

"The Bible: Revelation or Imagination?"

Holiness

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2 Peter 1:19-21

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Bruce: Good morning, men.

Men: Good morning, Bruce.

Bruce: Let us pray. Blessed are You, O Lord, the God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all. In Your hands are power and might. In Your hands You have made what is great and to give strength to all. And now we thank You, O God. We praise Your glorious name forever and ever. Amen and Amen.

Let's turn in our Bibles, please, to 2 Peter chapter 1, continuing our examination of the theme of holiness, as recorded in the books of 1 and 2 Peter. In 2 Peter chapter 1 we'll be looking specifically at verses 20 and 21 today. Well, let me back up and start at 19.

"And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, till the day dawns and the Morning Star arises in your hearts, knowing this first of all: that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen and Amen. If we want to get to know someone, there are many ways in which we can go about that. In our culture today we can just go on the Internet. You can pretty much find out about anything you would like to know about that individual person. You could also call the CIA. You could call the FBI. You could go to his college or get his transcripts or his academic achievements or his curricular activities.

But all of those activities would be secondary information because the quickest way to really get to know somebody in depth, and the most accurate way, is that knowledge of a person which comes from the personal contact you have with that person. In other words, you can read his mind. You can see his eyes. You can see his body language. You can hear his voice intonations, inflections and so forth.

But no one can express something about himself more clearly than that person himself. And that is basically what we would call the principle of self-disclosure. If you really want to get to know somebody, you have to be with that person and he can disclose himself to you. The important thing is that if that person does not want to disclose himself to you, you'll never get to know him.

And that is basically what Peter is teaching us today in our passage in 2 Peter chapter 1. He's talking about the principle of self-disclosure, where God has chosen to disclose Himself to us so that we will get to know Him. If God were so pleased not to do that, you and I would be left to creating the god of our human imagination rather than seeing the God of Biblical revelation.

Now Peter has been teaching us about credible Christianity. And basically, the theory was this—that doctrine precedes your conduct and conduct precedes your conversation. In other

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words, it is the style of life that we lead that might cause somebody to say, "Would you give me a reason for the hope that's within you?" This means that your conduct is the means of attracting somebody to want to have a conversation with us about the doctrines which we hold true about the Person and work of Christ. Doctrine precedes conduct and conduct precedes communication.

But Peter now teaches us something else. He says, "There is another reason why I have such strong convictions about my belief system." And that's where we come to verses 20 and 21.

In verses 1-11, he talked to us and told us about the divinely implanted life of Christ, the divinely implanted life in verses 1-11. Now, in verses 12-21, he gives you the reason for these deep convictions that he holds about his faith life.

Peter basically says this—that his greatest defense of the Christian life is the way in which God chose to disclose Himself through the Scripture—the principle of self disclosure. God has chosen to disclose Himself so that we can know Him intimately. And He has chosen to do that through the revelation of the Scripture. It is the principle of self disclosure. If God had not chosen to do that from before the foundation of the world, we would be lost. We would be on our own intuition as to who God is. And we would be bound by our human reason as the means by which we would determine who He is.

But Peter said, "There is another reason why I'm so confident and have such strong convictions." And that is the means by which God has made clear that He has disclosed Himself in the Scripture.

So Peter touches on three major concepts in these verses that I want to go through today so that we can have a clear understanding of how God was pleased to self disclose, so that we might know Him. There are two principles that he is going to talk about, and they are these. *True wisdom is not humanly discerned.* True wisdom is not humanly discovered. And secondly, this. *True wisdom is revealed by the Holy Spirit.*

Now let me explain what I mean by this. There are three elements that Peter is going to teach us. I want you to stick with me today because it is very, very important that we understand how God has chosen to self-disclose through the Person and work of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures. The three elements in this process are *revelation, inspiration* and *illumination*.

To do this, I want to take you to 1 Corinthians chapter 2. Would you turn with me there? We're going to spend some of our time in that particular passage, written by the apostle Paul. 1 Corinthians chapter 2.

