

The Natural Man Exposed

Series 1-12

VerseQuest Ministries

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## **Series Introduction - The Natural Man Exposed**

The Natural Man Exposed is a 12-part study designed to strip away the flattering lies that fallen man tells about himself and to let the word of God define him exactly as he is. This series is not built on psychology, modern sentiment, religious tradition, or human opinion. It is built on the plain testimony of Scripture, especially Paul's words in "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14). In these studies, we are not dealing merely with the openly immoral man, the profane man, or the obviously wicked man. We are dealing with man as he is by nature in Adam - blind, proud, resistant to truth, hostile to light, and unable to receive spiritual things as they must be received. That includes the worldly man, the intellectual man, the religious man, the moral man, and the church man who has never truly been born again.

This series exposes the natural man from every necessary angle. It shows why spiritual things look foolish to him, why the wisdom of this world cannot reach the deep things of God, why religion without the Holy Ghost is so dangerous, and why blindness in high places has led multitudes astray. It deals with the moral reason men hate the light, the inability of the natural mind to know God, the limits of natural affection and natural reason, and the confusion between false converts and fleshly Christians. It brings the reader face to face with the great offense of the cross, where all human pride is shattered and all human righteousness is condemned. In other words, this is not a soft study. It is meant to expose, confront, and uncover. It is meant to tear the mask off the flesh, the world, and dead religion so the reader can see clearly what God says about man apart from His grace.

But this series does not end in darkness. It moves steadily toward the answer in Jesus Christ. After exposing what the natural man is, it shows what God must do to rescue him - the new birth, regeneration, quickening, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and finally the glorious reality of the mind of Christ. So this is not a series meant merely to condemn. It is meant to clarify, awaken, warn, and point the reader to the only true hope. The answer to the natural man is not education, therapy, morality, culture, self-improvement, or religion. The answer is supernatural salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what this series is about. It exposes the natural man so that Christ may be seen more clearly as the wisdom of God, the power of God, and the only Saviour of sinners.

### **1 of 12: The Natural Man Exposed - What Is the Natural Man?**

**Main Passage: "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” (1 Corinthians 2:14).**

The Holy Spirit gives you one of the clearest diagnoses of fallen humanity in 1 Corinthians 2:14, and He does not waste a word doing it. Paul does not say the natural man is occasionally confused, somewhat limited, or merely uninformed. He says, “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:14). That means you are dealing with a man who is shut up inside the walls of his own fallen nature. He may be polished, educated, articulate, cultured, ethical in appearance, and admired by society, but if he has never been born again by the Spirit of God, he is still natural. He is still operating on the level of Adam after the fall. He is still a stranger to spiritual life. He is still blind where it matters most.

That one truth cuts the legs out from under half the religious confusion in this world. Men assume that if a fellow is nice, respectable, family-oriented, intellectually refined, or faithful to religious routine, he must have some standing with God. But the Bible does not measure a man the way society measures him. The Bible does not ask first whether he is civilized. It asks whether he is saved. The Bible does not ask first whether he is moral. It asks whether he is regenerate. The Bible does not ask first whether he knows religious language. It asks whether he has the Holy Ghost. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). Flesh never graduates into spirit by education, manners, or church attendance. Flesh remains flesh until God does a supernatural work.

So this first study has to lay the foundation right. If you miss the meaning of the natural man, you will miss half of why the world hates truth, why false religion thrives, why intellectual pride is so dangerous, why the cross offends people, and why the new birth is absolutely necessary. The natural man is not merely the drunk in the gutter or the criminal in the alley. He is every unregenerate son of Adam, from the philosopher in the university to the bishop in the robe, from the celebrity with a platform to the deacon on the church board, from the moral neighbor next door to the idolater bowing before a false god. The issue is not outward polish. The issue is inward life. The issue is not whether a man can talk about God. The issue is whether God has made him alive.

### **1. The Bible Definition of the Natural Man**

The first thing you have to do is let the Bible define its own terms. The natural man in 1 Corinthians 2:14 is the man left to himself in his fallen state, without the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. He is “natural” because he possesses only natural life. He has physical life. He has intellectual life. He has emotional life. He has social life. He may have religious

activity. But he does not have spiritual life from above. Paul is not describing some rare class of unusually wicked people. He is describing the default condition of man outside of Jesus Christ. “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh” (Ephesians 2:3). “We all” means just that. Before grace found us, that was us too.

The natural man is therefore not a special breed of sinner. He is simply man as he comes from Adam. He is man by nature, man in the flesh, man without the indwelling Spirit. Romans 5:12 says, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” That death was not merely physical death working later in the body. It was spiritual death working immediately in man’s relation to God. That is why Paul says, “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). Dead men do not revive themselves. Dead men do not educate themselves into life. Dead men do not improve themselves into resurrection. The natural man needs more than instruction. He needs quickening.

Now notice what the verse does not say. It does not say the natural man is necessarily stupid, low-class, crude, or outwardly corrupt in every visible way. Some of the sharpest minds that ever walked this earth were natural men. Some of the best-dressed men in history were natural men. Some of the most disciplined, eloquent, and publicly admired men in the world were natural men. The natural man can write books, build institutions, govern nations, compose music, create systems, and impress crowds. But when it comes to the things of the Spirit of God, he is bankrupt. He may know ten languages and still not understand one verse spiritually. He may debate theology for twenty years and die without ever having met the Author of the Book.

## **2. Not Mere Immorality, but Unregeneracy**

A great many people think the term natural man must refer to some openly immoral rebel, some wild pleasure-lover, or some profane reprobate who glories in filth. Certainly that type fits the natural state. But that is not the full reach of the term. The natural man includes the immoral man, but he is not limited to the immoral man. The natural man is any man who remains in the condition of the flesh and has not been born again. Nicodemus was not a gangster. He was not a drunkard. He was not a street criminal. He was “a ruler of the Jews” (John 3:1), a religious leader, a serious man, an educated man, and Jesus still told him, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). That ought to settle the matter.

The reason that shocks people is because man loves to divide humanity into nice sinners and bad sinners, manageable sinners and shocking sinners, acceptable sinners and disgraceful sinners. God does not divide the race that way when dealing with salvation. God sees lost and saved, dead and alive, in Adam and in Christ. The Pharisee in Luke 18

thanked God he was not like other men, while the publican cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13). And Christ said the publican went down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee. Why. Because outward religious superiority is no substitute for inward regeneration. Self-righteous flesh is still flesh.

This is why church people often have the hardest time seeing their need. The immoral man sometimes knows he is a mess. The religious natural man thinks he is an asset to heaven. He gets baptized, joins a church, sings hymns, gives money, and learns to say “praise the Lord” at the right times, but he still has never passed from death unto life. He has adjusted his manners without having his nature changed. He has improved the wrapping paper while the package inside remains rotten. The Bible says, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). Christ did not say that to a prostitute or a thief. He said it to a master in Israel. The natural man can be immoral, but he can also be devout, neat, restrained, and lost as a goose in a snowstorm.

