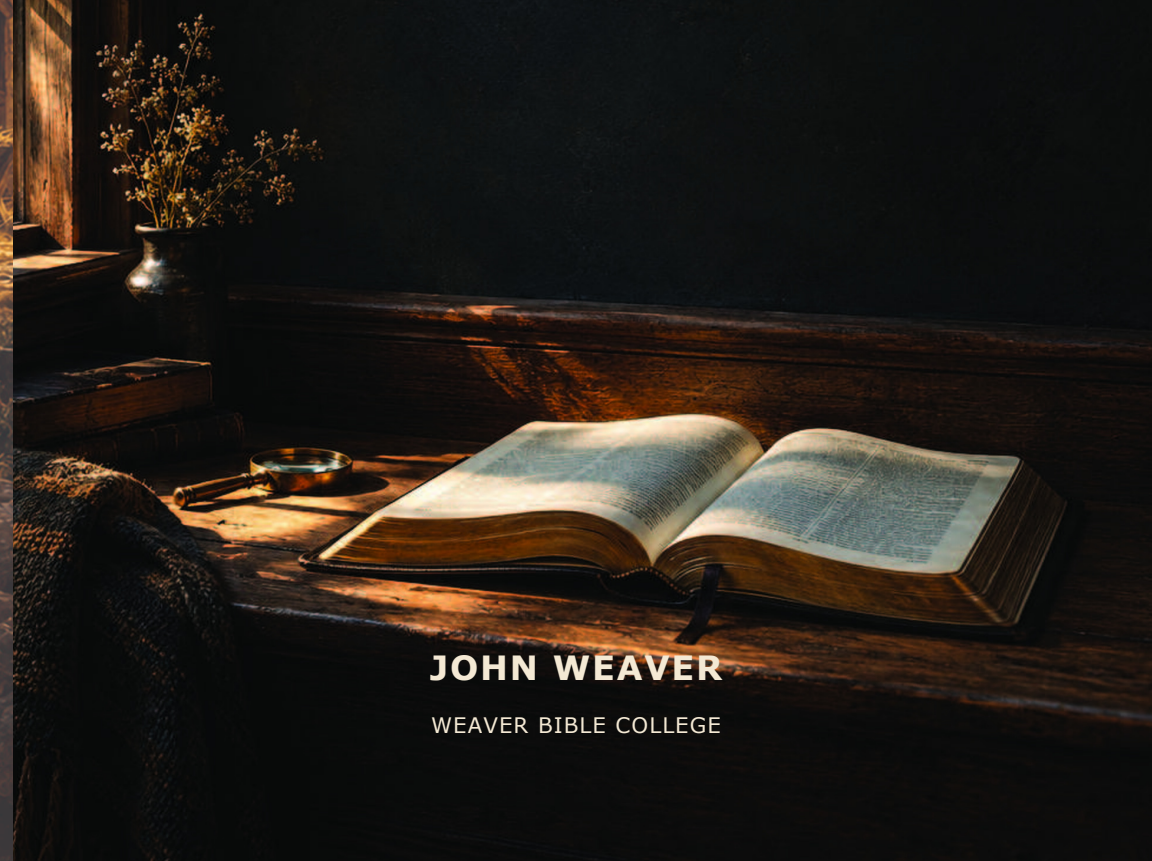
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Seeing and Hearing

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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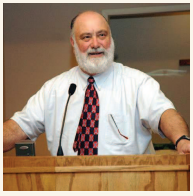
Take heed therefore how ye hear.

LUKE 8:18, EXCERPT

Hearing words and seeing events do not necessarily produce understanding. John Weaver examines spiritual attention, the condition of the heart, and the responsibilities that accompany instruction. These messages encourage believers to consider what they receive, how they interpret it, and whether their response is shaped by the truth of Scripture.

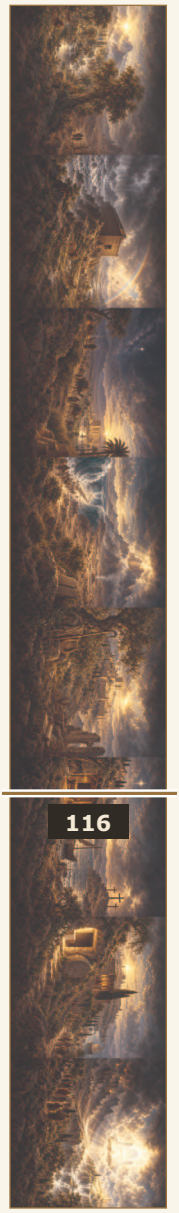
"As we study and consider what He says, we prayerfully seek His gift, asking God to open our minds and give us understanding."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.



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CHAPTER 1

Seeing and Hearing, but Not Understanding

Introduction: Seeing and Hearing Without Understanding

Matthew 13, beginning with verse 10: “And the disciples came and said to him, ‘Why speakest thou to them in parables?’ He answered and said unto them, ‘Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance. But whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables.’

“Because they seeing, see not, and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, ‘By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive. For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.’ But blessed are your eyes, for

they see, and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

The Importance of Understanding in Scripture

Solomon is known as one of the wisest men that ever lived, and he made some statements in Proverbs chapter 4. Proverbs 4, verse 5, says, "Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth." Then, in verse 7, he says, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." Obviously, understanding is very important.

Does it do us any good to have eyes and not be able to see? Does it do any good to have ears and not be able to hear? Seeing and hearing do not necessarily equate to understanding. One may see or one may hear and yet not understand.

Pastor McCurry recently sent me a little short video of an illusionist or magician, whatever you would call him, doing tricks with doves. He would take the doves and put them in a little cage after he had seemingly pulled them out of nowhere. He even pulled a little canary, a live canary, out of an egg.

Obviously, it was an illusion. The magician placed live birds in a little cage sitting on a table. After his dove-making act, he covered the cage with a black cloth, shook it, and pulled the cloth back. The doves were gone, and a beautiful woman was in the cage, which was still sitting on the table. I saw it, but I still did not understand it. I knew it was an illusion and a trick. The point is that we can see, but we really do not understand sometimes. We can hear, but we really do not understand.

As you read through the Bible, you find that one who lacks understanding is likened to a beast or a dumb animal. Psalm 32:9 says, "Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee." Notice: "Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding." Would it not be wonderful if we could explain to a horse what we wanted to do and ask him to

cooperate? It does not work like that. You can explain all day long, but the horse does not understand. Put a bit and bridle in his mouth, however, and you force him to do what you want. Psalm 49:20 says, “Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.”

The Ethiopian Eunuch and the Need for Guidance

Someone without understanding, then, is like a dumb beast. That is why Asaph said in Psalm 73:22, “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.” He was saying, “I did not understand, and so I was as a beast before thee.” Based on these verses alone, we could conclude that understanding is vitally important.

Yet multitudes of Christians read their Bibles daily, and sometimes even study them, but do not possess understanding. If you would hold Matthew 13 and turn to Acts 8, here is a good illustration in the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip drew near and heard him reading from the prophet Isaiah. Acts 8:30 says, “And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?” Do you understand what you are reading?

The Ethiopian eunuch said, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" He desired Philip to come up and sit with him. Philip opened the Scriptures and explained to him the Word of God. If one is content to read and not understand, he is basically no better off than the Pharisees. To have eyes and see not and ears to hear not is to be in the same absolute condition as the Pharisees.

The Pharisees' Blindness and Modern Parallels

For instance, look in John chapter 9, beginning with verse 39: "And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." The Pharisees saw, but they did not see. They heard, but they did not hear. However, they professed to see and hear.

Yet they had absolutely no understanding of divine truth. Many Christians are like that. At least they profess to believe and know the truth, and yet their lives are completely opposite to that which they profess. Why? The answer is because they lack understanding. Why did the Pharisees follow the commandments of men instead of the commandments of God? Because they had no understanding of divine truth. They saw, but they did not see. They heard, but they did not hear.

