

February 25, 2018 - I Corinthians 2:6-16

“The Body of Christ (6): The Mind of Christ”

“What’s on your mind?” Ever asked that? My wife Miriam asks me that all the time— *What were you thinking?* It’s remarkable, really. We’ve been married 26 years, in love for over 30. And yet, neither she nor I can really get into each other’s heads. It’s impossible.

I tried to come up with an example of her marveling— *What were you thinking?* I didn’t come up with one example. I came up with many. I used to love having peanut butter on my hotdogs— *What were you thinking?* Another time I backed our two week old pick-up truck into a tree that was the only one standing on the edge of a parking lot— *What were you thinking?* Many-a-times I have shrunk, made pink or ruined her laundry— *What were you thinking?* One time, I was playing hockey with our son Calvin in the driveway—I went across the street, we were using a tennis ball, and I took a slap shot. He was only about 8 or 9 at the time—I was convinced it would sail harmlessly over his head. Hit him right in the chest. Thought I stopped his heart. *What were you thinking?*

What’s even more amazing is that Paul says here in I Corinthians 2:16, **“But we have the mind of Christ.”** How can that be? Well, we’re going to just scratch the surface of that question this morning.

But before we even get started, it needs to be said we’re talking about deep, deep mystery here. And it all starts with the mystery and the wonder of the Holy Spirit of God actually *inhabiting, indwelling* the believer’s own heart and mind. Because, even as we contemplate this deep mystery of somehow possessing the mind of Christ, there’s even deeper love, joy and assurance.

So what does it mean to have the mind of Christ?

Well, for one thing, as we look at vs.6-8, it involves ***the mysterious wisdom of God.*** Vs.6-8, and vs.12 & 14 for that matter, describe this wisdom as something the world will simply not get or understand. Vs.7 says, **“No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time**

began.” Where the NIV translation renders “God’s secret wisdom”, the Greek word Paul is using there is actually *mustarion*, from which we get our word *mystery*.

But this word has nothing of the mysterious in our sense of the word. We’re not talking about some grand divine puzzle that people find really difficult to solve. No, instead we’re talking about a secret that a person is totally unable to penetrate. But it’s a secret that God has now revealed. Aussie scholar Leon Morris says it’s a word that points to humankind’s impossibility of knowing God’s secret, and to the love of God that makes that secret known. It’s “hidden”, and folks outside of Christ are still in the dark about it, but it’s been revealed to believers, not as some afterthought, but as the last part of vs.7 says, revealed for our glory “before time began”.

We’re talking about big-time mystery here, so much so that if you think about it long enough, it’ll make your head hurt. But it’s really a message for the heart: As Morris says, “From before all time He was concerned for our well-being, and planned the gospel that we should enter into our glory.” No after-thought at all! Instead God had us, those who place their trust in Jesus, in mind *before time began*. ***Having the mind of Christ means to realize that as those who trust and follow Jesus, we are people of great destiny.***

Vs.9-10 continue that thought, but draws us in even further. Listen to this— if this doesn’t make your heart go just a little bit faster, maybe you should check that pulse:

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him’— but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.”

What Paul is saying in vs.9 is that there is no mode of apprehension available to us-- no eyes, ears, nor understanding-- that can give us any idea of the wonderful things God already has in store for those who love Him. That’s what makes loving Jesus above all and everything and everybody so marvelous! “No eye has seen, no ear has heard,

no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”! *Given what we’re in for, given what God in Christ has prepared for us, who can imagine loving anyone or anything any more? Where’s the wisdom in that!?!*

And you older folks will probably appreciate this illustration a little bit more— but think about the perspective you’ve gained on your life. Think about it. Miriam’s grandmother, who was a great-grandmother at the time in her 90’s, used to talk about

how it seems as if it was just yesterday when she was a little girl. Ever felt like that? And you know the thought that comes next, don't you? *If I only knew then, what I know now!*