### **3. The Natural Man Is Not Fixed by Education**

One of the favorite fairy tales of modern civilization is that if you can just educate man enough, inform him enough, train him enough, and expose him to enough culture, he will rise into moral and spiritual maturity. That is one of the biggest lies ever sold to a gullible public. Education can sharpen the intellect, but it cannot cleanse the heart. It can improve vocabulary, but it cannot impart life. It can teach a man how to dissect a sentence in Greek and still leave him blind to the Christ the sentence reveals. “The world by wisdom knew not God” (1 Corinthians 1:21). That verse did not slip into your Bible by accident.

Look at the religious scholars in the days of Jesus Christ. They knew the text, quoted the law, argued doctrine, and were trained in the traditions, yet when the living Word stood before them, they wanted Him dead. Jesus said, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). That crowd had education without illumination. They had information without transformation. They had theological machinery without spiritual life. And that disease is still spreading today. A man can get degrees hanging on his wall like hunting trophies and still not know God any more than a parrot knows grammar.

Now education has its place. Learning is not the enemy. Ignorance is not holiness. But education is a dangerous idol when men begin trusting it to do what only the Holy Ghost can do. A professor can analyze the Bible as literature and never once tremble before its Author. A seminary student can master systems and miss salvation. A polished speaker can deliver lectures on redemption while remaining unredeemed. “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7) is not just a line about

apostates in some abstract sense. It is a perfect description of what happens when fallen man mistakes academic accumulation for spiritual life. The natural man is not cured by a diploma.

#### **4. The Natural Man Can Be Religious**

Here is where the thing gets dangerous. Most people can spot open worldliness easier than religious lostness. The man cursing in a bar is easier to identify than the man teaching Sunday school without the new birth. But the Bible repeatedly shows that religion in the flesh is one of the devil's finest disguises. The scribes and Pharisees were not secular pagans. They were religionists up to their eyeballs. They fasted, tithed, prayed publicly, and stood for tradition. Yet Jesus called them "blind guides" (Matthew 23:16), "whited sepulchres" (Matthew 23:27), and "children of hell" in effect by saying they made their converts "twofold more the child of hell" than themselves (Matthew 23:15). That is not because religion saves. It is because religion without regeneration hardens a man in his blindness.

The natural man loves religion when religion allows him to keep control. He likes ritual he can perform, rules he can boast in, identities he can wear, and ceremonies he can point to as proof of righteousness. What he does not like is the offense of the cross, the necessity of grace, and the sentence of death pronounced on his own merit. The natural man will light candles, count beads, join choirs, wear robes, recite creeds, and build cathedrals, but he recoils when told that all his righteousnesses are "as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). He wants a system that flatters him while appearing to honor God. He does not want to come as a guilty sinner to the foot of a bloody cross and receive mercy he cannot earn.

That is why religious vocabulary proves nothing by itself. A man may talk about Jesus, salvation, faith, holiness, the Spirit, and Scripture, and still be a natural man. The question is not whether he uses biblical words. The question is whether he has biblical life. The devils know doctrine well enough to tremble. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2:19). If correct language alone saved, devils would be in heaven by supper time. No, sir. The natural man can become a trained religionist and still remain spiritually dead, because dead religion is still dead.

#### **5. Why the Natural Man Cannot Receive Spiritual Truth**

Paul says, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14). There is the problem stated plainly. He does not receive them. That means he does not welcome them, embrace them, or accept them as they are given. Why not. "For they are foolishness unto him." There is his opinion. "Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). There is his inability. The natural man has

both a moral aversion and a spiritual incapacity. He resists the truth because he does not love its implications, and he cannot know it rightly because he lacks the Spirit by whom it must be discerned.

Think about the truths of God. The deity of Christ. The necessity of the cross. Salvation by grace through faith. The authority of an inspired Book. The reality of eternal judgment. The indwelling Spirit. The need for holiness. The resurrection of the dead. Those truths all require a man to bow, submit, repent, and admit his bankruptcy. The natural man does not like that arrangement. He wants to sit in judgment over truth, not have truth sit in judgment over him. He wants to edit revelation with his own reason. He wants a god small enough to fit in his pocket and a religion tame enough to leave his pride intact. So when God speaks, the natural man says the problem is with the message, when the problem is really with his condition.

This is why the preaching of the cross is “to them that perish foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:18). Not merely unfamiliar. Not merely challenging. Foolishness. The natural man hears that a crucified Jew is the only hope for the world, that eternal life is a free gift, that human merit is worthless for justification, and that one must be born again by the Spirit of God, and he says, “That is absurd.” But it is only absurd to him because he is judging eternal truth with a fallen instrument. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. He is trying to evaluate heaven with the yardstick of earth, and it will not work. A fish may deny the existence of mountains all day long, but that does not flatten the Rockies.

## **6. The New Birth Is the Great Divide**

The single greatest dividing line in all of humanity is not race, class, education, politics, or denomination. It is the line between those who have been born again and those who have not. That is why Jesus did not offer Nicodemus a reading list. He did not tell him to become more sincere, more charitable, more ceremonial, or more informed. He told him, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Notice that word “see.” A man without the new birth cannot even see properly. His whole spiritual vision is off. He may be religiously active and doctrinally opinionated, but he is still blind to the kingdom until God gives life from above.

The new birth is not moral reform. It is not joining a church. It is not turning over a new leaf. It is not crying through a service, getting sentimental during an invitation, or promising to do better. The new birth is a supernatural act of God whereby He imparts spiritual life to a sinner who was dead in trespasses and sins. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth” (James 1:18). “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). That is not a figure for self-improvement. That is a miracle. And

until that miracle takes place, the man remains natural no matter how many external adjustments he makes.

This is why all substitutes for the new birth are damnable counterfeits. A denomination may tell a man he was made right by infant baptism. A preacher may tell him he is fine because he repeated a formula without repentance and faith. A religious family may assure him he has always been a Christian because he grew up around the truth. But none of that can replace regeneration. If a man has never been made alive by God, he remains what he was by nature. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Galatians 6:15). The natural man does not need better credentials. He needs a new nature.

## **7. Human Polish Cannot Hide Spiritual Death**

One of the great deceptions of our age is the worship of human polish. If a man is articulate, stylish, calm, successful, and socially impressive, people assume he must possess some authority worth following. But a polished corpse is still a corpse. You can dress it up, perfume it, pose it, and photograph it, but you cannot talk life into it. So it is with the natural man. He may be refined, but refinement is not regeneration. He may be ethical in public, but ethics are not the indwelling Spirit. He may know when to smile, when to soften his voice, and how to appear balanced and moderate, but none of that means he knows God. The world is full of smooth-talking blind men leading eager blind followers.

The Bible warns you not to be dazzled by appearances. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). You and I are often impressed with surfaces. God never is. God is not intimidated by titles or seduced by polish. He sees the heart, the root, the nature, the source. That means the kindly unbeliever, the charming professor, the eloquent religionist, the philanthropic celebrity, and the disciplined moralist may all still be natural men if they lack the life of God. The issue is not whether they sparkle in public. The issue is whether Christ lives in them. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9). That settles it whether the world likes it or not.