Parables: Earthly Stories with Heavenly Meanings

When you look at Matthew 13, a chapter dealing with the parables, you have to understand that our Lord often taught in parables. A parable, on the one hand, is easily understood; but on the other hand, it requires discernment and understanding to ascertain its true meaning. Someone in times past defined a parable as an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The earthly story is quite common, and none fail to see and grasp it. However, it is the heavenly meaning that most people do not see, hear, grasp, or understand. So, in Matthew 13, look at verses 10 and 11. Verse 10 says, "And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" Why are you teaching in parables?

And he answered and said to them, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." Our Lord often used parables to state his doctrine. If their hearts had been right, if they had not been malignant and blind, they would have understood the parables. His doctrines were clear and concise and stated in the best possible way.

Yet it was not his fault that they did not understand them. Moreover, it was entirely proper for our Lord to impart instruction to his disciples that he did not intend for others. Are you willing for your wife to tell you things that she would not broadcast in church? Are you willing for your husband to tell you things that he would not broadcast on the street or somewhere? It is proper, many times, to communicate things to certain individuals that you do not intend to communicate to others as well.

Even now, there are truths that the unsaved do not understand, and they never will understand unless they are converted by the

grace of God. In Proverbs 25:14, the Bible says, "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. God has secret truths and secret things that he only reveals to his own. Proverbs 3:32 says, "For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous."

First Corinthians 2:14 really ends the argument and the debate over this: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

The Natural Man's Inability and the Insufficiency of Mere Reading

On the one hand, the unsaved cannot understand the things of God. He does not have the ability; "can" is a term of ability. On the other hand, he does not desire or even want to understand the things of God because they are foolishness unto him. So that which condemns the man, it is not just his inability, but also his lack of desire to even have or to hear the truth. Today, I want to emphasize one point. This is the point that is not ready to receive by many Christians. But it is true based upon the word of God. Here it is. Listen carefully.

The fact is that a mere reading of the Scripture is insufficient. I have people tell me, “I read my Bible.” Well, then I do not doubt it. But why are you so ignorant? Why cannot you explain certain doctrines? Let me tell you this again: it is hard for Christians to receive, but mere reading of your Bible is insufficient. Also, mere studying of your Bible is insufficient unless you study it with understanding and with application.

I have no idea how many times this question has been asked me: Why are there so many different churches? Why are there so many different doctrines floating around? Here is your answer: either because of understanding or lack of understanding. Those who have understanding believe the truth. Those who do not have understanding usually do not believe the truth; they will believe an error. Those who do not understand will usually twist the Scriptures to their own destruction.

Wresting the Scriptures and the Apostles' Lack of Understanding

Let me show you that. Look in your Bibles to 2 Peter 3, and notice what the apostle Peter says concerning the teachings of the apostle Paul. In fact, let us read verse 15. He said, “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

So Peter says the apostle Paul has written some hard things, some difficult things. There are plenty of people who are wresting—that is, twisting and perverting—what Paul wrote, as well as twisting and perverting the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. Obviously, there is a need and necessity of understanding, especially in relationship to the Word of God, because without understanding we will wrest the Scriptures to our own destruction. In fact, most of your sects, most of your isms and schisms, are derived from a twisting, perverting, and wresting of the Scripture. I was thinking just the other day how simple it is to wrest the Scripture and to twist it.

In fact, I could prove from the Bible that everyone needs to live in Ware County. If you do not, you are unscriptural, because the Apostle Paul wrote, “Be thou ware also.” Is that not twisting and perverting Scripture? Of course it is. He is telling someone to be on guard. But I could twist it: “You should be living in Ware County.”

The Importance and Necessity of Understanding

That's what a lot of people do. They take things out of context. They don't compare Scripture with Scripture. So obviously, there is a need and an absolute necessity for understanding. If you would take your concordance when you get home and look up the words "understand," "understanding," "understandeth," and "understood," you would be amazed at how many times those words occur in the Bible, and especially in the New Testament. There is indeed a great deal of emphasis in the Bible upon understanding.

Now, stop and think about the original twelve apostles. They lived with our Lord for three years. Would that not be a blessing? These individuals observed Him, walked with Him, worked with Him, watched Him, and listened to Him. They had intimate access to Him. If you really want to know who had more access than the others, it was Peter, James, and John. They were the inner circle. If anyone ever went beyond the normal routines with Christ, it would be Peter, James, and John. But all twelve of them lived with our Lord for three years.

Here is a question: In light of the close fellowship these twelve apostles had with our Lord, and especially the close fellowship and easy access enjoyed by Peter, James, and John, did they always understand His teachings? The answer is no. The truth is, most of the time they did not understand. When we think of the apostles, we normally think of men with deep spiritual insights and understanding, and somehow place them on a plane far above ourselves. Let me tell you the truth: The Twelve Apostles were just as human and just as dumb as we are. They very seldom understood anything our Lord taught the first time.

Let me show you. Follow me in the Scripture. Let's go to Matthew, chapter 15. We will walk our way through the New Testament, beginning with verse 15 and reading through verse 20. I am going to point out this phrase as it appears in the Bible over and over. In verse 15 of Matthew 15: "Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable."

In Matthew 15, Peter asks Jesus to explain what He has taught. Jesus said, “Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.” But note in verse 17, our Lord says, “Do you not yet understand?” Verse 16, “Are you yet without understanding?”

He had just taught them something, and they were asking Him to explain it. Didn’t they hear what He said?

Look in Matthew chapter 16, beginning with verse 5. “And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.” Jesus then asked, “O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?”

“Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”

It almost appears that they were dunces. He told them, and they began to reason totally differently from what He said. He said, “How is it you do not understand?” They were seeing, but they did not see. They were hearing, but they did not hear.

In Mark 9:31-32 we read, “For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.” What?

You and I have the opportunity to have the completed Word of God. Yet He taught His disciples that the Son of man would be delivered into the hands of men, killed, and raised the third day.

Now to us, that is so simple. We can understand he is going to die and be raised again from the dead. But they understood not that saying. Moreover, they were afraid to ask him. How could they not understand? They heard, but they did not hear.

In Luke 9:44-45, our Lord said, “Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.” In other words, he was going to be betrayed. “But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.” Can you

believe that? They could not understand, and then they were afraid to ask. We are talking about Peter, James, and John—the original twelve.

Look in Luke 18. Beginning at verse 28, we see that he was speaking to Peter and the other apostles: “Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.”

Then, beginning in verse 31: “Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.” What?

To me, reading that, it is fairly plain. But they did not understand. It did not matter what he said; they had absolutely no understanding. I am just trying to show you that the apostles were not superhuman. In John 10, our Lord says:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.”

“This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.” You and I hear that and think, Who could not understand this? Of course, we have the benefit of the completed Word of God. But when they heard, they

did not understand—not at all. We are talking about Peter, James, and John, the inner circle.

In John 12, we read: “On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass’s colt.”

“These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.” When it was happening, they did not understand. Later, they remembered.

Are you surprised that even the apostles did not understand that which our Lord taught? Oftentimes, they had to ask him to explain his parables or his teachings; they had to ask for further illumination and enlightenment. When we think of the apostles, we think of men filled with the Spirit of God—men of action, men of knowledge, men who understood all the doctrines and teachings of our Lord instantly, completely, and fully. However, we soon discover that the apostles, like us, were just mere men.

Even the Prophets Did Not Always Understand

They did not possess supernatural understanding. They had to listen, ask, and learn, just as we do. Notice in 1 Peter, chapter 1, beginning at verse 10, that even the Old Testament prophets who prophesied concerning Christ often did not understand their own prophecies: “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.”

These prophets ministered to us. They wrote things that they did not understand. The Bible says they were searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. They wrote by inspiration, but they did not understand it. Even the mighty prophets did not understand.

If the Old Testament prophets did not understand many of their prophecies, and if the apostles in the New Testament, who lived daily with our Lord, needed understanding, how much more do we need understanding? We are not in the actual physical presence of our Lord, nor do we hear Him speaking and teaching daily as they did. Mark this down and think about it.

