

# Scott's Thoughts

Attempts at explaining various  
subjects of Scripture  
from the small mind of Scott Sheridan  
go-gators-go@comcast.net



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## The Doctrine of Illumination

The Doctrine of Illumination is a doctrine that has led to all kinds false teaching about all kinds of subjects. I knew a man once that said Adam and Eve did not have bodies of flesh and bone until after they sinned. Their fleshly bodies were part of their punishment. I asked how he knew this and his answer was that God had revealed it to him while he was studying the first few chapters of Genesis. Illumination can be used to prop up any kind of hooley (pronounced 'hü-E) that can cross the mind of man.

The doctrine of Illumination comes from John Calvin. Calvin's theology can be summed up with the acrostic "TULIP". Calvin, following after Augustine and Luther, felt that God predetermined EVERYTHING before creation. God made man as evil as it is possible to be. That is the "T" in TULIP. It stands for "Total Depravity." There is absolutely NO good whatsoever in man, hence he is totally depraved. Since God made man so evil, there is no way man could choose to have faith on his own, so...God chose who would be saved and who would be lost before He ever created the first molecule. This is the "U" and it stands for "Unconditional Election." Since all of man is equally as evil, God chose who to save. He did so with no rhyme or reason, He simply chose some. That also meant that He chose everyone else to go to Hell.

Since only those God chose are to be saved, Jesus didn't die for everyone. He only died for the chosen. Therefore we come to the "L" and it stands for "Limited Atonement." The atoning sacrifice of Jesus was only for the chosen. The "I" stands for "Irresistible Grace" which means that since God chose someone to be saved, they were saved whether they wanted to be or not - salvation is irresistible. And then we finally come to the "P" which stands for "Perseverance of the Saints." In other words, Once you are a Christian you will always be a Christian.

You might be asking where the doctrine of Illumination is to be found. Well, it's actually an outgrowth of Calvin's theology. If mankind is so evil as to not even be capable of having any good thoughts on his own, then how can he understand the Scriptures? If man is to understand them God must Illumine their hearts and minds so that the Scripture can be understood. Therefore, only the saved can truly understand the Bible.

Folks, this doctrine comes from Hell itself and is as far from what the Scriptures teach as anything can be. If the doctrine of Illumination is true then much of the Bible is simply a lie. For example, Romans 10:17 teaches us that faith comes, not by God's arbitrary choice before time, but instead by hearing the Word of Christ. You see, the Word produces faith. That means the Word can be and is to be understood BEFORE a person becomes one of the saved. The only difference between what a believer can understand versus what a non-believer can understand is application. A believer will apply what he understands and an unbeliever will not. That is the ONLY difference.

The critical passage used to teach this doctrine is First Corinthians 2. When Paul speaks of the "natural man" as opposed to the "spiritual man" (verses 14 & 15) it often gets misinterpreted. It is assumed that the "spiritual man" is a Christian and the "natural man" is not a Christian. But as we will soon see, that's an improper interpretation and will lead to all kinds of false teaching. So let's look at the chapter as a whole:

Since Paul was not one of the original 12 Apostles he was constantly having to defend his apostleship. In chapter 2 he is doing just that. Two other places in the Corinthian letters he defends his apostleship are 1 Cor. 9:1ff and in 2 Cor. 12:11 & 12. Peter even comes to Paul's defence in 2 Peter 3:15 & 16.

In chapter 2 Paul presents a contrast between False wisdom, which is human speculation, and True wisdom, which is Divine Revelation.

**<sup>1</sup>And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.**

Paul did not come to them using fancy words or trying to be persuasive using human wisdom when he told them about God. Remember that he is writing to those in Corinth which was located in Greece at a location that was a major crossroad of the world. The Greeks were known for their philosophers and teachers. Paul did not come to them the same way these others did trying to smooth-talk them. The wording of the text implies that Paul was accused of this, and can be seen back in 1 Cor. 1:17-20 and also in 4:3.

I invite you to comment on my interpretation or make comments in general. If you wish to be removed from my address list just let me know and you will be removed immediately. Thank you.

All quoted Scripture is from the NASB Updated

**<sup>2</sup>For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.**

Wisdom teaches you how to be good. Christianity teaches you how to be forgiven. Anyone could see that Jesus died. It took Divine Revelation to explain that His death was for the sins of mankind. The death of Jesus should be at the heart of all true preaching. Paul presents this thought again in 1 Cor. 15:1-4. If the cross is not being preached it is a false Gospel.