So the church must stop confusing social respectability with spiritual reality. Some of the most dangerous men in America are not the loudest pagans but the nicest lost preachers, the most educated blind teachers, and the most impressive unsaved religionists. They have enough Bible to sound safe, enough morals to look stable, and enough confidence to gather a following, but they are strangers to the power of God. And people follow them because they mistake poise for life. The natural man can look remarkably clean while

remaining fundamentally dead. A white glove on a dead hand does not make the hand alive.

The natural man is simply man as he is in Adam, without the new birth, without spiritual life, and without the indwelling Holy Ghost. He may be immoral or moral, crude or polished, secular or religious, ignorant or highly educated, but if he has never been born again, he remains what Paul calls natural. That is the Bible's diagnosis, and it cuts through every false confidence man has built for himself. It tells the drunkard his problem is deeper than bad habits. It tells the scholar his problem is deeper than insufficient information. It tells the churchgoer his problem is deeper than denominational alignment. It tells all of Adam's race that flesh is flesh, and only the Spirit gives life.

That is why this subject matters so much. Once you understand what the natural man is, the confusion starts clearing up. You begin to understand why the world mocks truth, why religion so often opposes the gospel, why human wisdom cannot climb into the deep things of God, and why Christ said, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). The natural man is not spiritually misunderstood. He is spiritually dead. The things of God are spiritually discerned, and he cannot receive them rightly until God changes his condition. That is the issue. Not better branding. Not more polish. Not a sweeter sales pitch. Life.

So let this first essay settle the foundation for everything that follows. The issue with man is not a lack of civilization but a lack of regeneration. Not a lack of education but a lack of illumination. Not a lack of religion but a lack of resurrection life in the soul. And the answer is not for the natural man to admire spiritual truth from a distance. The answer is for him to come to Jesus Christ as a lost sinner, receive the gospel, and be made a new creature by the grace of God. Until then he remains what he was by nature. But in Christ, by the word of God and the Spirit of God, a dead man can live. That is good news worth preaching.

## **2 of 12: The Natural Man Exposed - Why Spiritual Things Look Foolish**

**Main Passage: "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" (1 Corinthians 2:14).**

When Paul says, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him" (1 Corinthians 2:14), he is not giving you a minor observation about a few difficult doctrines. He is giving you a divine diagnosis of the whole fallen race outside of Jesus Christ. The problem is not that the natural man finds one or two Bible passages hard to follow. The problem is that the whole spiritual world, as revealed by God, strikes him as

absurd, unreasonable, exaggerated, offensive, impractical, or embarrassing. He may tolerate some religion as long as it stays sentimental, ceremonial, or socially useful, but when the truth of God confronts him as absolute, holy, final, supernatural, and authoritative, he begins to squirm like a worm on a hot shovel. Why. Because divine truth is not designed to flatter the flesh. It is designed to expose it.

The natural man is offended by spiritual truth because spiritual truth comes from above and judges what is below. It does not take man's side against God. It takes God's side against man. It tells the sinner that he is wrong, not just weak. It tells him he is guilty, not just misunderstood. It tells him he is dead in trespasses and sins, not merely underinformed. It tells him that his righteousness is "as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6), that his wisdom is corrupt, that his heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9), and that his only hope is not self-improvement but the mercy of God through the blood of Jesus Christ. That message does not stroke a man's ego. It knocks his crown off and lays him in the dirt.

That is why this matter goes far beyond intellectual confusion. The natural man does not merely misunderstand the truth by accident. He resists it because it threatens his sovereignty. He wants to rule himself, explain himself, justify himself, and save himself in some form. Spiritual truth tears that whole fantasy to pieces. The cross says he cannot save himself. Grace says he cannot earn favor. Judgment says he will answer to God. Holiness says God does not grade on a curve. Inspiration says God has spoken whether man approves or not. The resurrection says death is not the end and accountability is coming. No wonder the natural man calls spiritual things foolish. He is not reacting to nonsense. He is reacting to the collapse of his own pride.

### **1. The Natural Man Trusts the Wrong Standard**

The first reason spiritual things look foolish to the natural man is because he insists on judging them by the wrong standard. He brings heavenly truth down into the courtroom of fallen human reason and tries to make the infinite answer to the finite. He wants eternal truth to submit to his temporary logic. He wants God to fit inside the measuring devices of his own mind. But "the world by wisdom knew not God" (1 Corinthians 1:21). That verse ought to be nailed over every university entrance in the Western world. Human wisdom may build bridges and balance budgets and design machines, but it cannot by itself climb into the deep things of God.

This is where the natural man goes off the rails. He assumes that if something cannot be weighed, photographed, dissected, or replicated in a laboratory, it is doubtful. He has trained himself to trust only what can be seen, measured, and controlled. But the Bible

says, "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). That does not mean biblical faith is irrational. It means it rests on divine revelation rather than fallen sight. The natural man hates that because it requires him to admit there is a realm beyond his reach and an authority above his own judgment. He would rather sit on the bench and put God on trial.

When a man uses the wrong instrument, he gets the wrong result. You cannot use a yardstick to measure love, a thermometer to measure justice, or a microscope to measure eternity. In the same way, you cannot use natural reason alone to evaluate spiritual truth. The things of God "are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). The natural man tries to read heaven with earthbound eyes, and when he cannot make sense of it, he says the problem must be with the truth. No, sir. The problem is with the reader. A blind man may deny the sun at noon, but his denial does not darken the sky.

## **2. The Cross Humiliates Human Pride**

Nothing looks more foolish to the natural man than the cross of Jesus Christ. Paul says, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:18). Why is it foolishness to them. Because the cross is God's death sentence on human boasting. The cross declares that man is so ruined, so corrupt, so lost, and so guilty that nothing short of the sacrificial death of the Son of God could deal with his sin. That is not the message of self-esteem. That is not the message of self-help. That is the announcement of total moral bankruptcy.

The natural man hates the cross because it leaves him nothing to brag about. He cannot stand at Calvary and boast in his education, his family heritage, his moral record, his social class, his religious routine, or his achievements. The cross levels all men. The polished church member stands beside the drunkard and the prostitute and hears the same verdict. Guilty. Hopeless. Condemned apart from grace. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded" (Romans 3:27). That verse is enough to make the flesh break out in hives. Fallen man wants a religion that leaves room for medals. God gave him a bloody cross that strips him naked.

That is why the natural man tries so hard to improve on the cross. He adds rituals, sacraments, commandments, works, ceremonies, penance, morality, or church membership. Anything but simple faith in the finished work of Christ. Why. Because grace through a crucified Saviour is humiliating to pride. It means God did everything and man contributed nothing except the sin that made Calvary necessary. The natural man would rather climb a ladder than kneel at a cross. He would rather earn a wage than receive a gift. But "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). That sentence has offended more human pride than a thousand thunderclaps.

### **3. Grace Sounds Insulting to the Flesh**

Grace sounds beautiful to a broken sinner who knows he is lost, but it sounds insulting to the natural man who still imagines he deserves something. Grace says God saves the ungodly, not the qualified. Grace says eternal life is freely given, not gradually earned. Grace says salvation is rooted in what Christ did, not in what the sinner promises to do. Romans 4:5 says, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly.” There is enough in that one verse to enrage every religious Pharisee from Rome to Salt Lake to the local community church with the smoke machine and the latte bar. “Him that justifieth the ungodly.” That is offensive to flesh.