Truth Without Understanding Is Quickly Lost

What good is hearing if you do not understand? What good is seeing if you do not understand what you are seeing? Do you realize that truth without understanding will quickly be ignored, forgotten, or attacked? Truth communicated but not understood will quickly be ignored, forgotten, or attacked. It is only understanding that makes truth applicable and personal. If there is no understanding, truth is quickly discarded, mocked, forgotten, or attacked.

In 2 Peter 2:12, the Scripture speaks of wicked false teachers: “But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption.” This verse should explain why so many attack the Bible and doctrinal truths, and why they attack the existence and attributes of God. They do not understand. When you do not understand, you either ignore, forget, or mock and attack.

A failure to understand not only results in ignorance, but also in arrogance. Ignorance and arrogance both lead to blasphemy and idolatry, and ultimately to destruction.

Look in your Bibles at Acts chapter 28, beginning with verse 25. Paul tells us what Isaiah said: “And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall

not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

Lack of Understanding as Evidence of Being Unconverted

"Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." The Lord says, in effect, "You deem yourself unworthy? Fine. I'll leave you in your ignorance and your arrogance." Interestingly enough, I am going to show you this in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. When God describes the wicked in Romans chapter 1 and verse 31, here is how He begins: "Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." But He began by saying, "without understanding." Do you realize that both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, a lack of understanding is evidence of being unconverted? A lack of understanding is evidence of being unconverted.

Let us go in our Bibles, first of all, to Isaiah 44. I will show it to you in the Old Testament, and then we will go to the New Testament. Look at Isaiah 44 and verse 18. Look what God says: "They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand." They have not known or understood; they are lost. They are unconverted.

Look in your Bibles at Isaiah 56 and verse 11. Again, he is talking here about His watchmen. In fact, let us read verse 10. He says, "His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter." They cannot understand. So He is talking about them being lost.

If you look in the book of Mark, chapter 4 and verse 12, obviously, in this passage, without understanding, or a lack of understanding, means that you are unconverted. He says, "That seeing they may see,

and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." Then turn over to John 8 right quickly and look at what our Lord said to the Pharisees. In John 8 and verse 43, our Lord says this to the Pharisees: "Why do ye not understand my speech?"

"Even because ye cannot hear my word." Why do you not understand my speech? Even because you cannot hear my word. Without understanding, they cannot hear. They do not want to hear, and they are lost. John 12:39-40 says, "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." Both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, a lack of understanding is a symptom of being unconverted.

We must comprehend that even a baby in Christ, someone who is just born by God, understands some things. He may not be able to explain them, but he understands them. A newborn baby automatically goes to his mother's breast; he understands that he needs nourishment. A newborn baby in Christ may not be a theologian or have a doctrinal degree, but he knows several things. He understands, first, that he is a sinner; that Jesus Christ is the only Savior; that he has been saved by grace through faith alone; and that the Word of God is his source of sustenance and nourishment. He may not be able to explain these truths, but he understands them. If a babe in Christ can understand these simple truths, why is it that someone who professes to have been saved for forty years cannot understand those simple truths, or anything in the Word of God?

Encouragement and Applications

First Peter 2:1-4 says, "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious."

Even a newborn babe knows the preciousness of Jesus Christ. He may not be able to explain the incarnation, the impact and importance of the resurrection, or the intercession of Christ, but he knows that Jesus Christ is God and that Jesus Christ is the one who saved him. Verse 7 says, "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner."

A true Christian may not be the greatest scholar in the world, but at least he has understanding. There are certain biblical and spiritual truths that he does understand. I know, and you know, men and women with earned PhDs who are absolutely incapable of understanding spiritual truths. Are they brilliant? Yes. Did they earn their degrees? Yes. Does the world acknowledge their brilliance? Yes. But they have absolutely no understanding when it comes to the Word of God.

A child of God may not understand the whole Word of God, but he does understand that salvation is of the Lord, that Jesus Christ is God and the only Savior, and that the Bible is indeed the Word of God. I would rather be criticized, mocked, and ridiculed by the world, with everyone calling me stupid and dumb, and have understanding of the Word of God and of Jesus Christ, than have all kinds of degrees the world can fasten upon me. Spiritual understanding far exceeds simple intellectual knowledge. Without understanding spiritual truths, I am mighty dumb.

By way of encouragement, we are not to consider ourselves dumb or stupid simply because we do not understand truth the very first time we hear it. Did the apostles? No. They had to ask. It had to be repeated and explained to them over and over again.

In Mark 10, verse 1, the Bible says our Lord came there and taught them again. The Lord taught them the same truth over again. It takes time for things to sink into our brains, and it takes repetition. The more you hear, the more you understand. People have told me, “I’ve got more out of that message the second time I heard it than the first time,” or, “I got more the third time than the first time.” Of course.

It is easy for anybody to comprehend 2 plus 2 equals 4—except those who believe in common core, of course. That is merely an intellectual fact. But when you begin dealing with the Word of God, it requires spiritual discernment, and it takes time to develop spiritual discernment. Do not consider yourself stupid or dumb simply because you do not understand something the very first time that you hear it.

If I were to explain the difference between trichotomy and dichotomy, or some apologetic principles, or say, “Tomorrow we're going to be discussing supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism,” you might ask, “What is that?” They are theological doctrines. But I did not understand some of those things the first time I heard them either. I could not pronounce the words.

So do not consider yourself dumb or stupid. Ask the Lord for discernment; ask him for the truth. We may not understand everything, or even most Bible truths, but we should be thankful for what we do understand, including some basic truths. We must not read our Bibles merely to be reading them, nor study them merely to be studying them. We should read and study them while seeking understanding and application to our lives and circumstances. If there is no understanding, the truth will slip away from us.

Hebrews 2 and verse 1 says, “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” Spiritual truth will escape from us far more quickly than any other truth. Like all truth, we must fight to make it ours and fight to keep it. Proverbs 23 and verse 23 says, “Buy the truth, and sell it not.” Truth costs.

Once you get it, understand it, and apply it, it is like a piece of gold or a Glock; you do not ever want to get rid of it. Buy the truth, and sell it not. Help us, Father, to understand the importance and necessity of understanding, and to seek understanding. Teach us and build us up in the most holy faith. In thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Seeing and Hearing

Part Two

Review of Part 1: The Necessity of Understanding

Let us look in Matthew 13, beginning with verse 10. The title of this message is "Seeing and Hearing and Not Understanding."

The disciples came and said unto him, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" He answered and said unto them, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance. But whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables, because they seeing, see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which said, 'By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive. For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with

their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.' But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear."

"For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them."

So, seeing and hearing and not understanding. The importance and necessity of understanding are great. Unhappily, understanding is that which is lacking in the lives of most Christians. We have never really sought understanding, and most people have never really attempted to apply the Word of God to their lives. Many times we let things slip from our minds. In fact, the book of Hebrews says we ought to give the more earnest heed to these things, lest at any time we should let them slip.

Most of the time, especially when we talk about biblical truths, someone will say, "Well, it either slipped my mind or I just simply forgot it." It is interesting to know that we usually do not forget something we understand. If we forget it and it slips from our mind, we really never understood it to begin with.

Last week, I endeavored to demonstrate just one point: the importance and necessity of understanding. I took you through the Bible and showed a number of passages that I hope surprised many people. When we think of the twelve apostles, we think of mighty men of God, men filled with the Spirit, men who understood, men capable of teaching and grasping everything our Lord said. Yet, as we went through Scripture, even concerning the twelve apostles, over and over the Bible says, “But they understood not.” They understood not. They understood not. I went through about a dozen passages showing that whatever our Lord said and taught, they did not understand. They had to ask our Lord repeatedly to explain what He was saying. Occasionally, Scripture says they were even afraid to ask. Why? Because they realized they should have understood, yet at the same time, they did not understand.