**<sup>3</sup>I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling,**

It is a mistake to think that Paul is speaking of the fear of men here or fearing for his life. This is weakness and fear that comes with speaking the very words of Jesus. This is what an apostle did. He was Jesus' ambassador (2 Cor. 5:20). The apostles, in John 20, were given the very authority of God. When Jesus breathed on them, he gave them the authority to forgive or retain sins. He then sent them out as His personal ambassadors replete with His authority. When Paul spoke, he spoke the words of Jesus. When he wrote, he wrote the words of Jesus. This will become clear as we continue to study this passage.

**<sup>4</sup>and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup>so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.**

Paul was not speaking speculation. He was teaching them God's Revelation. 2 Cor 12:12 tells us, "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles." Paul had demonstrated his authority to them. They had no reason to doubt him. He was more than just a common philosopher or teacher. He was Jesus' representative.

**<sup>6</sup>Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away;**

Paul was not saying that he had no wisdom. But that his wisdom was not of this age. It was not a worldly wisdom. It was beyond the confines of earth. It was from God. And the Gospel makes sense to those that are truly wise. In this verse Paul uses what Roger Chambers called the "apostolic we". Many times when Paul uses the word "we" or "us" he is referring to the Apostles, not to everyone in general. When he says "Yet WE do speak wisdom..." he is referring to he and the other Apostles. Remember that Paul is defending his apostleship

throughout this chapter as well as throughout this letter. We're going to see this "apostolic we" throughout the rest of this chapter.

**<sup>7</sup>but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory;**

Paul and the other apostles all spoke God's wisdom. They did so in a mystery. This is one of my favorite Greek words. In the Greek this is the word *μυστήριον* (musterion). The etymology of this word goes back to the military. When a general would prepare for a battle, he would give his commanders their portion of the battle plan. No commander would have the entire plan itself for if he were to be captured the enemy would know the whole thing. Instead, each commander had his portion of the plan and as each part of the plan began to be implemented all of the portions would come together in harmony.

This is true of a mystery novel. As you read the story certain clues are presented to the reader. As you get to the end of the book all of the clues come together to reveal what really happened. This process of everything coming together is the *musterion*, aka, the mystery.

When Paul wrote, he was revealing his portion of the *musterion*. Peter revealed his portion. John revealed his, and so on.

Paul is NOT saying that he and the other apostles spoke things that were to remain secret and hard to understand. No. Instead he is saying that he had a part of God's revelation, as did Peter and the others. It had been hidden, in other words, not all of God's wisdom had been revealed before but God had waited until that times to bring it all together. Paul and the other apostles were speaking things that had been hidden in the Old Testament times.

Paul writes of the same concept in Ephesians 3:4 & 5: "By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit." Also 1 Peter 1:12: "It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things into which angels long to look."

**<sup>8</sup>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; <sup>9</sup>but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *which* HAVE NOT**

**ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."**

The things "which eye has not seen" and so on, is not referring to heaven as I have heard too many sermons declare. Paul is talking about God's plan. He is speaking from an Old Testament point of view. The glory that had been promised in ages past (v. 7) and is here now is not a wisdom that human wisdom could have conceived.

**<sup>10</sup>For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.**

As he has been saying throughout chapter 2, the "us" he speaks of is the apostles. It was through the apostles that God revealed His plan, His wisdom. And it was revealed to the apostles through God's Spirit. It is only through divine revelation that man could know forgiveness at the cross. Without divine revelation, Jesus is just another man wrongly accused dying on a cross.

God's Spirit is like our spirit in that God's Spirit knows every little thing there is to know about God. Paul makes this point in the next verse.

**<sup>11</sup>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.**

I've taught on this subject many times and I always use my wife as an example. There is not a human being alive who understands me as well as my wife – and believe it or not she still hangs around. But not even my wife knows me as well as my own spirit. I can lie to my wife and she may believe me. But my spirit knows I'm lying. Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

**<sup>12</sup>Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,**

The apostles had not received from God a worldly spirit, but instead they had received God's own Spirit in a way that no other men ever had or would have again. God's Spirit was freely given, in other words, there were no limits to their understanding of God's mind (see John 20:22 & 23). The apostles received the Spirit of God for the express purpose of knowing the mind of God. It was not human wisdom that Paul spoke

**<sup>13</sup>which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.**

Notice the words in italics. "Thoughts" and "Words" are not in the original Greek. What Paul is saying here is that he is not just giving out what he thinks God wants him to say. He is not speaking words taught by human wisdom. He is taking the very thoughts of God and putting them into the language of men. Paul spoke the very words of God.