The natural man wants a system where he can contribute. He wants to say, “I helped.” He wants to stand before God and point to prayers, moral efforts, denominational loyalty, religious discipline, or personal sacrifice. He wants some part of the spotlight. Grace turns the spotlight entirely on Jesus Christ. Grace says the sinner brought his guilt and Christ brought the righteousness. Grace says the sinner brought his debt and Christ paid it. Grace says the sinner brought his chains and Christ broke them. Grace gives God all the glory and leaves the sinner praising instead of boasting. Naturally, flesh hates that arrangement.

This is why so many religious systems always slide back toward works. Fallen man cannot stand the simplicity of grace because it kills his favorite god, which is himself. He wants to be his own co-saviour. He wants to help God out. He wants a plan he can manage. But Titus 3:5 says, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” The natural man hears that and says it is too easy, too extreme, too narrow, too simple. In reality, it is not too simple for God. It is too humbling for pride. Grace is not foolish. Pride is foolish. Grace just reveals it.

### **4. Eternal Judgment Shatters the Illusion of Control**

The natural man also thinks spiritual truth is foolish because he hates the doctrine of eternal judgment. He can tolerate a god who inspires poetry, decorates holidays, or helps people cope. He cannot tolerate a God who judges sin, records every deed, and promises a final reckoning. Hebrews 9:27 says, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” That verse drops like an axe on the neck of modern man’s fantasies. It tells him that death is not extinction, life is not a game, and morality is not self-defined. He is going to meet God whether he likes the appointment or not.

Why does this look foolish to the natural man. Because judgment strips him of the illusion that he is autonomous. He wants to believe he can write his own rules, reinvent morality, mock righteousness, excuse lust, celebrate rebellion, and then disappear into nothingness. Judgment says otherwise. Judgment says there is a throne above every

throne, a law above every culture, and a Judge above every court. Revelation 20:12 says, “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.” The natural man laughs at that because he cannot bear the thought of answering to anyone higher than himself. But laughter is a poor shield against reality.

This is why men try so hard to domesticate hell, redefine sin, or deny final accountability altogether. They do not reject judgment because there is no evidence of it in Scripture. They reject it because they do not want it to be true. “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Delay is mistaken for denial. Patience is mistaken for indifference. Mercy is mistaken for weakness. The natural man hears about eternal judgment and says, “That is primitive, harsh, fanatical.” No. It is holy. It only sounds fanatical to a race in love with its own sin.

## **5. Holiness Offends the Flesh**

The natural man thinks holiness is foolish because holiness is the direct opposite of everything the flesh admires. The flesh celebrates self-expression, indulgence, emotional freedom, sensuality, applause, convenience, and personal autonomy. Holiness says, “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). The natural man hears that and interprets it as repression, narrowness, extremism, or gloom. He cannot imagine that purity could be beautiful because his tastes have been corrupted. He has trained himself to call poison pleasure and darkness freedom. Naturally, holiness feels foreign to him.

God’s holiness also terrifies the natural man because it reveals how unlike God he really is. Men like a little religion as long as it stays vague, poetic, and non-threatening. But when Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up and heard the seraphim cry, “Holy, holy, holy” (Isaiah 6:3), his reaction was not self-congratulation. He said, “Woe is me! for I am undone” (Isaiah 6:5). The holiness of God does not pat a sinner on the head. It undoes him. It shows him the stain, the corruption, the unclean lips, the inward rot. The natural man hates that exposure, so he prefers a god made in his own image, a permissive deity who never gets in the way of his desires.

That is why biblical holiness is mocked in every age. People laugh at modesty, sobriety, separation, purity, reverence, and the fear of God because those things rebuke their choices. Proverbs 14:9 says, “Fools make a mock at sin.” Notice that carefully. The fool mocks sin because he does not see sin as God sees it. He sees it as entertainment, personality, liberation, or normal human behavior. Holiness makes that whole show look filthy, so the natural man labels holiness itself as foolish. He calls evil good and good evil,

exactly as Isaiah 5:20 warned. He does not do that because he is enlightened. He does it because he is blind.

## **6. The Authority of Scripture Threatens Human Independence**

Another reason spiritual truth looks foolish is because the natural man despises final authority. The Bible does not come to men as a suggestion box. It comes as the word of the living God. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16). That means God has spoken with finality, and man is not free to edit the message to suit modern tastes. The natural man hates that. He wants a book he can critique, not a Book that critiques him. He wants to stand over Scripture with a red pen, not under Scripture with a bowed head.

That is why the world is always trying to reduce the Bible to literature, mythology, religious experience, moral tradition, or evolving community reflection. Anything but revelation. If the Bible is truly the word of God, then man is not the final judge of truth. God is. And that is exactly what the natural man cannot stand. He may be happy to quote the Bible when it seems inspirational, comforting, or useful for public ceremony, but once the Bible condemns his lust, his unbelief, his pride, his false religion, or his rebellion, suddenly it becomes outdated, symbolic, misunderstood, or culturally conditioned. The issue is not evidence. The issue is authority.

Jesus said, "The scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). That is not how the natural man approaches it. He approaches it like a mechanic with a wrench, tightening one verse, removing another, bending a third, and discarding anything that offends current sensibilities. But Psalm 119:89 says, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." It was settled before the natural man was born, and it will still be settled after he is under the ground. He calls that foolish because he wants a moving target. God gave him a Rock. He calls certainty foolish because certainty destroys his little kingdom of private interpretation.

## **7. Spiritual Truth Destroys Self-Glory**

At the bottom of the whole issue lies one great rotten root. Spiritual truth looks foolish to the natural man because spiritual truth takes glory away from man and gives it to God. The natural man wants admiration. He wants significance on his own terms. He wants to feel central, necessary, and impressive. But the Lord says, "My glory will I not give to another" (Isaiah 42:8). That is where the battle really is. Man wants the throne. God is on the throne. Man wants credit. God gets the glory. Man wants to write the story with himself as the hero. Scripture reveals Jesus Christ as the hero, the Saviour, the Judge, the King, and the wisdom of God.

This is why even true doctrines become offensive when they are seen clearly. Election of grace destroys boasting. The cross destroys boasting. Justification by faith destroys boasting. The inspiration of Scripture destroys boasting. The new birth destroys boasting. The judgment seat destroys boasting. The second coming destroys boasting. All roads of biblical truth run through the graveyard of human pride. That is why the natural man does not merely shrug at spiritual things. He resents them. He senses that if those things are true, then he is not the master of his fate, not the captain of his soul, and not the architect of his salvation. He would rather call the truth foolish than surrender his vanity.

Paul asked, “Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (1 Corinthians 1:20). There is the irony. The world calls God’s truth foolish, while God calls the world’s wisdom foolish. One of them is badly mistaken. The natural man thinks he is standing in judgment on divine revelation, but in reality divine revelation is standing in judgment on him. His ridicule does not weaken the truth any more than a barking dog stops the sunrise. He calls the gospel foolish while marching toward a judgment he has already been warned about. He mocks holiness while his own corruption consumes him. He rejects grace while having no other hope. That is not intelligence. That is tragedy.