So, over and over, even the mighty apostles did not understand. Do not consider yourself dumb or stupid simply because there are some things in the Bible you do not understand. Even the apostles

did not understand. They had to seek understanding. They had to seek another answer. We should be willing to go to our Lord the same way.

Two Foundational Truths About Understanding

When it comes to understanding, there are absolutely two truths that we must grasp. The first is this: there are some truths we are unable to understand immediately. Hold Matthew 13, but look in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 5. I read this passage last week, but let me point out this one truth. The Apostle Paul is talking about the priesthood of Christ. Beginning with verse 10, concerning Christ, he says, “called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedek.” Now watch verse 11: “Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

Just as it would be impossible to feed Jackson a T-bone steak—though Jackson's daddy would take care of it—so it is impossible for a newborn babe in Christ to understand what you and I would call the meat of the Word. It is simply impossible. Babies are fed food that is convenient for them, and likewise spiritual babies are fed food that is convenient for them.

There are varying stages in the Christian life. In 1 John, chapter 2, verses 12 and 13, the Apostle John talks about babes, young men, and fathers. You have to be a babe before you can be a young man, and a young man before you can be a father.

I have said that I need to show you from Scripture the characteristics of a babe, a young man, and a father. No one expects a teenage boy to act like a fifty-year-old man, or a two-year-old child to act like a sixteen-year-old young man. There are various stages, and at those different stages people are obviously unable to be fed

with the same food. Spiritually speaking, the young man is not going to understand what the father understands.

I usually tell people that I can prove absolutely that light travels faster than sound. The advice and counsel I gave my children at eighteen, they did not hear until they were forty. You do not expect an eighteen- or nineteen-year-old to act like a fifty-year-old, nor a two-year-old to act like an eighteen-year-old.

You must understand that there are things in the Bible you are not necessarily going to understand instantly or immediately. This will be determined especially by the stage you are in your Christian life. The second truth is this: if you find a certain truth difficult, you must learn to do what the early disciples did. You have to go to Christ and seek further illumination, enlightenment, and understanding from Him.

In Mark 4:33–34, the Bible says, “And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.” Isn’t that interesting? Did you know that Christ will only teach you as you are able to hear it? Now watch: “But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.” In other words, when He got away from the multitude and was alone with His disciples, He gave further explanation, further illumination, and further enlightenment.

I have written a number of books, and people have asked me, “Here’s a sentence, or here’s a paragraph, or here’s a page that I don’t understand. What do you mean by that? Or what did you mean when you wrote that?” And I explain it. The point being, they could have gone to Kevin and asked him what I meant when I wrote that, and Kevin would probably shrug his shoulders and say, “I don’t know. You need to ask him. He’s the one that wrote it.” So the point I’m trying to make is this.

The Holy Spirit inspired the Word of God. This is the living Word of God. You can go to Christ. You can go to the Holy Spirit and say, “What in the world is meant here? Show me.” For instance, John 16:13 says, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you

things to come.” But note, if you would, the promise: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.” So it is His ministry to further illuminate your mind, guide you into truth, and give you understanding.

Last week I covered one point: the importance and the necessity of understanding. Today I’m going to cover only the second point, one point as well, and that is this: Understanding is a duty as well as a gift. Now, the very fact that understanding is a gift in Scripture is very easily proven. It doesn’t matter whether you look in the Old Testament or in the New Testament. Scripture teaches that the Lord alone is the possessor of all wisdom and understanding, and that He gives it according to His divine purposes to those who seek Him in the right way.

SCRIPTURE READING - 1 Kings 3:5-13 (KJV)

Understanding as a Divine Gift

"In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee." That is an amazing statement, where God just told Solomon, "Just ask me whatever you want. I'll give it to you."

"And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father. And I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude."

Now, here is his request: "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, "Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine

> enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee." And if you look at verse 13: "And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days."
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> But note what the Bible says: "I have given thee," says God, "a wise and understanding heart."

In the book of Job, right before the book of Psalms, chapter 38 and verse 36 are put in the form of a question, where God asked Job. Looking back at verse 1, we read, “Then the Lord answered Job.” So God is asking Job this. In verse 36, we read, “Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?” Well, very obviously, it is God. God is the one that gives wisdom, and God is the one that gives understanding.

In Proverbs chapter 2 and verse 6, the Bible says this very pointedly. In fact, you will hear me quote this passage quite often. Look at what the Bible says in Proverbs chapter 2 and verse 6. I do not see how anyone could get around this verse, but the Bible says in Proverbs 2 and verse 6, “For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.”

The Lord giveth wisdom. Do you remember the passage in Matthew 13:11? Our Lord said to His disciples, “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” If something is given to you, it is a gift. The Bible says in Luke 24:45, referring to our Lord’s disciples, “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.” What did our Lord do? He gave them understanding; He opened their understanding. The Apostle Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:7, “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” Where does understanding come from? It comes from the Lord.

Look in 1 John 5:20. The Apostle John says, “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we

may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

What if our Lord asked you, as He did His early disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" Some answered, "Thou art Elijah, one of the prophets." Our Lord said, "But whom say ye that I am?" The apostle Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Do you remember what our Lord said to Peter when he made that confession? He said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." He did not say, "Peter, boy, you're smarter than everybody else. You finally figured this thing out." No. He said, "Peter, My Father revealed it to you. He gave you understanding."

If you understand and believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He is salvation, and He is salvation alone, God gave you that understanding. You did not figure it out for yourself. God gave you that understanding. That is what 1 John 5:20 says. It is God who sovereignly and powerfully gives us His gift of understanding.

Since understanding is a gift from God, it is also our duty and responsibility to seek this gift from Him. It may surprise you to know that we have been commanded in Scripture to understand. Stop and think about that: our Lord commands us to understand.

Understanding as a Human Duty

For instance, look in your Bibles if you would. And by the way, before I turn you there, I want you to listen to this statement. Our natural inability to understand does not negate our responsibility to understand. Our natural inability, just because we're not necessarily super spiritual and just because we're flesh and blood, our natural inability does not negate our responsibility to understand. So look at Matthew chapter 15, if you would, at verse 10, Matthew 15 in verse 10, and then we're going to Mark chapter 7. So look at Matthew chapter 15 in verse 10. Look at what our Lord says. Matthew 15 in verse 10. The Scripture says, "And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand." And I want to point out that both of these are commands. He said, "Hear, and understand." If you look in Mark 7 and verse 14. Mark 7 and verse 14. "And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me

every one of you, and understand." Now in each of these instances when our Lord says either "hear" or "hearken" and "understand,"

in the Greek, these are present active imperatives. An imperative is a command. Being present active, it means that you are continually to be hearing and you are to be continually understanding. In other words, when our Lord commands us something, we must obey. And here is his command to hear and to understand. In other words, understanding may be his gift, but it is our duty and our responsibility to seek him for that gift.

Now, I want you to turn with me back to the book of Proverbs, chapter four. I want to show you this. I want you to see I'm going to read a lot in the book of Proverbs and then we're going to go to the New Testament. But look in Proverbs, chapter four, and let's begin reading there with verse one. I want you to understand that we have been commanded to understand. You say, "I don't understand the Scriptures," but you have a responsibility because you've been commanded. So watch Proverbs 4 and verse 1.

"Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding." In other words, here is what he is saying: pay attention to get understanding. Look in Proverbs 4 and verse 5: "Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth." Get wisdom, get understanding. Look in verse 7: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." Look in Proverbs 5. He says, "My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: that thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge." What did he say? Bow thine ear to my understanding.

Proverbs 23 and verse 23—I quoted this verse last week. I love it. It is a very simple verse, and God says this: "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." Buy the truth and sell it not. And while you are buying, God says, you had better also get wisdom, instruction, and understanding. You say, "Boy, if I could buy that, I would." Well, I am going to explain a little bit later how it comes to pass.

