

Gifted Sight!

1 Corinthians 2:14-16

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page_id=3567

For some the Bible is the linguistic medium in which God chooses to communicate His personal love letter to humanity. The words are full of Spirit, life (John 6:63) and flawless truth (Psalms 12:6; John 17:17). They are sharper than any two edged sword, for its precepts judge the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12) not with the intent of destroying one in hell (2 Peter 3:9) but to offer salvation to all whom believe (John 3:16) and partake in the living waters and bread of life (John 7:38, 6:25-59)! Even though His word constantly convicts them of their sins (2 Timothy 3:15-17) they still meditate (Psalms 119:47-48) and see it as a light (Psalms 119:105) that through confession (1 John 1:9) and obedience (James 1:21-23) equips them to rightly serve and please their Creator. To others the Bible is nothing more than whimsical nonsense written by a bunch of sinful authors about a realm that cannot be seen and therefore in their minds does not exist! For them the words do not leap off the page as if they had any meaning but represent a bunch of sayings that merely restrict human freedom. They see the Bible as nothing more than a mere fantasy of simpletons and bigots. How can two different groups of people read the same love letter and yet one sees it as the source of their lives and the other as yesterday's trash? This sermon is going to answer that question by exploring in 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 Apostle Paul's statement that only those with the Spirit can rightly discern and understand the word of God!

Natural Person's Limitations (verse 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

Apostle Paul begins this section by stating that those whom do not have the Spirit of God cannot help but see His words as mere "dreams of simpletons."¹ It is not a lack of intellect,² riches or even good deeds³ that keeps this "natural person"⁴ from understanding or

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Natural or Spiritual?](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 7 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1861), 474.

² C. K. Barrett, [The First Epistle to the Corinthians](#), Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1968), 77.

³ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Natural or Spiritual?](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 7 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1861), 474.

⁴ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 135–136.



positively responding to God's love letter⁵ but their carnal nature and reprobate minds. Their "soulful human nature"⁶ inherited from Adam⁷ has been corrupted and entangled by sin (Hebrews 12:1)⁸ and as a result is incapable of comprehending the significance of the light of God's glory (John 1:5)⁹ that shines all around us. Such a person is "volitionally prejudiced" against the truth concerning God because their "unregenerate appetites"¹⁰ to gratify the sinful desires

of their hearts has made them spiritually blind (James 1:14-15). While they can know of God and therefore are accountable to respond rightly (Romans 1:20),¹¹ until they possess a "higher nature" than they received from Adam¹² they will not be able to receive the wisdom of God's love letter "regardless of their intellectual abilities or human accomplishments (1:20)."¹³

It is not a lack of intellect that keeps the natural person from knowing God but the attitude of his/her heart! Not only is said person unequipped to discern the activities and word of God¹⁴ but in his/her "natural condition he/she cannot prefer Christ over their self-glorifying attitude!"¹⁵ Even when they read about how "death can be destroyed, the grave swallowed up

⁵ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 135.

⁶ W. Harold Mare, "[1 Corinthians](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans through Galatians*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 202.

⁷ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 136.

⁸ Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2247.

⁹ Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2247.

¹⁰ David Brown, A. R. Fausset, and Robert Jamieson, [A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Acts-Revelation](#), vol. VI (London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited, n.d.), 289.

¹¹ John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1980-1989\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

¹² C. H. Spurgeon, "[Natural or Spiritual?](#)," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 7 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1861), 473.

¹³ David K. Lowery, "[1 Corinthians](#)," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 510.

¹⁴ Leon Morris, [1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 63.

¹⁵ John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1980-1989\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).



and life and immortality brought to life"¹⁶ by being forgiven,¹⁷ transformed and adopted into God's family; this unmerited grace remains foolishness to them and not worth understanding!¹⁸ It is not that their ability to discern the basic truths concerning God is lost¹⁹ but that the "evil inclinations and wicked principles" by which they live their lives²⁰ makes them unwilling to "enter into the mind of God, in the spiritual matters of His kingdom, and yield to their force and power."²¹ Morally such a person refuses to assign the right value

to God's love letter²² because that would mean giving up self-reliance, self-exaltation²³ and the autonomy of choosing²⁴ to live their lives to gratify their own sinful pleasures. How foolish they are to cherish low, earthly sinful values²⁵ over the life saving power of the Gospel!