The natural man does not call spiritual things foolish because those things lack coherence, beauty, power, or truth. He calls them foolish because they contradict everything his fallen nature wants to believe. He wants sight over faith, merit over grace, self-rule over authority, indulgence over holiness, and escape over judgment. Spiritual truth collides with all of that. It exposes his pride, crushes his illusions, strips away his excuses, and declares that he is accountable to a holy God. No wonder he resists it. The light is not the problem. His eyes are.

This means that witnessing and preaching must always remember what the real battle is. You are not merely trying to transfer information into a neutral mind. You are confronting a rebellious heart that loves darkness rather than light because its deeds are evil (John 3:19). The answer, therefore, is not to soften the gospel until the natural man finds it reasonable. The answer is not to repaint the cross in pastel colors and market it as a lifestyle enhancement. The answer is to preach “Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2), trusting the Spirit of God to do what human cleverness never could. The natural man is not argued into life by polished speeches. He must be brought under the convicting power of divine truth.

So the conclusion is plain enough for a child to grasp and sharp enough to cut a theologian in half. Spiritual things look foolish to the natural man because he is natural. He is fallen. He is proud. He is blind. He is self-exalting. He is trained by the world, the flesh, and the devil to distrust what cannot be controlled and despise what humbles him. But once God

saves a man, once the Spirit opens his eyes through the word, what once looked foolish becomes the highest wisdom on earth. The cross becomes glorious. Grace becomes precious. Holiness becomes beautiful. Scripture becomes living bread. Judgment becomes sobering truth. The issue was never that spiritual things were foolish. The issue was that fallen man was.

### **3 of 12: The Natural Man Exposed - The Wisdom of This World**

**Main Passage: “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Corinthians 3:19).**

The phrase “the wisdom of this world” sounds impressive until you hold it up beside the word of God and watch it fall apart like wet cardboard. Men build monuments to their own intelligence, crown one another with academic titles, and speak as though education, philosophy, psychology, and cultural sophistication have somehow elevated mankind into a higher species. But the Holy Ghost cuts through that whole performance with one sentence: “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Corinthians 3:19). That is not poetic exaggeration. That is a divine verdict. God is not dazzled by men who can explain atoms while denying Adam, or who can classify personality traits while remaining blind to sin, grace, and judgment. The Lord is not impressed with a civilization that can send signals across the planet and still cannot answer the most basic question a dying man asks, which is, “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30).

This world has always overestimated its own brainpower. Ever since the fall, man has tried to replace revelation with speculation, obedience with analysis, and fear of God with confidence in self. He wants knowledge without holiness, insight without submission, and wisdom without the God who is wisdom. That is why the world’s great systems always end up circling the same drain. One philosopher contradicts another. One expert revises the last expert. One generation laughs at what the previous generation called settled science, settled ethics, or settled psychology. Men keep changing the vocabulary while the disease stays the same. “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:22). There is the story of civilization in one verse. A proud fool can wear a lab coat, a robe, a suit, or a graduation hood, but the costume does not change the condition.

The real issue is not whether worldly wisdom can produce results in earthly matters. Of course it can. Men can learn how to build roads, write software, perform surgery, calculate trajectories, and structure economies. Nobody with any sense denies that human beings can achieve remarkable things on a horizontal level. The issue is that none of that

achievement can carry a sinner one inch closer to spiritual life unless God reveals the truth and the sinner receives it by faith. The world's wisdom may handle mechanics, markets, and medicine, but it collapses when asked to define righteousness, uncover the root of evil, explain the purpose of history, or reconcile a guilty soul to a holy God. That is where the mask comes off. A man can be brilliant in the laboratory and still be blind in the sanctuary. He can be a genius with formulas and a fool before the throne. That is the subject before us here.

### **1. The Wisdom of This World Has the Wrong Starting Point**

Every false system begins by starting in the wrong place. The wisdom of this world begins with man, not God. It begins with the creature instead of the Creator, with observation instead of revelation, with the mind of the sinner instead of the word of the Lord. That is why its conclusions are warped before it ever gets moving. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10). Notice that word "beginning." If you do not start with the fear of the Lord, you have not started right. You may start with curiosity, data, reason, experience, or consensus, but if God is left out of the foundation, the whole structure leans before the second floor is framed.

The world hates that because it wants autonomy. It wants to think without bowing, study without obeying, and reason without answering to anybody higher than itself. But the very first step toward real wisdom is not self-expression. It is reverence. It is humility. It is the recognition that man is not the center, not the measure, and not the standard. "In thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:9). That means light is not generated from below. It comes from above. The world reverses that order. It acts as though man shines the flashlight upward to inspect God. The Bible shows God shining the light downward so man can see anything at all.

Once the starting point is wrong, the whole process becomes an exercise in polished confusion. If a man begins with the assumption that his own mind is final authority, then every doctrine that humbles him will look unreasonable. The cross will look primitive, grace will look offensive, holiness will look restrictive, and Scripture will look dogmatic. Why. Because he began with man enthroned. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." The wisdom of this world always "seemeth right" because it flatters fallen nature. But being flattering and being true are not the same thing.

### **2. Worldly Wisdom Can Function Earthly While Failing Eternally**

The world's wisdom can produce astonishing earthly results. Men can invent machines that fly, instruments that detect disease, systems that process information at lightning speed,

and tools that would have looked supernatural a hundred years ago. That is not the issue. The issue is that practical success in earthly matters can create the illusion that man is competent in all matters. He is not. A man may know how to transplant an organ and still not know how to cleanse a conscience. He may know how to predict weather patterns and still be unable to explain why his own heart lusts, lies, and rebels against God. He may know how to manage an empire and still die like a fool.

That is why the Bible never lets earthly competence become spiritual authority. Jesus said, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36). There is the question worldly wisdom cannot answer honestly. It can tell you how to gain the world. It cannot tell you how to keep your soul. It can advise on markets, policy, behavior, branding, and productivity, but when the hearse pulls up and the body goes cold, all the world’s charts and theories suddenly look like children’s toys in a funeral home. The issue then is not whether the man was informed. The issue is whether he was prepared.

The tragedy is that success in the lower realm often hardens men against truth in the higher realm. Because they have mastered something visible, they assume they are also qualified to judge what is invisible. Because they can manipulate nature, they imagine they can evaluate God. Because they can solve temporal problems, they assume the Bible must submit to their scrutiny. That is madness. It is like a mechanic trying to critique a symphony with a socket wrench. Earthly skill is real in its place, but it is no passport into the deep things of God. “Canst thou by searching find out God?” (Job 11:7). The answer is no. Not by searching alone. Not by worldly methods. Not by carnal brilliance.