In 1 Corinthians 14 and verse 20, the Apostle Paul is inspired to write, "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men." Isn't that interesting? Be not children in understanding.

If Jackson were just a couple of years older, I could say, "Jackson, I want you to recite all of your times tables." He might look at me and say, "I don't understand your request." And he would be right because he is a child. Just another year or two is not going to make that much difference right now. He could say, "I don't understand." So, in children, he says, "in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men." He is commanding us to be mature in understanding.

In Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 17, our Lord commands, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." So if He commands us not to be unwise, the opposite is that we must be wise, and at the same time, we must be understanding what the will of the Lord is. I spent all this time showing you two simple truths.

Understanding: A Divine Gift and Duty

The first truth is this: understanding is a divine gift. God must give it. The second truth is that it is your duty and responsibility to seek the Lord for understanding. Now that you understand that understanding is both a gift and a duty, you have to ask this question, or these questions: What is understanding? How do I know whether I understand or not?

The Nature of Biblical Understanding

Stop and think about that. How can I tell if Ed really understands something? I can tell if Marshall understands. I could explain and explain and explain. I understand it, but that does not necessarily mean that you understand. So how can I tell whether or not Marshall understands or Patrick understands? Well, let me tell you this: biblical understanding differs from worldly understanding, just as biblical wisdom differs from worldly wisdom.

Let me show you that in the Bible. There are individuals with earned PhDs, sometimes far more than one, who, although they are brilliant in the things of the world, are absolutely ignorant in the things of Christ. They have no ability to understand heavenly things. James 3:13 says, “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.” In other words, if you have wisdom and understanding, there will be a demonstration of it in your life.

Then he says, “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.” What is truth? First of all, the word of God is called the word of truth. Jesus Christ said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth. Therefore, when you act and live contrary to Scripture, you are lying against the word of God, the Son of God, and the Spirit of God. James says, “If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.” Then notice verse 15: “This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.”

"For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

What is our Lord saying? You can tell who has biblical wisdom and who has worldly wisdom. Likewise, you can tell who has biblical understanding and who does not, because it will be demonstrated in our lives.

Do you remember Solomon's request? In 1 Kings chapter 3 and verse 9, he said, "Give thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad." What does that tell you? Understanding has to do with the law of God and with the Word of God, because all of God's Word is law. Biblical understanding distinguishes between good and bad, and between right and wrong. It enables us to judge righteous judgment.

You hear people quote our Lord's words in Matthew, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." The Bible does say that; you cannot judge

someone's motives. But it also says, in John 7:24, "Judge righteous judgment." I do not have to judge your motive; I can judge your actions based upon the Word of God.

Our Lord said in John 10:10, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." How does our Lord give us life? Through His Word, His will, and His way.

Understanding is not a game of mental gymnastics, a brain teaser, or a complicated puzzle. It is not some esoteric secret that only a privileged or initiated few may acquire. Understanding is simply knowing our Lord, His Word, and applying it to our lives.

Now go back in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 4, and let us read verses 5 through 8. Look what God says to His people when He gave them His law. Deuteronomy 4, beginning at verse 5. Moses says, "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it." Moses said, "I've taught you statutes and judgments that ye should do so."

Not that you can glory in your brilliant intellect, please others with your knowledge, or demonstrate your knowledge. He has taught you this so that you can do it. "Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" He says, "This is your wisdom. This is your understanding." It is God's law, God's word, that is our wisdom and understanding. Do you understand that when God gave his law to Israel, it was unique?

The nation was unique, and the people were unique. Do you realize Israel was the only nation that had His law? The Hittites did not have it. The Jebusites did not have it. The Babylonians did not have it. The Egyptians did not have it. No. It was very unique, not only to have God's law, but to be instructed in God's law and have God's law explained so that you could apply it and live by it in every

situation. There was absolutely nothing among the nations that existed then or that exists now so agreeable to reason, truth, justice, and equity that is comparable to God's law. Nothing. God's law is unique. It was His law that set Israel aside as a unique people, gave them wisdom and understanding, and set His people aside as a peculiar people, as Titus says and as Peter uses that expression as well. It is His law that gives us wisdom and understanding.

We must comprehend that to know and to do God's will is the whole of wisdom and understanding. Our observance and obedience to the law of God brings God so nigh unto us. So how can I tell whether Marshall has understanding? How can I tell if Kevin has understanding? The answer is by how he lives. How does he conduct his life?

It is not how many Scriptures he can quote. There is nothing wrong with quoting Scripture. You could memorize the entire Bible, but if you do not apply it and live by it, you do not really understand it; you have merely memorized it. Scripture teaches in Ecclesiastes 10 and verse 2 that the heart of the wise man is at his right hand. What does that mean? I thought the wise man's heart was in the center of his chest like everybody else's. Most men are right-handed. It is the right hand that works; it is the right hand that applies. When it says the heart of the wise man is at his right hand, it means the wise man applies God's law and God's word in every situation. Do you understand? Do you understand now why Romans 12 and verse 2 is so specific?

You remember the Apostle Paul said in verse 1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." But now listen to verse 2: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." How do you prove it? You live it. You work it out in your daily life and in every situation.

In Proverbs 8:8–9, the Word of God says, "All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge." Think about that: they are all plain to

him that understandeth. I've had people tell me, "Brother Weaver, I just don't understand the Bible." I don't understand why you don't understand the Bible. It's all plain.

How can you misunderstand, "Ye must be born again"? How can you misunderstand, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"? How can you misunderstand, "Thou shalt not commit adultery"? How can you misunderstand, "Thou shalt not steal"? A lot of times, it is not that we do not understand some things; it is that we do not want to obey them or apply them. But if we really have understanding—if we genuinely want to apply the Word of God to our lives—it will be made plain to us. It is not going to be exceedingly difficult.

The Consequence of Rejecting God's Law

God gave His law to His people and said, "This is your wisdom and your understanding." It is important to know that God gave His law to His people. But Israel turned from that law, rejected it, and followed their own devices. Deuteronomy 32 is an ode, or a song, against Israel. God commanded Moses in Deuteronomy 31 to write it because He knew exactly what Israel was going to do. Speaking of Israel, Deuteronomy 32:28 says, "For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"

Why were they void of counsel? Why was there no understanding in them? Why were they unwise? Because they had rejected God and His law. They were not going to obey. After Moses wrote the song recorded in Deuteronomy 31:30, he spoke it “in the ears of all the congregation of Israel,” until the words were ended. Amazingly, God refers to these people as a nation void and deprived of understanding. He had given them His law, but they had rejected it, refused it, and turned from it. They would not obey it or believe it. So, in their latter end, they faced the judgment of God.

God continued to speak about these people who rejected His law. Jeremiah 8:9 says, “The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?” When you reject God and His law and His total

Word, you are depriving yourself of wisdom and understanding. When you refuse to live by God's law and God's Word, you are depriving yourself of wisdom and understanding.

You have to remember what happened to King Saul in 1 Samuel 15. He had turned back from obeying God. Samuel said to him, "Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel." That is the lex talionis, the law of retribution. Saul rejected God and His law, so God rejected him.

Anyone who rejects God and His law has only chaos and confusion left for his life because of his rebellion. It is God's Word that gives us wisdom and understanding. Therefore, it is our duty not just to read the Scripture and not just to study the Scripture, but to apply the Scripture. If there is no application, there is no real understanding.

David's Prayers for Understanding

Before I give you some applications, turn with me to the book of Psalms, to Psalm 111. I want to show you how David cried for understanding, and I hope it will enable you to cry for understanding as you emulate his prayers. Psalm 111, verse 10, says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever." Did you hear that? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and a good understanding have all they that—what? Memorize his commandments? No. Are aware of his commandments? No. Taught his commandments? No. A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.

There has to be application. Now look in Psalm 119, beginning with verse 34. David prays, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart." What is understanding? It is keeping God's law; it is obedience. "I shall observe it with my whole heart."

