

REASONS TO TRUST THE CLARITY OF SCRIPTURE

1 Cor 2:7-16, ⁷ *But we speak **God's wisdom** in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory;* ⁸ *the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;* ⁹ *but just as it is written, 'eye has not seen and ear has not heard, nor has entered the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.'* ¹⁰ *But God has revealed them to us **through His Spirit**;* ¹¹ *for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God, no one knows except the Spirit of God.* ¹² *But now **we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God.*** ¹³ *These 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 the 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.* ¹⁵ *But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man.* ¹⁶ *For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? **But we have the mind of Christ.***

* As vs 7 says, the wisdom of God, hidden from the rulers or the leaders or the scholars or the religious and important people.

* None of them understand this, which is why they crucified the Lord of glory, and why the wise of the world continue to misunderstand the meaning of His death.

* We speak God's wisdom hidden from the world and revealed to us.

* Given to us, says vs 10, *through His Spirit*.

* The Spirit knows the mind of God, & is the one who has revealed it in Scripture.

* So, we have received, vs 12: *the wisdom of God, the truth of God, by the Spirit who is from God, in order that we might know the things freely given to us by God:*

* His truth, revelation, promises, commands – everything that God has freely given to us.

* The key phrase: “*that we might know.*” God has revealed His thoughts by His Spirit, **in His word**, so that we might understand and know these things.

* We can only know them, however, not by, vs 13: *human wisdom, but by the Spirit.*

* For the natural man, not accepting the Spirit, is unable to appraise or to understand or to discern divine truth, and finds it foolish.

* We receive it, and thus, vs 16, we have the mind of Christ.

* That is a monumental statement. We know what Christ thinks about everything He has revealed to us - **the mind of Christ is one with the mind of the Spirit.**

* **The mind of the Spirit and of Christ is one with the mind of God.**

* We know what God thinks

* We know how God appraises all things about which He has given us revelation.

* Presupposing the Bible is God's revelation:

* Taking that which has been hidden and bringing it out of hiding

* Taking that which has been an unknown mystery, making it crystal clear.

* The Scripture is given us by God through the Holy Spirit in order that we might know how God thinks, and we might possess the very mind of Christ.

* All this demands that the Bible be a clear word.

* Vs 12 states that we have actually **received the Spirit who is from God that we might know**

- * Unless this is a clear word, we are hopeless meandering in its mystery.
- * Centuries ago the Roman Catholic Church began advocating the idea that the Bible is unclear
 - * Impossible for the average person to correctly interpret and discern
 - * In fact, throughout history, any effort to put the Bible in the hands of common people was met with fierce opposition and even martyrdom
 - * The Roman Catholic system executed people for translating the Bible into the vernacular so that people could read it for themselves.
 - * Recall, that's why William Tyndale was killed in Belgium.
 - * That's why his partner in the Matthew's Bible, John Rogers, was killed by Bloody Mary along with 282 other people
 - * Because they said that the Bible disagreed with the Roman system.
 - * The church has affirmed that the only infallible and true interpreter of the Bible is the church itself.
 - * The darkness of that system has been exposed -- it frequently brought about severe and deadly persecution.
 - * In more modern times, the church has softened that dark system of severe persecution and allowed the Bible to be in the language of the people
- * Any effort to keep people from the study of the word of God, any effort to keep people from reading and understanding the word of God **is really a satanic ploy** just to keep people trapped in various types of error for the purpose of perpetuating that error.
- * As we've noted, there are many in evangelicalism who are telling us essentially that not only are we not able to understand the Scripture, but ...
 - * We cannot be authorized infallible interpreters of Scripture – Scripture is just too unclear.
- * Brian McLaren, who is the guru behind the Emerging Church Movement, says, "**Clarity is sometimes overrated. Shock and ambiguity often stimulate more thought than clarity.**"
 - * In his book "A Generous Orthodoxy" he celebrates the idea of ambiguity.
 - * Emerging Church Movement: The belief that man was never intended or even supposed to understand precisely what the Bible means.
- * The sinner's inability to comprehend the spiritual truth in Scripture is a function of the unregenerate mind.
 - * Rom 8:7⁷ *The carnal mind is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*
 - * The unregenerate person, vs 14, does not understand the things of God.
 - * Rom 8:14¹⁴ *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*
- * The carnal, fleshy, unregenerate mind, does not understand the things of God.
- * Not only is it not subject to the law of God, **it cannot be.**
- * So one could conclude that these people **who do not believe the Bible can be understood** are in the category of the natural man or the carnal mind.
- * So, this avalanche of teachers say that we can't know the Scripture because the Scriptures can't be known.
 - * It's not a matter of studying Greek & Hebrew & theology, & comparing scripture with scripture
 - * It's needless to do that
 - * Because we can't know
 - * Because no one can know
 - * Because the Scriptures themselves cannot be understood.
- * Yet, we just read in 1 Cor 2:16 that we have the mind of Christ
 - * It's not about some mysterious experience or some personal ascent to secret knowledge

