

*1 Corinthians 2:9-11***v9 (REVISITED)**

I mentioned last week that I reserved the right to revisit v9 of our passage—and I would like to claim that right, and do a better job of placing it in the context of this passage.

**Read 1 Corinthians 2:9.**

Let's set aside the problem verifying the actual source for what Paul is quoting (because scholars will be divided on this until Christ returns); the more important question for us is: In this context, what does he mean by using this text? What is his point?

Some have interpreted this to be a reference to the future, to the end times. That is, for example, "eye has not *yet* seen... what God *yet* has in store for those who love Him." But that ignores the context.

The best explanation considers this a continuation of vv6-7; in this it further illuminates what Paul means by the "wisdom" he speaks. That is, "we speak God's wisdom..." (v7) "which eye has not seen..." (v9). Or in a fuller paraphrase,

We speak God's wisdom, salvation through Christ crucified, which none of the rulers of this age understood; but even as it is written: What no one could see, hear or understand about God's ways, these are the very things God has prepared for those who love Him.

**v10a**

In the Greek, v9 is not a grammatically complete sentence, so it follows that the NIV and ESV treat it so by making the first portion of v10 a continuation of Paul's thought process in v9.

**Read 1 Corinthians 2:8-10a**

ESV: None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"— these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.

This whole passage—from v6 through v10a—is a cohesive unit on the inability of those "of this age" to comprehend God, and the salvation He offers us in His Son. The wisdom Paul speaks—"Christ crucified"—is *not* of this age, so the unregenerate cannot understand it. Then in v10 he nails the reason for this, by stating, in the positive, why those *not* of this age *can* understand it.

*For to us God revealed them through the Spirit;*

The "them" in that phrase has been inserted by the translators of the NASB and KJVs (just as "these things" has been inserted by the translators of the ESV) to help us understand the connection between v10a with v9. They point back to "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man." Those things that the natural senses cannot recognize or understand do not exist for the unregenerate, because they haven't the Holy Spirit to reveal and interpret them.

**Sidebar:** The emphatic position of “to us” is not so much intended to contrast believers with unbelievers (us vs. them), but to connect “us” to “those who love Him.” That is, we could paraphrase it, “For to us, namely those who love Him, God has revealed what is otherwise hidden.” (Fee)

The Spirit is essential to our relationship with God. I am reminded of King David’s plea when he was on his knees before the Lord, confessing his egregious sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband. His greatest fear was that this transgression would cause God to exit his life.

**Do not cast me away from Your presence  
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.  
(Psalm 51:11)**

As we go about our temporal lives, dealing with all that is necessary to dwell here, it is easy to forget the importance of the Spirit in our lives. King David knew how important He was.

If we ignore the Spirit, we are separating ourselves from God; if we do not have the Spirit, we are disconnected from God. Initially the Spirit convicts us of our need for God in Christ; it is His ministry to make contact with those predetermined for regeneration. Afterward the Spirit becomes our two-way umbilical to God: through whom Father God reveals Himself to us, and through whom we commune with Him.

## 10B

*for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.*

The first part of v10 is connected with what has come before, while the second part of v10 begins what follows—an extended riff to the end of the chapter on the critical work of God’s Spirit in our lives.

**Sidebar:** There is an ancient, Greek philosophic principle known as “like is known by like,” and Paul makes this the basis for his argument in the following verses.

*Fee:* Humans do not on their own possess the quality that would make it possible to know God or God’s wisdom. Only “like is known by like”; only God can know God. Therefore, the Spirit of God becomes the link between God and humanity, the “quality” from God Himself who makes the knowing possible.

This pertains to knowing and communicating while we are on earth. In an identical sense, only God can live where God lives, because He lives in holiness. Thus believers must receive new, glorified bodies so as to live with Him for eternity. (Philippians 3:20-21)

One of the qualities of the Holy Spirit is that He cannot be contained: He moves about at will, unrestricted, wherever He likes—including the very depths, the “deep things” of God (*Greek, bathos*). Which follows, since the Spirit *is* God, and God is spirit-kind.