Look in verse 73: "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments." It is not that David did not know them. He will learn how to apply them, how to use them in every situation. In verse 104, David says,

“Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.” You want more understanding? Then you have to obey those precepts that God has already given you, the ones you do understand. That leads you to hate every false way.

In verse 125, David says, “I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.” Verse 130 says, “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.” Verse 144 says, “The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.” You remember what our Lord said: “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” What did David just say? “Give me understanding, and I shall live.” I will enjoy the abundant life as long as I am living obediently.

In verse 169, David prays, “Let my cry come near before thee, O Lord: give me understanding according to thy word.” All these prayer requests prove the point I made earlier: understanding must be diligently sought by the child of God.

Applications: Diligence and the Worthlessness of Unapplied Truth

Yes, it is God's gift. God gives understanding, but that gift must be diligently sought. Have you genuinely considered that it is your duty and obligation to understand the law of God? Reading is insufficient. Even studying is insufficient. You are required to seek God for understanding. You must cry to God to open your eyes and enlighten your mind, just as He did to the apostles in Luke 24: “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.”

When you ask, “How diligent must I be in this?” turn to Proverbs chapter 2. I want you to see the diligence required to really understand the Word of God. Verse 1 says, “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;” Notice what he says: you have to receive, hide, incline, and apply.

Then he explains what he means: “Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest

her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

Suppose I came to your house with a map for treasure buried on your property—treasure worth millions. I told you, "This is on your property." You asked, "Where is it?" I answered, "I do not really know. You have ten acres here; I only know it is somewhere on these ten acres." You examined the map, authenticated it, and knew it was real and genuine. You knew the treasure was on your property.

Would you get your shovel, dig a foot or two in one spot, and say, "I am tired; I will pick this up tomorrow if I have time"? The next day, seeing the shovel, would you say, "I just do not feel like digging today; I will dig tomorrow"? If you really believed there was treasure on your property, you would not even mess with a shovel.

You would rent a backhoe. When you finished with your property, you could not tell it from a mountain, because dirt piles would be everywhere as you dug for that treasure. That is what our Lord said: "If thou wilt receive my words and hide them in your heart, so that you incline your ear and apply your heart, if you cry after knowledge, if you lift up your voice for understanding, yea, he said, if you seek as for silver and for hidden treasures, then, and only then, will you find knowledge and understand the fear of the Lord." It should be obvious that if you are seeking silver and gold, you will be working. If you are going to understand God's law, it will require time, patience, and work.

Truth that is uncomprehended and unapplied is absolutely worthless. You say, "Boy, I wish I could remember all these terms. I wish I could remember this, I wish I could remember that." Do you know why you do not retain most of what you hear, read, or discuss? It is because you never genuinely understood it. If you understand it, you apply it. Go back to this analogy again: if I know—

If there is treasure buried on my property, and I have the means to dig that treasure up, what good is it if I never use the means to acquire it? What good is the treasure of the Word of God to you if you never seek Him for understanding and never apply it in your lives? Our Lord said in Matthew 13:12, "For whosoever hath, to him

shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."

In language that we can understand: if you use the truth, you get more truth. If you do not use it, you lose it. There is no real understanding without application.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank Thee for Thy Word and for Thy grace, and we ask Thee for understanding. Show us not only its importance and necessity, but also that it is a divine gift. It is our duty, obligation, and responsibility to seek that gift from Thee. May we seek it diligently, as we would seek silver, gold, and buried treasure, knowing that in Thee we have life and can have it more abundantly by Thy grace and mercy. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Seeing and Hearing

Part Three

In Matthew chapter 13, beginning with verse 10, we read: “And the disciples came and said to him, ‘Why speakest thou unto them in parables?’ He answered and said unto them, ‘Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.’”

Review of Previous Messages

“But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”

In the first message, we looked at the importance and necessity of understanding. Over and over in Scripture, we are commanded to understand. When one is without understanding, he is likened unto a beast or a dumb animal. Sometimes the animals are more understanding than those who claim to be men.

In Psalm 32 and verse 9, he said, “Be not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.” Then in Psalm 49, verse 20: “Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.” And in Isaiah 1, verse 3: “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib.”

"But my people doth not know, my people doth not consider." Understanding spiritual truth is very unnatural for a fallen man. According to the Bible, he is incapable of understanding spiritual truth except by the grace and mercy of God, when God opens his eyes. Moreover, believers are likewise unable to understand truth unless our Lord opens our mind and our understanding. This was true even of the twelve apostles. Over and over, the Bible says, neither did they understand, and they would ask our Lord to explain his teaching or a parable to them. We do not need to consider ourselves dumb or stupid just because we do not understand something in the Bible. Even the apostles did not understand. They had to ask, and it had to be taught them again and again so that they could understand.

Understanding is a duty as well as a gift. True understanding is the gift from God. Proverbs 2 and verse 6 says, "For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." In Matthew chapter 13, verse 11, he said, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." While understanding is indeed the gift of God, it is likewise

our duty, responsibility, and obligation to seek that gift. The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 31, "But covet earnestly the best gifts." We should desire the gift of understanding. When Paul said, "covet earnestly the best gifts," that is not a suggestion. It is a command because it is a present active imperative in the Greek, meaning that he is commanding us to covet earnestly the best gifts. Likewise, the apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 7 to Timothy, "Consider what I say."

"And the Lord give thee understanding in all things." The word "consider" there is also a present active imperative. An imperative means it is a command. When it is present active, it means that you are to be continually and constantly considering. So he is commanding us to consider what he says, and the Lord will give him understanding.

Understanding Must Be Sought and Applied

Understanding is the gift of God, but it is also our duty to seek that gift. God does not give understanding willy-nilly. He does not simply drop it into the minds of the lazy, the ignorant, and the slothful. No one goes to bed ignorant and wakes up smart; no one goes to bed dumb in spiritual things and wakes up brilliant in spiritual truth.

As we study and consider what He says, we prayerfully seek His gift, asking God to open our minds and give us understanding. Understanding is therefore not only a gift; it is also a duty, a responsibility, and an obligation.

Understanding Must Be Diligently Sought and Daily Applied

Understanding must be diligently sought, daily exercised, and applied. Have you considered that you need understanding not merely weekly or daily, but even hourly? We must apply it constantly and consistently in every area and avenue of our lives.

If we view understanding as a hit-and-miss proposition—sometimes having it and sometimes not—we will never live a godly, biblically oriented life. When God graciously opens our eyes and enlightens our minds to understand a specific truth, it is so

that we may exercise and apply that truth in our lives. It is not enough to say, “I see that today. I understand that today. Today I will do it,” and then abandon it tomorrow or the next week. If God opens our minds and enables us to understand the truth, it is so that we may constantly and consistently apply that truth for the rest of our lives.

I believe I have biblical warrant for saying this: if there is no application of the truth, there is really and truly no understanding of the truth. When God gives us understanding, it is so that we might apply it. In Matthew 13:15, concerning these people, He said, “For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”

Let me ask this question: What would happen if this people really and truly heard, really and truly saw, and really and truly understood? What would happen? The answer is, they would repent and believe. In other words, this verse, verse 15, implies that truth has to be applied. If you hear truth, if you see truth, if you understand truth, then you apply truth. Truth held in the mind but never applied is worthless.

Paul writes to these Colossian Christians: “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will.” He continues, “in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

Go back to verse 9 and look at this: “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” So here is my question: What is going to be the result, or what will be the consequences, if you are filled with the knowledge of his will and all wisdom and spiritual understanding? If

God gives you spiritual understanding, what will be the result? Look in verse 10: “that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might.” In other words, if God gives you understanding, there cannot help but be an application of that understanding in your life. You will walk pleasing unto the Lord. You will be fruitful in every good work. So understanding must be applied.