### **3. Philosophy Without Revelation Ends in Vanity**

Philosophy is man trying to climb into heaven on a ladder made of abstractions. It asks real questions, but without revelation it never reaches real certainty. It circles, speculates, argues, revises, and debates, but it cannot pierce the veil. Paul warned the Colossians, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit” (Colossians 2:8). He did not say every use of reason is wrong. He said philosophy, detached from Christ and grounded in “the tradition of men,” becomes a spoilage agent. It robs rather than enriches. It empties instead of filling.

The philosophers in Athens were proof enough. Acts 17 shows a city full of intellectual curiosity, debate, novelty, and religious speculation. They “spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). That is the academic spirit in a nutshell. Always a new theory, a new angle, a new framework, a new critique, a new reconsideration. But when Paul preached Jesus and the resurrection, many mocked (Acts

17:32). Why. Because philosophy loves questions more than it loves submission. It likes ideas that keep the mind entertained, but it stumbles when truth arrives with authority and demands repentance.

The world still does the same thing. It praises the man who can question everything but despises the man who believes God has spoken clearly. It loves the intellectual who keeps every door open and suspects the preacher who closes the door on error with Scripture. But the Bible says, “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3), and that “whom” is Christ, not Plato, not Kant, not Freud, not the latest cultural theorist in designer glasses explaining why civilization is a social construct. Philosophy without revelation may sound deep, but most of it is just fog with footnotes.

#### **4. Education Cannot Regenerate a Dead Soul**

Education is useful in its place, but it is helpless where the soul is concerned. A school can train memory, sharpen reasoning, and transmit information. It cannot create spiritual life. That is why the most educated nations in history have often been as morally rotten and spiritually blind as any barbarian tribe that ever danced around an idol. Learning facts is not the same as knowing truth. Memorizing arguments is not the same as having discernment. A man can quote Scripture in Greek and Hebrew and still miss Christ altogether. Jesus told the scholars of His day, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29). Imagine telling trained religionists that they did not know the Scriptures. But there it is.

The problem is not that knowledge has no value. The problem is that knowledge puffs up when it is severed from humility before God. “Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth” (1 Corinthians 8:1). Worldly education often creates a man who is more skilled at disguising his blindness. He learns how to question miracles with sophistication, dismiss judgment with nuance, and sneer at the cross with academic politeness. The village atheist may be rude and obvious. The educated unbeliever can be far more dangerous because his rebellion comes with vocabulary, footnotes, and institutional approval.

This is why seminaries, colleges, and universities can become factories of unbelief when they elevate criticism over faith and speculation over submission. A man goes in with a Bible and comes out doubting whether Moses wrote Moses, Isaiah wrote Isaiah, Daniel wrote Daniel, or whether Christ meant what He said. That is not education. That is corrosion. “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7) describes a whole civilization drunk on information and starving for wisdom. A dead soul does not need a more expensive bookshelf. It needs resurrection power.

#### **5. Psychology Cannot Diagnose Sin Correctly**

One of the great idols of the modern age is psychology, especially when it pretends to explain the human condition without reference to sin, God, guilt, judgment, or redemption. Psychology in its secular forms often renames rebellion as dysfunction, lust as need, pride as self-protection, and guilt as unhealthy shame. It studies behavior and emotion while refusing the Bible's diagnosis of the heart. But the Lord says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). That is the real starting point for understanding man. Not self-esteem. Not self-actualization. Deceitful and desperately wicked.

Now that does not mean every observation about the mind or behavior is worthless. Men can notice patterns, trauma, habits, and effects. The problem comes when those observations are turned into a godless replacement for biblical truth. Once sin is redefined away, the cure disappears with it. If man's problem is merely maladjustment, then Christ is reduced to a therapeutic accessory. If man's problem is merely wounds, then the cross becomes a sentimental symbol instead of a necessary atonement. If guilt is only internal discomfort, then repentance becomes unnecessary. That whole system collapses under the weight of its own blindness.

The wisdom of this world likes psychology because it allows man to discuss himself endlessly without ever repenting. He can analyze his childhood, his patterns, his triggers, his insecurities, his attachment style, and his environment, all while never once admitting, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned" (Psalm 51:4). But until a man sees that his greatest problem is not merely what happened to him but what he is before God, he has not begun to understand himself. Psychology can sometimes describe symptoms. It cannot provide the new birth. It cannot wash away sin. It cannot justify the ungodly. It cannot impart the mind of Christ.

## **6. Cultural Sophistication Is Often Refined Darkness**

The world loves sophistication because sophistication gives sin better manners. A crude pagan and a polished pagan are still pagans. One may shout his rebellion, the other may serve it on fine china with violin music in the background. But refinement does not sanctify darkness. In fact, refined darkness is often more dangerous because it is easier to admire. Men think if something is artistic, prestigious, or culturally elevated, it must be somehow closer to the truth. Not so. Hell has excellent taste in architecture when it wants to. Satan can wear religious beauty when it helps him deceive.

Paul said that unbelieving minds are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4:18). Notice that this blindness can exist in people who are socially impressive. A symphony hall may contain

blind hearts. A literary circle may contain blind hearts. A university faculty may contain blind hearts. A fashionable church with eloquent sermons and tasteful décor may contain blind hearts. Cultural sophistication is no evidence of spiritual life. The devil is not bothered by polished unbelief. He sponsors plenty of it.

This is why the world often celebrates minds that are darkened toward God. It calls them brilliant because they can deconstruct moral certainty, question biblical authority, and make rebellion sound humane. It praises men who sneer at Scripture and calls them courageous. It applauds women who despise God's order and calls them liberated. It rewards artists, thinkers, and speakers who baptize corruption in beautiful language. But the Bible says, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil" (Isaiah 5:20). Sophistication can perfume decay, but it cannot remove the stench from God's nostrils.

## **7. God's Wisdom Centers in Christ, Not in Man**

After exposing the bankruptcy of worldly wisdom, the Bible points us to the real source of wisdom, and it is not man thinking harder. It is Christ revealed by God. Paul wrote, "But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24). There is the great dividing line. The world searches for wisdom in systems, methods, schools, theories, and expert classes. God locates wisdom in a Person. Not in a think tank. Not in an institution. In Jesus Christ.

That changes everything. Real wisdom is not merely knowing facts. It is knowing God through His Son and then seeing everything else in light of that truth. Once Christ is central, sin makes sense, righteousness makes sense, history makes sense, suffering makes sense, judgment makes sense, and salvation makes sense. Without Christ, men juggle fragments and call the mess a worldview. With Christ, the whole structure comes into focus. That is why Paul said, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). He was not being anti-intellectual. He was putting first things first. If you miss Christ, you miss the center of truth.

The natural man hates that because Christ destroys man's illusions of intellectual independence. If Christ is the wisdom of God, then the world's proud systems must bow or be broken. If Christ is truth, then fashionable falsehood is still falsehood no matter how many experts endorse it. If Christ is the Judge, then the applauded minds of this age will answer just like everybody else. That is why the wisdom of God looks so offensive to this world. It will not share the stage with human pride. It says plainly, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31). And there is nothing the flesh hates more than being told to step out of the spotlight.