Now the first principle that Peter teaches us is this—that true wisdom is not humanly discovered. It's revealed by the Holy Spirit. You'll see that in verses 20 and 21 of 2 Peter chapter 1.

Now Peter refers to the writers of Scripture, not the individual readers. Now what does it mean to have an interpretation? We're going to learn how to interpret Scripture this morning because that is Peter's greatest offense of his convictions of the Christian life. It is how God has chosen to self-disclose.

So what do we mean by *interpreting, interpretation*? The word means "to unloose, to untie, to explain what is hard to understand." That's an interpretation.

Now historically, the Catholic Church for centuries took this to mean that no one other than the priest could really interpret the Scripture because of personal interpretation. But the context of this particular passage that we just read in 2 Peter 1:20 demands that we understand that verse

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20 is referring to the source of what the Bible writers put down in the words of verse 21. So hold on to 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and go back to 2 Peter chapter 1, verses 20 and 21.

The context is this. *"Knowing first of all that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation."* So he's saying that it does not come through human reason. The context of this is all the context of Scripture, not just what some person interprets it to be. Verse 21—*"for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man. But men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."*

Now Paul says a couple of things that we need to understand. Let's go to 1 Corinthians chapter 2. Look at verses 6-7 specifically.

"Yet among the mature we impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age, or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God which God decreed before the ages for His glory."

Now Paul is going to teach us very significant things about God's self-disclosure. Paul is basically saying this—that there is a different kind of wisdom when we're exposed to Him and He has been pleased to disclose Himself. Before time began, God had a wonderful plan—that in Christ and in the Scriptures all the mysteries of that plan have been revealed to us.

Now oftentimes we talk about our Christian testimony. We basically say this. "Well, I found Jesus. And here is how I found Him." Well, I didn't know that He was lost. You see, we didn't find Jesus. Jesus found us, because He was never lost. And that is what Peter and Paul are going to teach us this morning. We didn't find Him. He found us.

Now here is the reason that He found us and why we can't find Him. He had to come and find us because we cannot leave our own natural system, meaning our life. We can't do that. God had to invade or reveal Himself to us because in our natural system wisdom is coming to nothing. Look at verse 6 again. *"Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age, or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away."*

Now we cannot leave our natural system, and so therefore we can't operate outside of that. God had to invade our system. And He did that through the Person and work of Christ. Look, then, at verses 8 and 9 of 1 Corinthians chapter 2.

"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.'"

Now verses 8 and 9 tell us that God has revealed a wonderful mystery to us. There are two ways that one comes to truth humanly, in our natural system. And this is why God had to invade us with His wonderful plan of sending the Person and work of Christ as taught in the Scripture.

First of all, humanly, there is what we would call *the experiential method*. Notice that it is eliminated here in these particular verses, 8 and 9 when it says this. *"No eye has seen, nor ear heard."* That means this—that God is not externally observable. No eye has seen Him and no ear has heard Him. He has to invade our system because we cannot operate outside of our own natural system. Do you understand that? And Paul is saying this. No eye has seen Him and no ear has heard Him. Therefore if we're going to discover who He is, He is going to have to choose to self-disclose, which is what He has done.

The second possibility of our coming to some degree of wisdom would be through *our own natural reasoning*. And again, notice what the Scripture says. *"No mind has conceived what*

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God has prepared." So it's not possible for man to conceive that. God is going to have to invade our natural system through the revelation of Himself by some other means because we cannot do that from our experiential method or our human reasoning method. You see, worldly wisdom can't know God, either through objective facts or through human reasoning. The human mind does not discover God. God reveals Himself to the human mind. And that is called *revelation*.

Now what is revelation? Revelation is the disclosure of something that has been previously hidden. God has chosen to reveal Himself and to reveal those things that had been previously hidden. And we cannot ascertain those things through our experiential method because no eye has ever seen it and no ear has ever heard it.