It is to govern our lives. Paul spoke in Colossians 2 and verse 2 about “the riches of the full assurance of understanding.” Do you realize it is understanding that enriches our lives? Because it enables us to walk pleasing to the Lord and be fruitful in every good work. So let me ask you a question. How does one exercise and apply biblical understanding? How does one exercise and apply biblical understanding? Well, the answer is, you apply and exercise biblical understanding the way that you apply and exercise any understanding. So let me give you a couple of illustrations, one just made up and the other is biblical. Here’s a good illustration of applying understanding.

Let’s suppose that you need a certain thing, a certain object. In fact, you may need several of them. You go into a store that carries those objects that you desire, find the object, and look at it. Then you look around and see another package that has multiple of the same objects in it. Let’s say that you truly need 50 of what you are looking for. You look at the price of one, the price of the package that has 25, and the price of the package that has 50 in it. Then you look and see how much money you have in your pocket.

You may need 50 of them, but if you have only enough money to buy 25, you are applying and exercising not only your understanding of the object that you want, but also your understanding of the money that you have in your pocket in relation to that object.

So you are going to apply biblical understanding basically the same way you apply any other understanding. Let me show you. Look in your Bibles to the book of Hebrews, chapter 11. Hebrews, chapter 11. Let’s look at verse 1. I’m going to show you again how to apply biblical understanding. The whole point that I’m making is very simple: biblical understanding must be diligently exercised and

daily applied. Look in Hebrews chapter 11 and notice, if you would please, verse 1. Hebrews 11, verse 1, the Bible says this.

Illustration of Applying Understanding: Creation

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report." Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Notice what he said: "through faith we understand." If faith enables me to understand that God is the Creator of this world, and that God spoke this world and every other world into existence, as the Bible says in Psalm 33:9, "For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast," then he is talking about creation.

If I understand that God is the Creator of this world, and that God spoke this world into existence, how do I apply that in my daily life? How do I apply that truth over and over? First of all, we apply this truth by believing that this world is God's creation. God created the world. It did not just happen. It did not come into being by evolution or by a gigantic explosion somewhere, where nothing created something. No, it was God who created the world.

When God created the world, He created it for a special purpose. What was that purpose? Revelation 4:11 says, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Why did God create the world? Because it pleased God to create the world. Why did God create you? Because it pleased God to create you. Why did God save you? Because it pleased God to save you.

If we apply this verse, "through faith we understand," the very first thing we do is believe that this world is God's creation and that it was created for a purpose. Secondly, we apply this truth by worshipping the Lord as our sovereign Creator.

I do not look around and see all the stars in the universe, the sun, and the moon and say, “Aren’t we lucky all this just happened?” No. I worship the God who created all of this. How can you look at the Grand Canyon, the ocean, the mountains, this great and vast world,

and even the universe, and not give God honor and glory for His creation?

So we apply this truth in Hebrews 11:3: “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” We apply that by worshiping the Lord as our sovereign Creator. Thirdly, we apply that truth by trusting the Lord’s omnipotence. Omnipotence means all power.

He is the all-powerful One. If God can merely speak and the world comes into existence—if He speaks and there is water, land, the sun, moon, and stars, and vast numbers of stars that we cannot even see or know—if God has the absolute power to speak this world into existence, does He not have the power to protect us and provide for us? That is an application of this verse, because it shows God’s omnipotence.

Fourth, we apply this verse by glorying in and enjoying the wonderful creation God has made. The Bible says that God has given us richly all things to enjoy. What does that mean? If I go to the mountains on a hunting trip, I enjoy the scenery and the trip, and I give God praise, honor, and glory for creating not just the mountains, but the game, and for allowing me to enjoy it. If I get to go to the

Grand Canyon, it is the same thing. I am enjoying God's creation and applying Hebrews 11, verse 3. I might also add, fifthly, that we apply Hebrews 11, verse 3 by what the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7, verse 31: "We should use this world as not abusing it." We have to understand that this is God's creation.

May I have a garden? Sure, I may have a garden. May I plant crops? Sure, I may plant crops. I can use this world. Do I have the right to destroy this world? No. Do I have a right to destroy the atmosphere? No. Do I have the right to destroy anything that God has created? No. I can use it, but I cannot abuse it.

I might build a box. It may not be the best box in the world, but it is my box. I built it. If you come to my house, you do not have the right to kick my box and take a hammer and tear it to pieces, because it is my box. This is God's world. We have the right and the blessing

of God to use it, but we do not have the right to abuse it. Biblical understanding always has to be applied.

Illustration of Applying Understanding: Lordship of Christ

Here is another example. The apostle Paul writes, "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Here is something you need to understand: no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed, and no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

How do you apply this verse? First of all, you apply this truth by recognizing the Godhead. There is that which is known as the ontological Trinity. The word ontos is the Greek word which simply means being. When you talk about the ontological Trinity, it is simply the logical order being Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. There is no confusion of the persons. Each person is a separate person, but we understand there is only one God who has revealed Himself in Father, Son, and Spirit. He has revealed Himself in three persons.

Now watch verse 3: “Wherefore I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed.” Why would no man speaking by the Spirit of God call Jesus Christ accursed? God the Father is God, God the Son is God, and God the Spirit is God. Since God the Spirit is God, if He prompted someone to curse Jesus Christ, who is God, He would be prompting someone to curse Himself, which would be blasphemous. Obviously, no man speaking by the Spirit of God is going to call Jesus Christ accursed.

Secondly, you apply this truth by acknowledging that the only way anyone can be saved is through Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit working salvation in that individual. Verse 3 says, “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” This does not mean that men lack the power or ability in their tongues to say, “Jesus is Lord.” If you have the ability to speak, anyone could say those words.

Men may imitate, but only God the Holy Spirit can authenticate. Men may mouth the words “Jesus Christ is Lord,” but only the Holy Ghost can enable someone to say “Jesus Christ is Lord” savingly. If you apply this verse, you will come to the same conclusion Jonah came to in Jonah 2:9: “Salvation is of the Lord.” That is what this verse is teaching us. Salvation is of the Lord. Only God the Holy Spirit can enable us to say “Jesus Christ is Lord” savingly.

Several other verses are self-explanatory as to how understanding is to be applied in our lives. Based upon these verses, we need understanding daily and hourly. These verses give us excellent examples of having understanding applied consistently and constantly in our lives.

Proverbs 14:29 says, “He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.” He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding. What is God teaching us here? He is teaching us that if we understand things, it will enable us to be slow to wrath. We also understand that, according to Proverbs 14:29, the man who is hasty of spirit exalts folly. Proverbs 15:1 says, “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.

Proverbs 19:8 says, “He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good.” I do not know about you, but I would like to find good all the time. So God says that he who keeps understanding shall find good. Without understanding, you are not going to find good.

Proverbs 19:25 says, “Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.” Reprove one who has understanding, and he will understand knowledge. This means that if a man who has understanding is doing something wrong, and you reprove him and show him where he is wrong, what is he going to do? He is going to increase in understanding. He is not going to become mad, angry, and upset; he is going to be learning.

Now, let me answer a question, but I want to ask it before I answer it. Why are there so few Christians who really understand

doctrine? I probably need to rephrase that question: Why are there so many Christians who do not know doctrine and do not know how to apply doctrine? The Bible has the answer. Before we go to the next point, look at Isaiah 28:9. Look at what question is asked.

Why Many Christians Lack Doctrinal Understanding

"Whom shall he teach knowledge?" In other words, whom shall the Lord teach knowledge? "And whom shall he make to understand doctrine?" Here is the answer: "Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." God said that if you want to understand doctrine and have knowledge, you have to be weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts. Here is why most Christians, most professing Christians, do not know doctrine or know how to apply doctrine: they are too childish, too immature, and too ignorant to understand doctrine, and therefore they are incapable of being taught.

You remember what the apostle said in Hebrews chapter 5. He is talking about Christ: "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

So the question is, why are so many professing Christians ignorant? The answer is that so many professing Christians are immature and childish. They are not capable of being taught.