Not only does the natural person lack the nature to value God's love letter but according to Spurgeon they also lack the "organs" to do so.²⁶ Imagine taking a blind person to the Sistine Chapel and then wondering why he/she did not appreciate the amazing artwork or imagine taking a deaf person to a theater performing Handel's Messiah and wondering why he/she did not enjoy the symphony? Why would such persons be willing to spend their time or money to see what for them is unseeable or hear what for them is unhearable?²⁷ One of the main reasons why the natural man perceives God's love letter as mere foolishness is that

¹⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Natural or Spiritual?](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 7 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1861), 477.

¹⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Natural or Spiritual?](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 7 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1861), 477.

¹⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Natural or Spiritual?](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 7 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1861), 477.

¹⁹ John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

²⁰ C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1968), 77.

²¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2247.

²² John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

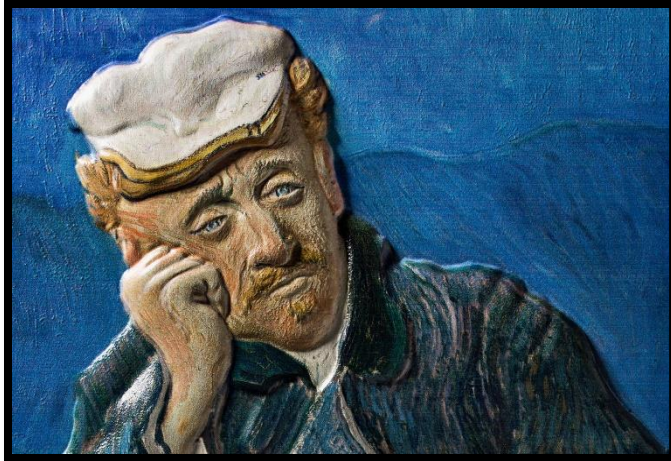
²³ John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

²⁴ John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

²⁵ John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

²⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Natural or Spiritual?](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 7 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1861), 477.

²⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, "[Natural or Spiritual?](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 7 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1861), 478.



he/she cannot see or hear the value and transforming power of His words!²⁸ “The eye of the Christian is his faith; but the natural man, being destitute of a living faith in the living Saviour, is like a man without eyes. He says it is foolish; it is nothing to him.”²⁹ For the natural person to truly understand the love letter takes an incredible leap of faith that once his/her will is surrendered to God, He will heal his/her spiritual blindness and deafness by transforming them into a redeemed

child and heir of His kingdom!³⁰

Spiritual Person’s Understanding (verses 15-16)

The moment a person becomes born again and the Spirit of God enters them they



become able to rightly discern the things of God.³¹ No longer does such a person evaluate God’s love letter based merely on human standards which are only interested in self-glorification³² but is guided by the Spirit in the truth concerning the spiritual things of God’s kingdom.³³ The Spirit whom knows God’s thoughts is the infallible arbiter of the wisdom of the cross³⁴ and its radical

²⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Natural or Spiritual?”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 7 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1861), 478.

²⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Natural or Spiritual?”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 7 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1861), 478.

³⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Natural or Spiritual?”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 7 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1861), 479.

³¹ Leon Morris, [1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 64.

³² Douglas J. Moo, [“The Letters and Revelation,”](#) in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2331.

³³ W. Harold Mare, [“1 Corinthians,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Romans through Galatians*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 203.