Secondly, we can't do it through human reason, because the mind cannot conceive of what God has prepared. So He has to invade us and do something for us.

And that's where we come to the first thing that Paul teaches us, and that is the word *revelation*. That's a disclosure of something that has been previously hidden. It is the unveiling of something that has been veiled. That's why no eye has seen it and no ear has heard it, and no mind can conceive of it, because we cannot work outside of our own natural capabilities and our own natural system. If God is going to teach us who He is, He's going to have to invade us by revelation, something that is hidden.

Now men, I want to walk you through a process. This is known as *hermeneutics*. And that is the science of Biblical interpretation. Now I want to walk you through this. We're going to go through a little class on hermeneutics, the science of Biblical interpretation.

There are three things we need to look at, and I'm going to walk you through 1 Corinthians chapter 2 hermeneutically. That means this. We're going to look first of all at the *context*. What is the context that Paul is speaking to? That's very important for us to understand the revelation by proper Biblical interpretation.

The second thing we need to look at is *grammar*. What do the words mean? What is the sentence structure?

And thirdly, we need to look at the *context*. What is the context of this passage as it relates to the other passages surrounding this particular chapter?

So let's start off, first of all, by giving you some historical background of what Paul is writing and why he is writing this particular passage under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, because we need to understand that this is new revelation. Yes, Ted?

Ted: You said, "Context number one, grammar number two and context number three."

Bruce: I'm sorry. *Historical background* is number one. Thank you, Ted. Historical background is number one. Number two is grammar. And number three is context. That's the principle of biblical interpretation that we're going to apply.

This is really fascinating when you understand the historical background of why the Holy Spirit was pleased to have Paul write the things that he did with the words that he wrote. To understand that, we need to understand the historical background.

Now Paul is writing to a racial group of people in history who were probably the most intellectual people of all, and those would be the Greeks. They were a race of creative thinkers. The sole instrument which they used in their attempt to pierce the mysteries of God was their human reasoning. This they sharpened to a very keen edge. But it was really inadequate to solve

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the mysteries of the creation. Even Plato, one of their great philosophers, said this. "We must lay hold of the best human opinion, in order that borne by it, as on a raft, we may sail over the dangerous sea of life, unless we find a stronger boat or some sure word of God, which will more safely carry us through life."

Now what he was saying is this. He was acknowledging that mere human reason was not sufficient to answer the riddles of human life. And basically he was saying this—that not even our best human reasoning can figure out who God is. The only way it can happen is through a divine revelation.

Now those are the people to whom Paul is writing this letter in the book of 1 Corinthians. The man who wrote this passage, Paul, was declaring to those individuals that the bible had some real impact which overrode human reason, and was necessary for divine intervention and divine revelation.

Here is Paul's background, and why the Holy Spirit was using Paul to write to the church at Corinth. He was a native of Tarsus, a city where Greek culture predominated. The University of Tarsus was known around the world at that particular time. It was placed ahead of the University of Athens and Alexandria for its zeal for learning.

Now the people to whom Paul was writing were Roman citizens. And they were also citizens of the city of Tarsus, which later tells us that his family was probably one of wealth and upper standing because it was only those of wealth and upper standing who could attend the University of Tarsus.

This explains why Paul could make such a statement as he did in Philippians chapter 3 verse 8. *"I've suffered the loss of all things."* In other words, he's saying that he lost all of his historical background in who he was when he became a believer.

The city was known for its intense activity. It's what we would call drive. This was a city that was driven to initiate things. Those are the people to whom Paul was writing. Paul was not rooted in some easy latitude of an Oriental city. But he was raised in a physical and mental achievement oriented city. That's where Paul comes from. And it was through this learning at the University of Tarsus that he was writing these words to the people at Corinth.

Now he could have used all of the human reasoning and everything that he learned at the University of Tarsus. But he didn't do that. He was schooled in Greek rhetoric. He was schooled in Greek philosophy and sophistry.