Understanding Is Necessary for Salvation and Repentance

Here is the fourth point: understanding is absolutely necessary for salvation and repentance. I do not want to spend much time on this point, but for the sake of clarity I will explain the principle. Romans 10:10 says, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Faith, or

belief, precedes confession. You cannot confess or profess something that you do not already believe. Faith precedes confession.

Now, turn in your Bibles to Acts 28, beginning with verse 25. Look and see what was spoken here by Luke, Dr. Luke, who wrote the book of Acts. Paul is speaking in Acts chapter 28, beginning at verse 25: "And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word." And here is what Paul is speaking.

“Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.” Remember that Paul designates himself as the apostle of the Gentiles.

Romans 15:21 says concerning those to whom Paul preaches: “But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.” Paul said, in effect, to the Pharisees and Jews, “You do not see, hear, or understand.” Therefore, he said, “Lo, I go to the Gentiles and they will see and they will hear and they will understand.”

Paul said concerning Timothy, “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” From childhood, Timothy had known the holy scriptures, which are able to make one wise unto salvation.

It is impossible to be saved without understanding that one is a sinner. It is impossible to be saved without understanding that Jesus Christ is Lord. It is impossible to be saved without understanding that Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, is salvation. One does not have to be a theologian or a Bible scholar to be saved, but it is impossible to be saved without some understanding. You must

understand that you are a sinner, that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that salvation is only in Him.

There can be no repentance without understanding. The Greek word for repentance is metanoia, and metanoia literally means a change of mind—a change of mind which inevitably results in a change of conduct.

So, if I am walking straight toward Ed and Henry is behind me, and I repent, that means I turn around and am now walking toward Henry. If I change my mind, there is a change of course. You cannot change your course or your conduct unless you change your mind, and you cannot change your mind unless you understand truth. In other words, when someone repents, he not only understands that what he is doing is wrong; he must understand why it is wrong for him to do that which he is doing.

Repentance is not just saying, "I'm sorry." Repentance is not being ashamed that you were caught in your sins. There is a difference between a worldly sorrow and a godly sorrow. The apostle made this distinction in 2 Corinthians 7:10: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

If you only have a worldly sorrow or a worldly repentance, you are ashamed of your sin, or ashamed that you got caught in your sin. You do not want to face anybody, and you are ashamed for people to know what you have done. That is it: you will run and hide. But someone who has a godly sorrow and a godly repentance may be ashamed that he has sinned, yet he is more than willing to acknowledge that sin, confess that sin, and say, "God has delivered me from that sin. I have turned from that sin. I am no longer what I once was. I no longer do that which I once did."

So biblical sorrow and biblical repentance lead into recognition of sin, confession of sin, and returning from sin. While we may be ashamed of our sin, we understand that we can no longer do what we once did because of our understanding. The man who has a godly sorrow is not ashamed for anyone else to know that he was a great sinner and that he sinned, but God has forgiven him and God has

saved him. He may be ashamed of what he has done, but he is not ashamed of what God has done for him.

There are two sides of the one coin. I could call them the two sides of repentance, or I could call them the two sides of salvation; either one is appropriate. On the one side, there is indeed an understanding and a turning from sin. On the other side, there is indeed an understanding and a turning to God and His law.

The Two Sides of Repentance

Job 28:28 says, "And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." What? To depart from evil is understanding. That is why there can be no repentance without understanding. To depart from evil is understanding, and this is the negative side of repentance: the knowledge of our sin and a turning from it.

Proverbs 9:10 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." Now, wait a minute. Job 28:28 says that to depart from evil is understanding, while Proverbs 9:10 says that the knowledge of the holy is understanding. Which is it? It is both. It is the two sides of one coin, just as a coin has heads and tails. On the one side, understanding is the knowledge of our sin. On the other side of that coin, our understanding is turning to God and His Word. The positive side is not merely turning away from sin, but turning toward God and His law.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:9, the apostle Paul brings these two things together: "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." What did they do? They turned to God—that is the positive side—from idols—that is the negative side. Here repentance includes both directions: away from idols and sin, and toward the living and true God, in order to serve Him.

Understanding Is Distinctive and Discriminating

They had an understanding of their sin and an understanding of God. So they left their sin, turned to God, and served Him. Genuine

repentance involves understanding: understanding our sin, truth, righteousness, and holiness. When we repent, we understand that God has the absolute right to dictate to us and command us how we should live.

Understanding is distinctive and discriminating. One reason so many do not understand, and will never understand, is the distinctiveness and discriminating grace and mercy of God. Psalm 25:14 says, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." Proverbs 3:32 says, "For the froward is abomination to the Lord: but his secret is with the righteous."

The wicked will never come to an understanding of God unless God gives them grace and repentance. Understand that. But even among Christians, and even among Christian pastors, there is a distinctive and discriminating understanding. Some have understanding that others never have and never will have.

Look at Matthew 13:17. Our Lord said to His disciples, "For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

Why did God not allow these righteous men to see and hear what the apostles saw and heard? That is the distinctive and discriminating grace of God. They simply did not. Understanding is distinctive and discriminating, not only among Christians, but among pastors as well. Many pastors do not understand doctrine; some see truths that others will never see.

Why is there such division among Christians and even among Christian pastors? One answer is that God does not give the same understanding to all men. Neither does He give the same understanding to all men at the same time. Nor do all men use the means that God has ordained, or use them consistently and constantly.

Consequently, their understanding is lacking. In 1 Peter, chapter 1, verses 10 through 12, many of the Old Testament prophets did not even understand their own writings: “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what

manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." In other words, these Old Testament prophets wrote something they did not understand. Why? Because of the discriminating and distinctive grace of God to certain individuals.

God only gives truth to men as they are able to hear it. Mark 4:33–34 says, "And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples." God only gives us truth as we are able to hear it. As long as you are a babe, you are not able to hear some truth. That is what the apostle said in Hebrews chapter 5 and in 1 Corinthians chapter 3.

The same thing is true among Christian pastors. As long as you are a babe, you are just not able to hear the truth, or at least untruth. A little baby cannot eat a T-bone steak, nor can he understand the implications of the priesthood of Christ, because he is a child, a baby in Christ. The Bible asks this question in Job 36, verse 22: "Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him?" We must be taught of God, and understanding is not only a gift from God; it is a duty and responsibility as well. We must seek understanding from our great teacher, the Lord himself, and use the means that he has ordained consistently and constantly. Now, let me make just a couple of applications.

Applications: Thank God, Glory in Knowing Him, Remain in Understanding

The first one is this: if we have any understanding of biblical truth, if we understand any Bible doctrines, the first thing we should do is thank God for His gracious and generous gift. For if God had not given us understanding, our eyes would be just as closed, our minds just as closed, and our ears just as deaf as everybody else's. It is God who enabled us to understand. Everything that we understand, we receive from Him. He taught us. He showed us. He alone is infinite in understanding. The Bible says in Psalm 147, verse 5, "Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite."

That means it is endless. If we want understanding, we must seek Him, but we must thank Him for that which He has already given us.

The second thing is this: if you are saved by the grace of God, then you must glory in that fact and worship and praise Him alone. Jeremiah 9, verse 24, says, "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." If you're going to glory, God says, glory in this: that you understand and know Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight. Yes, we should glory in the Lord that we understand Him. We may not understand everything about Him, but we know that He is God.

The third application is this: why is it important to exercise and apply understanding? Proverbs 21, verse 16, says, "The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead." You leave understanding, you leave life. Understanding is the gift of God, but we must seek Him. When He gives us understanding on any truth, we have to apply it to our lives consistently, constantly, and continually. He gives us truth that we may obey it. Truth applied is valuable. Truth unapplied is worthless.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. We ask for understanding. We ask for wisdom. And we ask that we may apply Thy Word to our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

For information about Pastor Weaver's sermons, contact Dominion Ministry by mail at 7400 Abercorn Street, Suite 705, PMB 175, Savannah, Georgia, 31406. Or give us a call at 912-... You can also visit our website at www.dominionministry.com.

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