- * It simply means we know what God thinks
- * We have been given the mind of Christ revealed by the Holy Spirit, and then we have been given the Holy Spirit to enlighten us about the true meaning of God's word.
- * Our redemption overcomes the rational effects of sin
 - * Our inability to understand – grasp – realize - is overcome by redemption.
 - * **We now have the mind of Christ**
 - * **We now are taught by the Spirit**, as we read.
 - * We now understand the connection between spiritual thoughts and spiritual words.
 - * The spiritual man appraises all things.
- * Yet, these “influencers in the church” constantly harp on the dangers of saying one can know what Scripture means by what it says
 - * They are implying that God has not spoken clearly.
 - * Such is **an attack on God**: God mumbles - God stutters - God isn't clear.
- * *1 John 5:12*¹² *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, **that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God***
- * Everything is written in the Bible so that we may know what God wants us to know.
- * Each and every sinner is held responsible ...
 - a) For the revelation of God in **Creation** (*Rom 1*) – The sinner has enough of the revelation of God in creation so that he is **without excuse before God**.
 - b) For the revelation of God in **Conscience** (*Rom 2*) - in them in the law of God written in the heart & the attending conscience that activates that law, so the sinner has no excuse
- * The sinner is without excuse for that which is revealed in **Creation** and **Conscience** and he is certainly without excuse for that which is **Revealed in Scripture**. God holds us responsible.
- * Not only has God given us His moral law in the heart, but there is a God who will hold us accountable to that by virtue of a conscience that activates guilt when His law is violated.
- * It seems foolish to consider that God would ...
 - * **Reveal Himself in creation**, and then
 - * **Reveal Himself in conscience**, and then
 - * **Muddle up the revelation that leads to the true, saving, fulfilling and glorifying knowledge of Himself**.
- * Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus
 - * *Luke 16:31*³¹ *But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'*
- * *John 3:19*¹⁹ *This is the judgment, that **Light** is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil.*
 - * Light is **Clarity** * Light is **Understanding** * Light is **Revelation**
 - * Light is **God Revealing Himself**.
 - * Light: **Lucid - Clear - Discernable - Understandable – Comprehensible**
 - * *Vs 20*²⁰ *For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and doesn't come to the Light lest his deeds should be exposed.*
 - * You want the light to shine into your life and expose the evil, so you can repent of it.
- * The Bible claims to be light again and again and again and again.

- * Men redefines it because they don't like what the light reveals.
- * The fault is not with God, it is with man.
- * We hold that Scripture is clear, because God – its Author, Creator, Redeemer – speaks plainly to accomplish His purpose – and what is His purpose in human history?
 - * To redeem men and women - To gather a bride for His Son - To bring a message of salvation, so that those who were chosen before the foundation of the world in Christ can hear and believe and be saved, and be brought to eternal glory as the bride of the Son of God
- * Ex) Jesus, in His teachings, His conversations, and His disputes with the Jews, never blamed their ignorance on the Old Testament.
 - * He was speaking to 1st century people removed from David by a 1000 years, removed from Moses by 1500 years, and removed from Abraham by over 2000 years. And Jesus refers to David and Moses and Abraham **as if they were familiar**.
 - * Whether He's talking to Jewish scholars or untrained rabble crowds, He always assumes that the blame for not understanding any teaching of Scripture is not to be placed on the Scripture, but on the ones who fail to understand, every – single - time.
 - * Again and again He says this: *Matt 22* “*Have you not read? Have you never read in the Scriptures?*” Or, “*You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God*”
- * In the NT Paul says to the church of God, which is at Corinth, to the churches of Galatia or to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, and so on and so on
 - * 13 epistles of Paul and then the epistle to the Hebrews - written to the Jews.
- * Most of the others focus primarily on Gentiles
 - * Paul, writing to Gentiles, with no background in the Old Testament, he assumes that the common, ordinary person sitting in the meeting of that church in Corinth, in Philippi, somewhere in Galatia, in Ephesus, wherever, will understand what he writes and what he means by what he writes.
 - * Ex) To the Colossians, Paul said:
 - * *Col 4:16*¹⁶ *Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.*
 - * They swapped the letters, passed them around -
 - * And yet, the New Testament authors showed no hesitancy in expecting these Gentile Christians to be able to read and understand the Scripture
 - * To read a Greek translation of the Old Testament that was available, or even a translation of the Old Testament in their own language.
- * In no case can we say that the teaching of the Bible on any subject is confusing or incapable of being understood correctly or ambiguous or unclear.
- * Scripture rightly interpreted is not arrogance, & Scripture deemed ambiguous is not humility.
 - * It is willful sin - an assault on God Himself, who speaks so that we can understand.
- * All Scripture, however, is not so clear as to need no interpreter or expositor.
 - * **Scripture has heights and it has depths of truth**, like God Himself, who is high and deep
 - * Scripture yields those heights and depths of truth by **diligent study**.
 - * That's why we are commanded to study, to be approved of God, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word.
 - * It's why the noble Bereans searched the Scriptures to see if these things were so (*Acts 17*)
- * The basic message of Scripture is clear, it is comprehensible, it is understandable.