Do you know what sophistry is? Sophistry is the use of fallacious arguments with the intent to deceive. He was schooled in that. That was the Greek educational system. He was also schooled in Greek literature.

So Paul now begins the treatment of this subject by telling the Greeks that neither his scientific investigation nor human reason has ever been able to set a sure foundation for religious thought. He is saying that logically, it has to come from divine revelation.

Notice what he says. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard ... the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

Now the context makes it very clear that he is talking about all of the Scripture. Not only was it that his scientific investigation never discovered this truth. It was also never achieved by the fact of human reason.

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The Greeks translated this word enter, and it is a very interesting word. It never entered his mind. In other words, he's saying this. It never entered my mind to think of God that way. It's the idea of conjuring something up in your own mind. Logically, he has eliminated human reason and scientific investigation, as well as academic knowledge. He's basically saying this. The things that God has revealed about Himself never entered my mind from the point of view of my human nature, using academic investigation or human reasoning. It just never entered my mind, Paul says.

Now notice how this impacts the theory of evolution. It teaches us that all of the human race is the result of the divinely inspired resident within him. In other words, he's saying this. Evolution has this basic principle—that inside man there is some divinity. We now can use that inside of us.

That's why Paul says, "No. It has never entered my mind." The people who take the position of evolution are saying, "Yes, it has entered my mind because it's in me already, because I have some divine spark in me. There is some degree of divinity." Paul is going to refute that because he is saying that no eye has seen these things, no ear has heard, and no mind can understand the things that God has for His people. He's basically eliminating those two possibilities.

Now there are three things that he talks about. First of all, there's *revelation*. And that is found in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verses 10-12.

Transcriber's Note: 1 Corinthians 2:10-12. *"These things God has prepared for us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit which is in him? So also, no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in human words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual."*

Bruce: It defines revelation. It's the act of God the Holy spirit imparting to the biblical writers truth incapable of being discovered by man's unaided reason. Revelation is the act of God the Holy Spirit imparting to the Bible writers truth incapable of being discovered by man's reason.

Then the next thing he talks about is *inspiration*. We see that in verse 13. Inspiration is the act of God the Holy Spirit enabling the Bible writers to write down infallibly in God-chosen words the truth revealed. Again, inspiration, in 1 Corinthians 2:13.

Transcriber's Note: 1 Corinthians 2:13. *"And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual."*

Inspiration is the act of God the Holy Spirit enabling the Bible writers to write down infallibly in God-chosen words the truth revealed.

And thirdly, you have the word *illumination*. You'll see that in 1 Corinthians 2, verses 14-16.

Transcriber's Note: *"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but he is himself to be judged by no one. For 'who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ."*

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Bruce: *Illumination is the act of God the Holy Spirit enabling believers to understand the truth given by revelation and written down by inspiration.*

Now let's go and examine some of these words that we see in 1 Corinthians chapter 2.

First of all, take a look at verses 10-12. These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. *"For the Spirit searches everything, even the truths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the Spirit of that person which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God."*

Now Paul is going to deal with a great deal of logic here. He is basically saying this. No individual knows the individual thoughts of that person except himself. You cannot discern that. The only person who knows what is going on inside of his heart is that person himself. If that is true, then only God is the One who knows what's going on in His heart. You can't discern that. It's not humanly possible.

And the logic is this. If you can't figure what's going on in somebody else's heart, how in the world can you figure out what's going on in God's heart? The only one who can reveal what's going on in your heart is you, the individual person. Likewise, God is the only One who can reveal what's going on in His heart. He's dealing with a great deal of logic when he teaches us this. What the individual knows is only the things that are going on in his own heart. And I cannot discern that myself.

So Paul says that logic will lead us to the conclusion that if a man does not understand what's going on in somebody else's heart, he's not capable of discerning what's going on in God's heart. God is the only one who knows what's going on in His heart. And the only way He's going to reveal that to us is by revelation. That is not something that we have conjured up in our own minds because Paul has already said this. "It never entered my mind." There is some external revelation that causes us to see who God is; it's not something that's internal. That's the whole concept of revelation. And just as the only person who knows what's going on in his heart is that individual, so only God knows what's going on in His.

