequences of it. The world has gone mad! That’s because we’ve rejected God, and we’ve rejected His Word and we’re basically like a ship without a rudder. We have no compass. We have no plumb line. We don’t know right from wrong. We have no concept of truth. Truth comes to us from God’s Word. The Bible shows us what is right, what is wrong, how to get right and how to stay right.

A reminder to us is in 2 Peter 1:21, where Peter says, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved…”—or “carried along”—“…by the Holy Ghost.” The Holy Spirit carried them along. So He’s the Spirit of revelation, the Spirit of inspiration and now, number three, He’s the Spirit of illumination, verses 14-16. “But the natural man…”—the “non-Christian,” the “unregenerate man,” the “unsaved man” or the person who hasn’t been born again—“…he receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are

foolishness unto him." They can't receive the things of God's Spirit. They don't understand the Bible or the things of Christ. "Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual…"—in other words, the Christian or the child of God, who has been born of the Spirit and has the indwelling Spirit—"…judgeth…"—or "understands"—"…all things, yet he himself is judged…"—or "understood"—"…of no man."

The world looks at you and says that you're an enigma. "I don't understand. You just believe in Jesus and think the Bible is the Word of God. You think there's really a heaven and a hell." You're an enigma to them; they don't understand you. He says in verse 16, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

Think about that statement: "We have the mind of Christ." Isn't that amazing? The Holy Spirit of God actually transforms our minds and our hearts. We have the mind of Christ; we understand the things of Christ. We understand the things of God. It's only due to the Holy Spirit's work that we can do that. He's the enlightening Spirit. He illuminates the Word of God to us.

I want you to notice some categories of man. There's the natural man referred to in verse 14. What is the natural man? The natural man is the unbeliever. He's not a hippie, by the way. In the old days, a natural man was a hippie. A natural mama was a hippie girl. Hippies don't shave or take a shower and they sleep in fields with flowers in their hair. No; a natural man is an unsaved person. There are terms that are synonymous: natural man, unregenerate man, not born again, not a Christian, not saved. I'm talking about the same person. If you are a Christian, you are because you've been born again. And if you've been born again, you are a spiritual person. People want to be "spiritual" but don't want to be born again. You can't be spiritual without being born again. You're unregenerated. You don't have the Spirit of God. You don't understand the things of God. You can't know God apart from the Holy Spirit revealing, inspiring and illuminating.

Vance Havner said, "Trying to explain the things of God to the unregenerate is like trying to explain physics to a monument in a city park." I love that. Or like trying to catch sunbeams with a fishhook. But notice the contrast in verse 15: "But he that is spiritual…"—that's the Christian, the born-again believer, the child of God. Every Christian has the Spirit of God living inside them.

It's interesting when you jump down to 1 Corinthians 3:1, it says, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." We have three categories: we have the natural man, who is not saved; we have the spiritual man, who is a Christian; and we have the carnal man, who I happen to believe is a Christian living like a non-Christian. For how long and how much is subjective. There has to be some evidence of conversion in your life or some fruit. You know people who have become Christians and then they just plateau and they just kind of backslide and they go nowhere. They stagnate. It doesn't mean they don't have the Spirit; it just means that they are controlled by the flesh. The word "carnal" means "fleshly." So they are Christians, but they aren't controlled by the Spirit.

They're not spiritually minded and haven't submitted to the Word of God. They're not walking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit's power. When you study the Bible you need to ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and to show you.

Jesus is called the "Living Word." He has two natures. Jesus is both human and divine; fully God and fully man. The Bible also has two natures. The Bible is the Word of God, but it's also the word of man. It has a historical background, a geographic background, a cultural background. So when you study the Bible, because of its two natures, you study it like you would any other book; you study it with your mind. You use the tools: the maps, the word study, Greek helps, Hebrew helps, the grammar, the context. You use your mind and study it like you would any other book. You take it literally. You understand that it uses figurative language. You understand that it uses allegory. It uses parables. It has poetic language. You take all that into consideration. It's a book like any other book in that way.

But the Bible is also the Word of God. So you study it like no other book. When I read a newspaper, I don't pray before I read it and ask the Holy Spirit to give me understanding and illumination. I don't need that. But when I read the Bible, I have to open it, get on my knees and pray. Every time I study the Bible, every time I read the Bible, every time I preach the Bible, I have to first say, "God, speak to me. Speak through Your Word. Holy Spirit, teach me. Holy Spirit, show me. Holy Spirit, open my heart. Holy Spirit, change my life." That's illumination.

I've been preaching now for over 44 years, and I've preached many texts many, many times, but every time I study the Bible, I learn something new. When I'm home alone in my study and I'm studying, sometimes I am so blessed! As the Holy Spirit gives illumination, the same way He does for you, I get so blessed that I just get up and dance around my office. I have this Holy Ghost jig that I do. But it's like, "Wow! That's so awesome!" I'm just so stoked that I just have to dance around my office for a while! This is just so amazing! Because it's the Spirit of God illuminating the things of God through the Word of God. It's such a glorious thing!