**<sup>14</sup>But a 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.**

Here's where the trouble is for the doctrine of Illumination. This term that Paul uses- "natural man"- has nothing to do with an unbeliever. The natural man was the Christian that did not have this unique apostolic ministry of the Holy Spirit. The natural man is the Christian who has the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit he received at baptism but he does not have the Spirit of God revealing to him the very thoughts of God. The natural man could not understand God's thoughts as the apostle's did because he was not an ambassador, a representative of Christ that had been especially set apart for this work and who spoke the very words of Christ. Without being set aside as the apostles were, the ordinary Christian – the natural man – simply could not handle it. When Paul says they are spiritually appraised he means by that that only those who were set apart for that unique spiritual ministry could put the thoughts of God into human words.

If the natural man is a non-Christian and the spiritual man is a Christian then faith cannot come by hearing and Romans 10:17 is a lie.

**<sup>15</sup>But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.**

However, the one who did have this unique ministry of the apostle appraises everything. If the apostle was Jesus representative, His ambassador, then what the apostle said was law in the Church. It was binding.

The Corinthians had been "appraising" Paul and some were claiming he wasn't a real apostle. He says that he was, and had proved it to them. It was he who was to do the appraising, not them. He himself, i.e., the one with the unique ministry of the Holy Spirit, is appraised by God, not by any man. The natural man was the uninspired man who was saying that Paul was not an apostle. The uninspired man was not in a position to judge Paul's message.

Paul finishes the chapter by explaining why no man was to appraise an apostle.

**<sup>16</sup>For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.**

Nobody but the apostles had the mind of Christ. Only the apostles knew the very thoughts of God. Who else but an apostle knew the mind of God. Who else was capable of instructing on the will of God. No one.

The Doctrine of Illumination is not taught here in chapter 2 nor anywhere else in the Scriptures. If you want to learn and understand the Scriptures then don't wait for God to reveal something to you. He has already revealed His understandable Word. Do what Paul told the young evangelist Timothy: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." The word "diligent" in the Greek means to eagerly master. In other words, eagerly master the word of God so that you can present yourself before God with His approval without having any cause for shame due to your lack of accurately handling His word. To sum it up: Study.

When you hear someone saying that they only read the parts of the Bible written in red, remember that when Paul, or Peter, or John, or Matthew wrote, they wrote the very thoughts of God. When Mark, Luke, James and Jude wrote, they were not apostles, but each had apostolic supervision as well as their own spiritual gifts. The entire Bible is of God and are the thoughts of God, not just the red letters.

We can trust the Word of God because we know that those who wrote it knew the very thoughts of God. There is no other book ever written that has that connection to God Himself.

**SCOTT**

Footnote: I owe so much of what I know concerning the Scriptures to the late Dr. Roger Chambers that I cannot even begin to acknowledge it properly. Most of the above study comes from his teaching. There are many of his published articles located here: [www.crownhillchurch.com/html/chambers.html](http://www.crownhillchurch.com/html/chambers.html) . If you take the time to read them, you will not be disappointed.



**I didn't receive many responses from the last edition but here's the few comments that came in concerning 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:**

TB in WA: Scott - good insight again. If I were to add anything, I would add to your description of verse 22.

You explained well that tongues are a sign to unbelievers, but didn't address the second half of the verse that prophecy is a sign to believers (i.e. from the angle that the believer shouldn't feel left out because tongues weren't for them because prophecy would be there for their edification). Also from V24 to 32 I think Paul is also making the point that for the believer, prophecy is far more important than tongues because of its ability to convict directly (even convict an unbeliever). Basically, that all things in the assembly are for edification & thus speaking in other languages is only good if it's essentially turned into prophecy via an interpreter (assuming that speaking in tongues is basically the words of God [prophecy] in another language). Prophecy was more potent then because it required less effort to edify in the assembly (i.e. no interpreter is required). Is it fair to say that those who were speaking in tongues were speaking the words of God? I always thought so, and thus thought that tongues & prophecy were very similar gifts, the only difference being which language it was in. Maybe that's going a little far, because we aren't told specifically what words were said when speaking in tongues, but it seems like it always occurs in the scriptures as a sermon or edification unless misused.

DS in FL: I think I've heard you say this before and I concur. When did this gibberish talking get started? I've seen nothing mentioned in any church history I read.