The wisdom of this world is a glittering fraud when it steps outside its earthly lane and starts speaking with authority about eternal things. It can function in technology, medicine, logistics, and countless practical matters, but it cannot redeem, cannot regenerate, cannot justify, cannot sanctify, and cannot reveal the deep things of God. It stumbles over sin, misdefines righteousness, mocks the cross, resists grace, and minimizes judgment. Men boast in their brilliance while remaining blind to the one truth that matters most, which is the truth of God in Jesus Christ. That is why Scripture says, “If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise” (1 Corinthians 3:18).

The world celebrates minds that are darkened toward God because fallen man would rather admire intelligence than submit to holiness. He would rather quote experts than fear the Lord. He would rather study himself than repent. He would rather debate Christ than bow before Him. But all the celebrated wisdom of this age will look like dust when men stand before the judgment seat and discover that cleverness cannot pardon guilt and education cannot raise the dead. On that day the polished fool and the plain fool will both be judged by the same righteous Lord.

So the answer is not anti-intellectualism. The answer is submission to revelation. The answer is not to despise learning but to put learning under the authority of Scripture. The answer is not to shut off the mind but to have the mind renewed by truth. The answer is Christ. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10), and outside that fear all the world’s libraries eventually become towers of Babel with updated bindings. Let the world crown its bright rebels and celebrate its blind guides. The child of God knows better. Real wisdom comes down from above, and it begins by taking off the crown from man’s head and laying it at the feet of Jesus Christ.

#### **4 of 12: The Natural Man Exposed - Religion Without the Holy Ghost**

**Main Passage: “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:5).**

There are few things more dangerous on this earth than religion without the Holy Ghost. Open unbelief is bad enough. A drunk in a ditch is a sad sight. A blasphemer mocking God in public is a wicked sight. But a lost man dressed up in religion is often far more dangerous than either one, because he has enough Bible talk to sound safe, enough morality to look respectable, enough ceremony to impress the crowd, and enough confidence to deceive both himself and others. He can sit in a church, carry a Bible, quote verses, sing hymns, say “amen,” speak about prayer, and even teach a Sunday school class while being just as

dead in trespasses and sins as the pagan who has never darkened a church door. The difference is that the pagan often knows he is outside, while the religious natural man thinks he is already in.

That is the burden of this study. The natural man is not always found in the bar, the brothel, or the crack house. Sometimes he is found in the choir loft, the seminary classroom, the deacon board, the religious podcast, the pulpit, or the pew. He is the man who handles holy things without possessing holy life. He is the man who knows the language of faith but not the Author of faith. He is the man who can discuss doctrine while remaining a stranger to regeneration. He has learned the motions, memorized the vocabulary, and adopted the customs, but the Spirit of God has never made him alive. He has a form of godliness, but the power is missing. He has the shell without the seed, the lamp without the oil, the religion without the Redeemer.

The Lord Jesus Christ met this kind of man constantly, and He was harder on him than He was on many openly sinful people. He could deal tenderly with publicans, harlots, and broken sinners who knew they were sick, but when He dealt with proud religionists who hid behind their piety while rejecting the truth, He came at them like a sword. He called them “blind guides” (Matthew 23:16), “whited sepulchres” (Matthew 23:27), and “hypocrites” again and again. Why. Because religion in the flesh gives a man confidence without conversion. It inoculates him against the gospel. It lets him mistake familiarity with God-talk for fellowship with God. It lets him substitute ritual for reality. That kind of deception can damn a man in a church suit just as thoroughly as open rebellion can damn a man in a tavern stool.

### **1. A Form of Godliness Is Not the Power of God**

Paul warned Timothy about men “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3:5). Notice the wording carefully. He did not say they lacked a form. They had one. They looked the part. They sounded the part. They fit the outline. They had the external shape of religion. But the power was missing. That means the form by itself can deceive. A form can be copied. A form can be rehearsed. A form can be inherited from family, culture, and church tradition. But the power of God cannot be faked indefinitely. The new birth is supernatural. The indwelling Holy Ghost is real. Spiritual life is not a costume.

That is why a man can learn how to do religion without ever meeting the living God. He can be taught when to stand, when to sit, when to bow his head, when to say the right phrase, and how to sound reverent. He can be raised around Scripture and become fluent in Christian vocabulary. He can talk about grace, salvation, holiness, prayer, ministry, worship, and doctrine while never once having passed from death unto life. This is what

makes dead religion so treacherous. It imitates life just enough to keep a sinner asleep. It gives him a religious pulse without the life of God in his soul.

The Bible never tells you to trust the form. It tells you to look for the reality. Romans 8:9 says, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." That verse does not ask whether a man was baptized, confirmed, ordained, voted in, or admired by the congregation. It asks whether he has the Spirit of Christ. The issue is not whether he knows religious language. The issue is whether God lives in him. The issue is not whether he has a title. The issue is whether he has life. A dead man wearing a choir robe is still dead. A dead man holding a Bible is still dead. A dead man behind a pulpit is still dead.

## **2. Nicodemus Proves Religion Is Not Enough**

If anybody in John chapter 3 had looked safe, it was Nicodemus. He was "a man of the Pharisees" and "a ruler of the Jews" (John 3:1). That means he was religious, educated, respected, and influential. He was not some rough heathen stumbling in from the streets. He was a trained religionist with credentials. Yet the Lord did not compliment him on his sincerity and tell him to keep climbing. Jesus looked that religious leader in the face and said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). There goes the whole lie that religion itself can bring a man into God's kingdom.

Nicodemus had the law, the tradition, the ceremonies, the respect of men, and the reputation of a teacher. But Christ cut through all of it and went straight to the one thing he did not have. Life from above. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). Flesh can become religious flesh, polished flesh, disciplined flesh, scholarly flesh, or devout flesh, but it is still flesh. It does not transform into spirit by church involvement. It does not regenerate itself through tradition. Flesh needs a miracle. It needs birth from above. That is why the religious natural man is still a natural man.

And notice something else. Nicodemus was confused by the very truth he should have grasped if religion were enough. He asked, "How can these things be?" (John 3:9). There he sat, a master in Israel, baffled by the new birth. That is exactly the problem with religion without the Holy Ghost. A man may know the mechanics of religious life and still be a stranger to spiritual life. He may know the map of the temple and never find the doorway into life. He may be able to discuss Moses and miss the Messiah. He may stand as a teacher and still need to be taught the first principle of entrance into the kingdom of God.

## **3. The Pharisees Had Bible Knowledge Without Bible Life**

The Pharisees were experts in religious appearance. They knew how to be seen of men. They prayed in public places, fasted with solemn faces, and tithed down to the herbs in the

kitchen garden. On paper they looked like spiritual giants. But the Lord Jesus tore the mask off. He said, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matthew 15:8). There is the essence of religion without the Holy Ghost. Mouth near. Heart far. Lips active. Life absent. Performance polished. Soul dead.

In Matthew 23 the Lord unloads on those men with a force that should make every religious hypocrite shake in his shoes. He calls them “blind guides” (Matthew 23:16). He says they are “like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones” (Matthew 23:27). That is religion in the flesh described by the Son of God Himself. Outward beauty. Inward death. Clean outside. Rot inside. The people admired them because man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord saw the corpse under the white paint.