Now, I say this reverently, but take that kind of experience and think about it from God's perspective in eternity. From that perspective, *eternity's just a moment away*. And God has such marvelous, marvelous, wonderful things in store for those who love Him! It's gonna *blow us away!* No eye has ever seen what God has in store for, not just anybody, but *for those who love Him*— no ear's ever heard, no heart or mind has ever conceived! *But if we only knew now what we'll know then!!*

Maybe, just maybe, that relationship, that boat, that car, that career isn't nearly as important as you think. Maybe, just maybe, it'd be far, far more wiser to invest in the things of God rather than the things of men. Right now I'm reading this fantastic book on holiness written the 19th century bishop J.C. Ryle. And at the end of a chapter on counting the costs of following Jesus, Ryle writes this: "The time is very short. A few more years of watching and praying, a few more tossings on the sea of this world, a few more deaths and changes, a few more winters and summers, and all will be over. We shall have fought the last battle, and shall need to fight no more. The presence and company of Christ will make amends for all we suffer here below. When we see as we have been seen, and look back on the journey of life, we shall wonder at our own faintness of heart. We shall marvel that we made so much of our cross, and thought so little of our crown. We shall marvel that in 'counting the cost' we could ever doubt on which the side the balance of profit lay. Let us take courage. We are not far from home. IT MAY COST MUCH TO BE A TRUE CHRISTIAN AND A CONSISTENT BELIEVER; BUT IT PAYS." (J.C. Ryle, *Holiness*, pg.111)

I remember one time, I was having one of those "neat" conversations with my Dad. And one of the things I loved about him most was his honesty. And one time, we were talking, I think we were in the car going someplace, and we were talking about eternity. Dad, at that time had been diagnosed with a terminal disease and we all know that his time on this planet is pretty limited. And as we were talking about eternity, Dad was wondering, questioning really, what it was really going to be like. In that moment, I had a stroke of inspiration. I said, "Dad, do you remember what Sunday brunch was like at Muskoka Baptist Conference was like?" Remember, how could we forget? Sunday brunch at MBC is *paradise*. We'd get up early and go to the early service so we could get a place at the early sitting in the dining room. They had fruit galore, they had toast, they had coffee, they had seafood, they had roast beef— *roast beef, people—for brunch!!* They had two stations there, and this kid would make you an omelet, just for you, any way you'd like it. I'd always joke & kibitz with & compliment

& butter up the kid makin' the omelet. I figured the more I did that, the better my omelet would be! And then, when it came to him asking me what I'd like *in* my omelet, I'd say, *I want it all, baby, I want it all.* I mean, half the time, *I didn't even have room for dessert!!* So I said, "Dad, do you remember the Sunday brunch at MBC?" He kinda smiled and said, "Yeah..." "Well," I said, "Sunday brunch at MBC won't be able to hold a candle to what we'll experience with Jesus in eternity." And ... it's true.

For, "no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him." Perspective. The Spirit searches the deep things of God, and gives us perspective.

Let me ask you a question: If you haven't already done so, if today was the day you said "yes" to Jesus Christ, do you think it would *just* be a decision you made one Sunday morning? Think about *any* of the ways we deepen our life in God: Do you think it's just sitting down to read your Bible? Do you think it's just prayer? Do you think it's *just* a Bible study or small group? Is this *just* a worship service? Is it *just* a time of prayer? Is it *just* a quiet time? Is it *just* a gesture or routine to help or give to the poor? Is it *just* a conversation about Jesus? Is it *just* a song? Is it *just* a visit? ... Not if you're doing it to express your love for God. **No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him. Perspective. That's a part of what it means to have the mind of Christ.**

And then, finally, the Spirit of God doesn't just reveal a snippet of *what's to come*, but He also shows us *what we already have in Jesus*. Look with me at vs.12. We'll talk a little bit about the verses around vs.12, but we'll focus mainly on vs.12.

It says, "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, *that we may understand what He has freely given us.*" Did you get that? One reason we're given the Holy Spirit is *to understand what He has freely given us.* The Spirit is given to help us understand what *we're* given.