**Read John 4:23-24.**

**Read 1 Corinthians 2:11.**

*For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?*

Here Paul draws a comparative analogy that will be completed in the second part of the verse: *God's thoughts are known by His Spirit the way man's thoughts are known by his spirit.*

**Proverbs 20:27**

In this instance, even though he does not cite it as a Scriptural quotation, Paul clearly had Proverbs 20:27 in mind when he wrote v11.

**Read Proverbs 20:27. (Not NIV)**

Proverbs 20:27 is *not* saying that the Lord (Yahweh) searches man, as the NIV implies, but that the spirit of man *placed there by Goa* searches the depths of his being. Certainly God can do that; it is just not what this verse is saying.

The Hebrew word translated "spirit" (literally, breath), *neshama*, is the "word to denote the self-conscious personal human spirit in contradistinction to the spirit of the beast" (K&D), "that inner spiritual part of human life that was inbreathed at the Creation and that constitutes humans as spiritual beings with moral, intellectual, and spiritual capacities" (Allen P. Ross).

That is, the Lord God has placed in each person the ability and the capacity to know himself. He did not grant this to animals; the spirit he gave them is a different spirit. This is one thing that sets man above the beasts of the field. This spirit is not God's Spirit; it is our own spirit that was given us by Him, and it can search out every room, every closet in our being.

This was, for me, another of those lean-back-and-get-lost-in-the-wonder moments. In fact I recalled the last line in that great Wesley hymn (*Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*), "Lost in wonder, love, and praise"—the first stanza of which includes the lines, "Fix in us thy humble dwelling," and "Enter every trembling heart." I think of it this way: Engineers will design into space vehicles docking rings that enable other spacecraft to dock—to safely lock onto—them. It is planned for, well in advance of the moment of need.

God has so designed us. Well before it is time for His Holy Spirit to "dock" with us, he creates each one of us with a "docking ring"—our own spirit. For each believer there comes a moment when God's Spirit enters to permanently dock with our life, and there He finds a compatible connection, something of like kind: our own spirit. This moment is described in Romans.

**Read Romans 8:15-16.**

The two spirits, now joined, testify that we are now a child of God.

[Back to our text.](#)

## *1 Corinthians 2:11*

*Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.*

The analogy offered in v11 states clearly the principle, "like is known by like." Just as the only person who knows what goes on inside one's own mind is oneself, so only God knows the things of God. If A, then B. If it is true that only the spirit of a man knows the thoughts of a man, then it follows that only the Spirit of God knows the thoughts of God.

Let's put this together, for the conclusion one draws from this is truly breathtaking—a conclusion Paul reaches in the next two verses, which we will look at in our next session. In closing, let us consider this from the aspect of love—God's love. And let's key off that Wesley hymn title: *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*—that is, divine love, God's love, surpasses all other loves.

In our daily lives we can become so self-involved, and so insecure in our relationship with God, seeing situations not from God's perspective but from the perspective of fallen flesh, that we too quickly forget how much and how profoundly He loves us.

When we don't get the parking spot we want, when we fail to get that promotion at work, when our prayers are not answered as quickly as we wish—when things don't work out to our liking we conclude that God no longer loves us, or is, at least, displeased with us for some reason.

But here is how much God loves us:

- Out of all the myriad beings created for this earth, He makes us in His image: "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...'" (Genesis 1:26a).
- Into each one of us He placed a unique kind of spirit, one capable of examining every part of our own being, and capable as well of communing with His Spirit: "The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, Searching all the innermost parts of his being" (Proverbs 20:27).
- By means of His indwelling Spirit communing with the spirit of believers, God reveals to us those things incomprehensible to unbelievers (2:10).
- This same Holy Spirit knows the thoughts of God and freely shares those thoughts with believers (2:11-12).

God does this freely, generously, graciously for all those who love Him (2:9), who call upon His name. Put simply, we are made supernatural by God, so that we can understand Him and His ways. By His own efforts we are made capable of knowing and understanding Him.

That is love indeed.