Therefore if man finds it impossible through scientific investigation and human reason to discover the inner secrets of a fellow man, it's rather clear that he does not have the capability to discover the inner secrets of God's heart. That's going to have to come through revelation.

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes?

Participant: How do we deal with a person in our modern day when he says, "Well, God revealed that to me. God told me that you should do this," or "God told me that I should do this," or "This is how I interpret that, because God told me." That's like a trump card. My experience could be a trump card. I hear people say, "But God told me this."

Bruce: Well, I would say that if somebody says that, be cautious. The second thing I would say is can you back it up with Scripture? Show me where God spoke to you through the Scripture.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: That's what you have to do. Go back to the Scripture. That's what I always say. Would you show me in the Scripture where the Lord spoke to you?

"Well, He spoke to me audibly." I had this wisdom. I had this sign."

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God is never going to say one thing to some person and have it be in conflict with the Scripture. That's our basis. Take it back to the Scripture and let them validate what they said is true.

I mean, I've had people tell me all sorts of things. One guy took me to lunch several years ago and said, "The Lord told me that you're going to be the next principle of this Christian high school."

And I said, "Really!" (*Laughter.*) And I said, "Well, when He tells me that, we'll have a conversation. Could you show me where He Scripturally gave you that insight?"

"Well, it was just something that I know." Well, he was wrong. That was not something that the Lord was doing in my life any more than it was in his own life.

So take people back to the Scripture when they make statements like that. We have to be very, very cautious.

Now why does somebody say that? "God told me to tell you this."

Participant: Ungodly influence?

Bruce: A manipulating influence. But who looks good?

Participant: Them.

Bruce: Them! It makes me look good! If I say to you, "God told me to tell you this," it actually building myself up because I'm such a spiritual guru that I'm now telling you that God speaks to me. I'm now telling you that. It makes the person look good. That's why they do it—because it makes them *feel* good, as well as manipulating the whole situation. We just have to be very, very cautious of that, men. Be very, very cautious.

The first step, therefore, is the transmission of what Paul is teaching us in 1 Corinthians chapter 2—the doctrine of revelation, the act of God the Father and the Holy Spirit uncovering the things of the heart of God so the bible writers could write down truth. Revelation is uncovering the heart of God.

Paul logically says this. If you can't discern what's going on in the heart of an individual, the only person who can do that is the person himself. Likewise, the only Person who knows what's going on in God's heart is God Himself. You can't discern that. The only way you're going to do that is that it has to come from some external source, which is revelation. Paul is using a great deal of logic here in all of this.

Now the second word is the word *inspiration*. We need to talk about that for a moment.

Now first of all, let me tell you what inspiration is not. A quick definition would be that *inspiration* is the method by which the Spirit delivered God's revelation. Now let me tell you what inspiration is not. It is not a high level of human achievement. Smart men didn't write the Bible because smart men don't defend themselves.

Secondly, inspiration is not God working only through the thoughts of the writers, which basically says this. God just gave them general ideas.

And thirdly, inspiration is not the act of God on the reader of Scripture, which basically says this. The part that is inspired is that part which means something to me. So when I read the Scripture and I get zapped by something meaningful, that's inspiration. So they are basically saying that the Scripture is non-authoritative unless it means something to you personally. Scripture is authoritative regardless of what it means to you. Inspiration is not the act of God the Father through the Holy Spirit causing you to find some insight into a Scripture that applies to

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you and rejecting everything else. Basically, that's saying that inspiration is not authoritative. Inspiration is authoritative because all of Scripture is.

And fourthly, I would say this. Inspiration is not mechanical dictation.

Now the apostle Paul makes this very positive statement. He says that the words which the bible writers were taught came by the Holy Spirit. They wrote the Scriptures because the Holy Spirit revealed the truth to them. God chose the exact words by which they did this.