- * Scripture is milk, but it is also what? _____.
- * So, God has given us pastors, evangelists, as well as apostles and prophets, for the edification of the saints.
- * He's given to the church pastor-teachers, teachers, elders, bishops, overseers (all the same office), gifted saints, for the teaching of the word of God.
- * To Timothy Paul says give double honor to the elders who labor hard in preaching - teaching.
 - * The basic message is one thing -but **the work of exposition that takes you high and takes you deep** is something that **enriches and blesses and enhances your worship** and your service, because **it enhances your knowledge of the things of God.**
- * Scripture is bread - bread available to the reach of a child.
 - * But it is also Gold, deep under the surface, **to be dug out only by a diligent laborer.**
- * Scripture contains truths hard to understand
- * Scripture contains truths that demand all our mental powers; transcendent truths that we look into, and we can't even plumb the full depth of, though we spend a lifetime doing so.
- * *2 Peter 3:15-16*¹⁵ ... consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,¹⁶ as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are **some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.**
 - * If Peter found Paul hard to understand, and knew him and lived in his era, there are parts of Paul that we find, on the surface, hard to understand.
- * To deny the clarity and certainty of Scripture is arrogance of the worst kind.
 - * **It's a kind of blasphemy that accuses God of an inability to communicate clearly, and then hold people accountable for their eternal destiny for truth that is incomprehensible***
- * There is amazing uniformity of agreement on the central truths of Scripture throughout the history of the whole church.
- * The central doctrines of the Christian faith are apparent to all who study diligently
- * Expository Preaching of Scripture: Expositing, Explaining the Bible.
 - * The old English verb “to exposit.” It means “to explain.”
- * There are a number of reasons why we do this, Manifesting Scripture's Clarity.
 - 1) **It establishes the authority of God over the soul.**
 - * Who has the right to speak in the church? God does.
 - * It is the church of God - Purchased with His own blood through His son Jesus Christ.
 - * Christ is the head of the church – It is He who should speak to His church.
 - * The Expositor is like an errand boy, a waiter - Not the chef.
 - * He is simply responsibility to tell say what the Lord of the Church has said.
 - * It is a clear message.
 - * It should be Given with its Clarity as best one can to the Height and Depth and Length and Breadth of which they are able.
 - * Anyone who does not preach the word of God **interrupts** the Lordship of Christ over His church - hindering the work of the Holy Spirit
 - * Because the Spirit uses the word **Understood**, the word **Magnified**, the word **Clarified**, to save and sanctify.
 - * Churches are full of self-appointed, self-styled mavericks who don't want to submit to biblical truth

* So they cultivate in their people the very same thing: Indifference to and lack of Submission to the Word of God, and therefore to God Himself.

2) Because the Word is Clear – It Sanctifies

* It sanctifies both the listener and the one who studies and prepares

* If pastors give little quick cutesy ditties here and there and never delve into the deep things of the word of God, then the people are not exposed to the power and pruning and purging of His word.

* The Scriptures must be expounded by example in order to help people understand the priority of Bible study.

* One thing that happens in the church where there's not an Expository Ministry is people don't see Bible Study as a Priority.

* They might see meeting felt needs as a priority.

* They might see being successful as a priority.

* They might see politics as a priority.

* They might see philosophical theory as a priority

* Whatever comes out of the pulpit.

* If the pulpit however is filled with the exposition of the word of God, that's the high point of Christ's Church.

* This is the Church at its **Pinnacle** of assembly, when God speaks through His word.

* Most churches today, mega churches, have no such thing as Sunday School, because there's nobody to teach - It's not a priority.

**** Expositing the Word of God regularly, making clear the great truths that are in it, produces spiritually deep thinking in the people; and that produces Transcendent Worship ****

* The work of the word is to produce a congregation of people who worship

3) The People are Protected from Error and Carnality,

* Error is everywhere in this world and there's plenty of carnality to go along with it

* We must defend the church against it.

* Unfaithful shepherding means

* No deep soul work * No convicting preaching * No penitence * No fear of God

* Then you get a congregation of people who are carnal, and subject to drifting off into error because they don't know anything.

* Imagine going to a church where they believe that there was nothing clear in the Bible and everything is ambiguous.

* How could one live their life in that kind of ambiguity?

* You'd end up not only in error and carnality, but you'd end up weak, cowardly, and compromising with no convictions about anything

* You couldn't confront anything

* You couldn't protect yourself from anything

* Compelling reasons why the word of God must be preached in its clarity

* We rejoice in the clarity of God's Holy Word.

**** It's not the things I don't understand that bother me, it's the things I do understand ****

* What ought to bother us as Christians is what we do understand about the word of God.

* It should bother us into obedience and spiritual devotion.