³⁴ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 136.

indictment³⁵ “of our desperate helplessness and on the other hand the all-sufficiency and beauty of Christ crucified.”³⁶ This does not mean that born again believers are infallible interpreters of God’s love letter³⁷ or that studying God’s word is no longer necessary,³⁸ for believers still sin and see dimly what will be made clear later (1 Corinthians 13:12). Unlike the natural person the spiritual one is able to accept, obey and perceive the commands of God³⁹ not as mere foolishness but words of love from their Creator, a source of infinite joy⁴⁰ that when following will lead to right living and pleasure in Him!⁴¹

In relation to the things of God “the power of spiritual discernment means freedom from human scrutiny.”⁴² John 3:20 states that the natural person who does evil will not



approach the light because of fear that their evil deeds will be exposed. Such a person not only hates the light but also tends to hate those whom have received the Spirit of God (John 15:8). We whom are born again are not to be concerned with “mere human judgments that ridicule Jesus’ death”⁴³ but are to focus on giving every effort possible to use the spiritual gifts God we have received to please Him (Hebrews 13:21). Through the power of the Holy Spirit we can judge rightly about all things⁴⁴ and therefore

our thoughts, words and deeds can fulfill His command to be Holy (1 Peter 1:16). To be able to not only comprehend God’s love letter but to be obedient to God’s revelation (Philippians 2:5–8)⁴⁵ is truly a treasure and pearl of infinite value!

³⁵ John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1980–1989\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

³⁶ John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1980–1989\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

³⁷ C. K. Barrett, [The First Epistle to the Corinthians](#), Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1968), 77.

³⁸ John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1980–1989\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

³⁹ David K. Lowery, [“1 Corinthians,”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 510.

⁴⁰ John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1980–1989\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

⁴¹ Marion L. Soards, [1 Corinthians](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 62.

⁴² Marion L. Soards, [1 Corinthians](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 62.

⁴³ Douglas J. Moo, [“The Letters and Revelation,”](#) in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2331.

⁴⁴ Marion L. Soards, [1 Corinthians](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 62.

⁴⁵ David K. Lowery, [“1 Corinthians,”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 510.

At the end of this passage Apostle Paul rejoices born again believers have received the mind of Christ.⁴⁶ “The *mind of Christ*, is God’s profound wisdom regarding salvation through a crucified Messiah which was hidden but is now revealed by the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁷



We as believers are not to view ourselves as elitists that have obtained special, revealed knowledge through our own merit or superior intellect⁴⁸ but as redeemed masterpieces of God’s grace that were once blind and now see! Praise be to God that those who have passed from death to life are now able to, albeit within limits, “view and assess things the way Christ does!”⁴⁹ This means that our mindset⁵⁰ is no longer focused on gratifying our sinful

pleasures with the things of this world but on seeking first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33) that is both a present and future reality (Luke 1:20-37)!

How to Become Born Again

If the cross is foolishness to you and there is an eternity between you and the regenerate, born again believer⁵¹ then please pay attention to the last portion of this sermon! The same power that raised Christ⁵² from the dead can command your bones and very soul to come to life.⁵³ The words of the cross is not just about Christ’s crucifixion it is about yours!⁵⁴ To become born of the Spirit you must see being part of God’s kingdom as being infinitely more valuable than your self-exaltation and gratifying the sinful desires of your heart. Please do not

⁴⁶ Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2248.

⁴⁷ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 138.

⁴⁸ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 138.

⁴⁹ John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1980–1989\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

⁵⁰ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 138–139.

⁵¹ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Natural or Spiritual?”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 7 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1861), 479.

⁵² C. H. Spurgeon, [“Natural or Spiritual?”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 7 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1861), 479.

⁵³ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Natural or Spiritual?”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 7 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1861), 480.

⁵⁴ John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1980–1989\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).



be fooled into thinking that entrance into God's kingdom can be obtained through good deeds or by reading the Bible, praying or attending church. While these certainly go a long way towards fulfilling Jesus' command to follow Him, salvation cannot be obtained without taking the first and crucial step called faith! It is by believing that Christ died to atone for one's sins and the surrendering of one's will to Christ that one becomes a new creation and adopted into God's family (Romans 10:9). So, if you want to be part

of God's family and read His love letter with the mind of Christ then pray from the heart this prayer:

Lord Jesus please forgive me for wanting to live my life my way. While I am a sinner not deserving to be saved, I plead to Your mercy to save a wretch like me. I believe in my heart that You Jesus were crucified for my sins and were raised from the dead so that I might be saved this very day! Jesus take control and be the Lord of my life. I thank You for Your grace and mercy and for accepting me as one of Your children. Now that I am saved teach me to follow you from now and forever, amen!