So the Holy Spirit is the revealing Spirit, the inspiring Spirit, the illuminating Spirit and, number four, the Holy Spirit is the transforming Spirit. In 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, Paul says, "Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." In the context, Paul is talking about the Law of Moses and that the Jewish people have a veil over their eyes. They couldn't understand it, because they were blind. Now we're not under the Law; we're not under those kind of law precepts anymore. But we've been born of the Spirit, and the Spirit brings freedom. We have the new covenant. Then Paul says in verse 18: "But we all, with open face…"—or "unveiled face." This is in contrast to the Jews, who are reading the Law of Moses and are unregenerate—"…beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed…"—Notice that. We are metamorphosized—"…into the same image…"—that same image of the Lord—"…from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The Spirit of God takes the Word of God and transforms the child of God into the image of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. That's how it works.

Jesus, praying to His Father in John 17:17, said, "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is

truth." I quoted that verse a few weeks ago to point out that God's Word is true, but this week I'm quoting it to point out that God's Word sanctifies. The word "sanctify" means "to be set apart and make holy." The moment you're saved, you're sanctified positionally, but as you read the Bible and you pray and you surrender to the Holy Spirit and you put God's Word into shoe leather and you begin to act it out in your life, you're being sanctified and being made holy and being made set apart. When you are born again, God declares you righteous positionally. When you are being sanctified, God is making you righteous practically. There's a big difference. You get saved; positionally you're righteous, but now you have to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

How does that happen? How does a Christian become more like Jesus? In many ways, but the way that we want to focus on now is that the Spirit of God takes the Word of God, and He transforms the child of God into the image of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

In Ephesians 5:18, Paul commands Christians to "…be filled with the Spirit." After you're filled with the Spirit, you're joyful, you're thankful and you'll be humble. Verse 19, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." You'll be thankful to God the Father for all things, and you'll be humble, submitting to one another in the fear of the Lord.

But don't miss this: In Colossians 3:16, we are commanded, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." So we have a command: "…be filled with the Spirit." Then we have another command: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." I believe the Word of Christ is the Scriptures. The consequences of being Spirit filled and joyful and thankful and humble are the same consequences, the same results, of letting "the Word of Christ dwell in you richly: "Speaking to ourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord," being thankful and being submissive.

I am absolutely convinced that in order to be a Spirit-filled Christian, you have to be a Word-filled Christian. You can't set your Bible over to the side and say, "Oh, Holy Ghost, take over my life." That's like trying to have a fire in the fireplace without any wood. If you have a wood-burning fireplace, which is a rare thing in this world we live in today—remember good old wood-burning fireplaces? If you have a wood-burning fireplace, God bless you. I miss my wood-burning fireplace. It crackles, and the more wood you put in, the bigger the fire gets.

One time my wife and I and all the kids went to a cabin in the mountains. It was a beautiful night and I put all this wood in the fire, but I forgot to open the flue. The fire was roaring. I was so proud of myself. "Look at me! Mountain man, Pastor John." The next thing, we were grabbing our stuff and running for our lives. We opened the windows. We stood outside the cabin in the dark night in the woods, and you could see the smoke pouring out of every window. "Dad, this is so much fun coming camping with you!" We finally got in there when the fire died down, and we were able to open the flue and exhausted the smoke out the chimney.

The Bible is like the wood, and the fire is like the Holy Spirit. The more fuel you put into your

heart, the more the Spirit will burn in your life. The more He will bring a transformation of your life. It's fuel for the fire. So He is the transforming Spirit, because "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2 Corinthians 3:17.

There is a fifth and last point I want to make. It's not in proper sequence, but I don't want you to miss it. He is the regenerating Spirit. He is the Holy Spirit of regeneration. He renews us. What I mean by that is that we are born again by the Spirit of God and the Word of God.

Titus 3:5 says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us…"—And how does God save us? Here it is—"…by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." I believe the "washing" is the Word of God. And He uses the Word of God to regenerate us or to give us new life.

In John 3:5, Jesus was talking to Nicodemus and said, "…Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." I believe the "water" is the Word of God. Whenever you have water mentioned in the Bible symbolic of washing, it is referring to the Scriptures. Whenever you have water being drank, it's the Holy Spirit. So the washing of regeneration is the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Born of water, born of the Spirit.

In 1 Peter 1:23, Peter says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." Peter says it so clearly: you have been born again, not by corruptible seed, but by incorruptible seed, the Word of God, which lives and abides forever.

When you are physically born, it takes two things: a seed and an egg. The two come together, and there is conception. When you are born of the Spirit, it takes two things: the Word of God and the Spirit of God. When the two come together, there is conception in the heart of a person.

The sequential order would be that He is the revealing Spirit—God is revealed in His Word; He is the inspiring Spirit—the Apostles wrote under the inspiration of God; He is the regenerating Spirit—you have to be born again to understand the Bible. If you're not a Christian, you're not going to be able to understand the Bible. It's going to be a mystery to you.

I remember when I got saved. I had been in church all my life, but I finally got saved. "Wow! Never saw that before! That's amazing!" I grew up in Sunday school and I knew the Bible stories, but it wasn't until the Spirit of God gave me new life that I understood His Word. And then as I studied and learned, the Lord gave me illumination. Then I learned more and more. Then the Holy Spirit brought transformation. And He's still in the process, by the way. As I look at God and His Word, I'm being changed into His image from glory to glory.

What a marvelous thing is the work of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures; revealing, inspiring, regenerating, illuminating and transforming our lives by God's Holy Word.

Let's pray.