Here is where it gets very interesting. This is not mechanical dictation. The Holy Spirit of God, knowing what He was doing in the lives of these men, to write the bible for us, took their individual personalities. He took the individual nuances of their own lives. And he helped them through the ministry of the Holy Spirit select the right words.

One of the words here which the Scripture talks about is *contrast*. As they were moved by the Holy Spirit, they would contrast their own thoughts with the words the Holy Spirit would give them. They would come up with the right word that was infallible because it was given by the Holy Spirit.

Now here is an example of what I mean. Here's how it works. Luke's writing in the book of Acts or the Gospel of Luke is the most glorious because he had the greatest Greek knowledge. Luke was the most beautiful part of the Scripture because it was really the purest and most beautiful form in the Greek language, because that's who Luke was.

Luke was a doctor. So his writing is going to be influenced by who he is as a person with his own personality, the Holy Spirit moving in his life to help him choose the words that fit his situation because God was ordaining the revelation through the illumination of these particular men.

How about Paul? Paul's Greek is more involved and much more difficult because he was more of an academic. And John's is very basic. The Gospel of John's writing is very, very different because John's knowledge of Greek was that of an average person of the first century who knew Greek as a second language.

So you're going to see how the Lord used their individual personalities. This is not mechanical dictation. This is taking that person's personality, using all the nuances of their lives, moving in their hearts to wrestle with the words that came out to be the right words under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And that is the illumination of the Bible writers who revealed the revelation that God had given them. The revelation comes first and the illumination comes through the Bible writers as they used their own personalities. This is not mechanical dictation.

In the original languages, the very words that God taught these writers to use, as they recorded the truth they had received by revelation. You'll notice that in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 13. *"And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom."* This is not something they just figured out themselves. The key is the *words* they used. Luke used different words. John used different words. Paul used different words, based upon how the Holy Spirit was going to use that individual person to communicate God's revelation.

"And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit." Now notice this. *"Interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual."*

The Greek word there is the word *comparing*. It means this. As the Holy Spirit moved in the Bible writers' lives, the thoughts came into their minds because of the Holy Spirit of words they were going to use to write this particular passage, revealed in the Scripture because of divine

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revelation. And they compared them to the right ones they would need to use. And so as they compared them under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they always came out to be the right words because they were determined by the Holy Spirit.

The key word there is *comparing*. We describe that word in our English language as *interpreting*. It means comparing the thoughts with the right words. And so they used the right words because they were inspired by the Holy Spirit with the divine revelation that God gave them.

The next thing we come to is *illumination*. Illumination is namely this—the act of God the Holy Spirit enabling the believer to understand the truth given by revelation and by inspiration that was written down. Illumination gives us the opportunity to understand what was illuminated to the writers of the revelation given to them. Illumination—that's what we ask for. That's what we pray for as we understand that. Illumination enables the believer to understand the truth given by revelation of the inspiration written down by the Bible writers.

Now Paul says this. "*The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God.*" Now let's look at verse 14. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God. What does the word *things* mean? It means all of Scripture, the things illuminated to them as revealed to them. The natural man does not accept those things of the Spirit of God, for they are . . .

Participant: foolishness.

Bruce: Folly to him. "*And he is not able to understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.*" This is not something that you're going to figure out through human reasoning. It's something with which God has got to illuminate us so that we understand it.

Now we need to understand this. We do not need to ask for new revelation. We do not need to pray for new inspiration. We need to pray for what?

Participant: Illumination.

Bruce: Illumination—that God will take that which has already been revealed to the writers in their inspired way of doing it, choosing the right words so that you and I will understand the inspiration that was revealed to them. We need to pray for illumination

There is no more revelation. Somebody comes up and says, "I have a word from the Lord, a new revelation." The Scripture says that has been closed. There is no more revelation. This person doesn't know God's heart any more than anyone else does. The only way God is going to reveal the *inner sanctum* of His own heart is for Him to choose to reveal that. That's what He has done in the Scripture.