First, a bit of a homey example, then we'll go a little deeper: A few years ago, one Christmas, at our Carter family gift exchange, my big sister, Phyl, gave me a crokinole board. Ever played crokinole? For one thing, it was in a huge box. It was by far the biggest gift there. I had no idea what was inside. I tore off the Christmas wrapping. I opened up the box. I took out the board. I still didn't know what it was. I had never played crokinole before. I'm the youngest of four kids. I was always too little! I was never allowed to play crokinole! "What is it?" I asked. "It's a crokinole board, silly!" Phyl exclaimed, "Haven't you ever played crokinole? It's a lot of fun!!"

She tried to explain it. I didn't get it. But I took it home and tried it out. Now we play it all the time, and if you don't know what it is, it really is a lot of fun! But that Christmas, I received a gift, but I didn't really understand what it was.

Well, the spiritual life in Christ can be a lot like that. We receive this totally free gift of salvation. We're told Jesus died and rose again to save us, to set us free, to liberate us to live for Him. And perhaps we say, "I get it, I get it." But even though you & I may have taken that step to accept Him, in many, many ways, we really don't get it, ... even though we got it.

Do you know what the Holy Spirit does for us? *He helps us to really get it.* And as Paul says in vs.11, just like any one of us knows what's going on in *our* spirit, so the Holy Spirit of God knows what's going on in *God's Spirit*. And this same Holy Spirit *helps us understand what He has freely given us.* It's an amazing thing: Not only does the Spirit convey to us the conviction, or if you like, the judgment of God, *but He also helps us understand the grace of God.* Part of having the mind of Christ entails *understanding under the Spirit's wisdom and guidance all that He has given to us.*

But to really mine all these riches, to really glean all this, you and I have to go *deeper*. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. But to really appreciate it, we have to be willing to go there— be willing to go deeper in prayer, deeper in the Word, deeper in *seeking out* this Spirit Who draws us deeper into the mind of Christ.

But with this seeking out, comes this deep, deep sense of *assurance* in your life and mine. The Spirit truly helps us to understand all that God has given us— even the deep things of God. Vs.10 says, **"... The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God."** This word Paul uses for "deep" in vs.10 was actually originally used to describe the depths of the ocean, the depths of the "deep". The Spirit wants to take us into the deep things of God, but we need to be willing to go there. But as we go deeper, great, great assurance comes— *real*/knowledge, *real*/certainty in Christ.

One time in researching this passage I re-read some parts of J.I. Packer's book on the Puritans called *A Quest for Godliness*— I was looking for some smokin' quote to bring this all home. I didn't find that quote. Instead, I gleaned a key insight about the Christian's assurance of being saved, the Christian's assurance of really knowing God. And the insight is simply this: Assurance doesn't often come immediately in the Christian life. For some, it may. But for most, assurance-- assurance given in and through the power of the Spirit— doesn't come at the "front end" of things. Most often, Christian assurance comes as the *reward* of faith— as we go *deeper in the Word*,

deeper in trusting Jesus, *deeper in* holiness, *deeper in* serving Him— then assurance comes.

We take that gift home. We take it out of the box. We enjoy it. And that Gift becomes more and more precious with every passing day. And we get *bigger* and *better* in Jesus as the Spirit brings home to our hearts all that God has freely given us.

That's a part of what it means to have the mind of Christ: It isn't necessarily that the Christian is able to understand all of the thoughts of Christ. But the indwelling Holy Spirit reveals Christ, and assures us of our safety in Him. This isn't something this old world can give. But it's something only the Spirit of God provides: Perspective, assurance, we have been given the mind of Christ by faith, giving us an awesome Spirit-empowered assurance.

This past week we lost a great, great man in the passing of evangelist Billy Graham. But he had great, great assurance of who he was and where he was going—not because he was “the great Billy Graham”—but because he placed his trust in Jesus and wholeheartedly believed what God's Word, the Bible said about Him. So much so that Dr. Graham once said, “Some day you will read or hear that Billy Graham is dead. Don't you believe a word of it. I shall be more alive than I am now. I will just have changed my address. I will have gone into the presence of God.”

We can have that same confident assurance—based not on ourselves, but on Jesus, and on the promise that we can have the mind of Christ.