So we need to understand what Paul says—that no human being is capable of understanding those things because they are spiritually discerned.

Now the word *natural* is a very interesting word. The natural man here in this particular passage is the most educated man that he can be. In other words, he is basically saying that the natural man is the unregenerate man in his highest intellectual phase, the unregenerate man at his highest level. The natural man here spoken of is the educated man at the height of his intellectual powers, but devoid of the Spirit of God. He's saying that he is an unregenerate man at the height of his intellectualism. He can't understand it, because it is what?

Participant: Spiritually discerned.

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Bruce: Spiritually discerned. If the Spirit of God is not in him, he cannot discern them. So the word *natural* is a very interesting word. It meant the most educated person you could be at that time.

Now this man may have the powers of apprehension. But they are limited to his own reason, unless God is pleased to change his heart and open up his eyes to see the truth of God. And the reason for this rejection is that "*they are foolishness to him.*" The things that we're talking about are foolishness to people. That's because they're spiritually discerned.

So Paul makes a very clear case that the natural man, even though he has great intellectualism, and all the political correctness of the world, is not going to understand the inspired Spirit of God because the person is unregenerate and does not have the spirit of Christ in him.

The natural man may be able to read God's inspired revelation. But without illumination of the Holy Spirit it doesn't make any sense to him. Sometimes, when we get into a dialogue with people, I have to remind myself that they can't do anything other than that. How should they expect them to think like me? They can't do that.

Now that's not building me up. I'm simply saying this—that in their unregenerate state, they cannot operate outside of their own reasoning. And so that makes us very, very sensitive, to be patient with people. They just can't do anything other than that. They just can't, because these things are spiritually discerned and they do not have the Spirit of God in them.

The word *discern* is a very interesting word in the Greek language. The word *discern* means "to investigate, inquire into, scrutinize, sift or question." And Paul says this. The investigation of, inquiry into, the scrutinizing and sifting of Scriptural truths, is done by the energy of the Holy Spirit alone, who illuminates the sacred page of Scripture to the individual believer.

Now Peter says this. The real defense of his understanding of the divinely implanted life is the work of the Holy Spirit in his mind and in his heart, as revealed in the Scripture.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones says this. "Ultimately, the question of the authority of Scripture is a matter of faith and not of argument. You may convince a man intellectually of what you're saying, but still he may not at all of necessity believe in and accept the authority of Scripture because these things are spiritually discerned."

Now Peter, going back to 2 Peter chapter 1, basically says, "The reason that I have such strong convictions is because of the operation of the Holy Spirit working in my life to reveal the *inner sanctum* of God's heart, inspiring me to do that in helping me to get the right words, and then illuminating me to the point of understanding."

Friends, what do we need to do? We need to be very, very grateful for this—God and His word, because brothers, this is the means by which God has chosen to disclose Himself so that we might know Him. We will not know Him apart from the revelation, the inspiration, and the illumination of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

And what is the ministry of the Holy Spirit, as we see in John 13? It is to guide us into all—

Participant: Truth.

Bruce: Truth. It's to guide us into all truth. That's what the Holy Spirit does with the Scripture. And men, when we say this statement, "This is the word of the Lord," and we say, "Thanks be to God," do you really mean that? Take the significance of what that statement

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means. "Thanks be to God." We ought to be so very thankful that God has been pleased to grant us His self-disclosure through the pages of Scripture.

Yes, we thank God the Father. Yes, we thank God the Holy spirit. Yes, we thank God the Son. But I think we need to say, "Lord, thank You for Your word." Brothers, this is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen and Amen. Let's pray. Father, I pray that You would override my inability to communicate the truths that You've laid before us. Father, would You illuminate our minds and our hearts with the things that You would have us learn from this particular passage? Father, open our eyes, that we might behold You more clearly, for Jesus' sake. And all the Brave Men said, "Amen."