What made them so dangerous was not merely that they were lost. It was that they were lost while claiming to be the guardians of truth. They shut up the kingdom of heaven against men. “For ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in” (Matthew 23:13). Dead religion does not just damn the man who holds it. It becomes a stumbling block for others. The Pharisee is not content to go blind himself. He wants a following. He wants authority. He wants disciples. That is why religion without the Holy Ghost is often more dangerous than open vice. Vice may disgust the sinner. False piety may deceive him.

#### **4. Priests and Teachers Can Be Lost Men**

One of the most sobering facts in Scripture is that men who handle sacred things can still be strangers to God. The Jewish priests oversaw sacrifices, temple order, sacred duties, and religious instruction, yet many of them stood opposed to the very Christ to whom their whole system pointed. Caiaphas held the high priest’s office and still took part in the plot against the Son of God. The chief priests did not merely misunderstand Jesus. They envied Him, opposed Him, and helped deliver Him to death. A man can stand close to holy things and still be spiritually dead.

The same principle shows up in the New Testament warnings about false teachers. Peter says, “There shall be false teachers among you” (2 Peter 2:1). Not merely outside you. Among you. Paul warned the Ephesian elders that “grievous wolves” would enter in, and even “of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things” (Acts 20:29-30). That is terrifying if you let it sink in. Men can rise in positions of instruction, authority, and trust while lacking the Spirit of God. They may know enough truth to sound dangerous. They may

use the right words with the wrong meaning. They may preach on grace while never having tasted it, or teach on holiness while secretly loving the world.

That is why a title never proves a testimony. “Rabbi” did not prove salvation. “Priest” did not prove salvation. “Pastor,” “teacher,” “bishop,” and “doctor” do not prove salvation. The test is life. The test is fruit. The test is truth received and lived under the power of the Holy Ghost. A man can learn to preach and never learn to pray. He can develop sermons and never know the Shepherd. He can instruct others and still be “a castaway” (1 Corinthians 9:27) if his life remains untouched by the grace he proclaims. Religion without the Holy Ghost is especially chilling when it climbs the platform and borrows a microphone.

### **5. Modern Churchgoers Can Know the Language and Miss the Life**

This danger is not locked up in ancient Israel or first-century Judaism. It is sitting in churches every Sunday morning. There are people who know when to say “praise the Lord,” when to nod during a sermon, how to carry a Bible, how to post a verse online, and how to sound conservative, spiritual, and respectable, but they have never been born again. They have grown up around the things of God the way a mechanic’s child grows up around tools. The tools are familiar, but familiarity is not life. The sound of religion is not the same as the presence of God.

Some have trusted a ceremony. Some have trusted a childhood profession that produced no evidence of life. Some have trusted a denomination, a family heritage, or a moment of emotion. Some have trusted their clean habits and moral image. Others are active in ministry and think activity proves spirituality. But the Lord said, “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?” (Matthew 7:22). Those people had religious language and religious works. Yet He says, “I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23). That is one of the most frightening passages in the Bible because it proves that doing religious things in Christ’s name is not the same as belonging to Christ.

The religious natural man often looks better than the man who is openly profane. He may be easier to live with, more disciplined, more conservative, and more outwardly decent. But if he has never been regenerated, he is still dead. He may smell cleaner than the prodigal in the pigpen, but he is just as much in need of grace. In Luke 15 the elder brother stayed close to the house and still had no understanding of the father’s heart. That fellow is sitting in churches by the thousands. He has not run off into scandal, but pride, resentment, self-righteousness, and spiritual deadness are rotting him from the inside out.

### **6. Religion in the Flesh Gives Confidence Without Conversion**

This is what makes dead religion so dangerous. It gives a man confidence without conversion. He feels secure because he is not like the openly wicked. He has a comparison

game that keeps him comfortable. He can point to the drunk, the addict, the fornicator, the atheist, and the criminal and say, “I thank thee, that I am not as other men are” (Luke 18:11). That was the Pharisee’s prayer, and it was a rotten prayer from a rotten heart. Why. Because it rested on self-righteousness. It used outward performance as proof of inward acceptance with God. The man went home unjustified.

The publican, on the other hand, stood afar off and cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13). He had no religious résumé to wave around. He had no confidence in his own record. And Jesus said, “this man went down to his house justified rather than the other” (Luke 18:14). There is the whole thing in a nutshell. The fleshly religionist had confidence, but no conversion. The broken sinner had no confidence in himself and found mercy in God. Religion in the flesh builds a false shelter. It keeps a man from fleeing to Christ because he thinks he already has what only Christ can give.

That is why the devil loves dead religion. He does not care whether a man is damned in a nightclub or damned in a pew as long as he stays damned. In fact, a religious lost man can be more useful to Satan because he can recruit others into the same deception. He can make people feel safe in their unregenerate condition. He can normalize lifeless religion, preach around the new birth, and train people to settle for ceremony instead of Christ. That is not a harmless mistake. That is soul poison. It is hell wearing church clothes.

## **7. The Holy Ghost Makes the Difference**

The issue, then, is not whether a man has religion. The issue is whether he has the Holy Ghost. Romans 8:14 says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Verse 16 says, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” The Christian life is not mere institutional membership. It is not mere theological literacy. It is not a hobby in sacred vocabulary. It is life in the Spirit. It is the inward witness of God, the new birth, the opening of the eyes, the changing of the heart, and the presence of divine life where there was once death.

This does not mean every true believer is mature, eloquent, or highly trained. Thank God it does not. The Holy Ghost is not given as a reward for academic performance. He is given through faith in Jesus Christ. “Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (Galatians 3:2). The answer is plain. The Spirit is received through faith. And when He comes in, He brings life. He gives hunger for the word, conviction about sin, light on Scripture, love for Christ, and a reality that no amount of empty religion can manufacture. A man may still have much to learn, but he is no longer dead.

That is why the new birth is the great dividing line. Without the Holy Ghost, religion is a corpse with makeup on it. With the Holy Ghost, even a trembling new convert has more

spiritual reality than a cathedral full of polished unbelievers. The power is not in the outfit, the architecture, the ritual, or the pedigree. The power is in God. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6). If the Spirit of God has never made a man alive, then no amount of religious polish can hide the fact that he remains what he always was by nature. Flesh.

Religion without the Holy Ghost is one of the devil’s finest counterfeits because it looks so close to the real thing on the outside while being utterly dead on the inside. It can quote the verses, copy the language, borrow the dress code, perform the rituals, and mimic the motions of faith, but it cannot produce life. It cannot create the new birth. It cannot wash away sin. It cannot unite a soul to Jesus Christ. It can only decorate death and teach the dead how to act alive long enough to deceive themselves and one another.

That is why the Lord was so severe with the Pharisees and so tender with broken sinners. Broken sinners know they need help. Religious hypocrites think they are the help. Open unbelief may be easier to confront because at least it is visible. Dead religion hides behind sacred language and holy appearances. It gives men false assurance, trains them to trust externals, and keeps them from seeing their desperate need for regeneration. A man can wear a suit, carry a Bible, quote the Psalms, and still die lost if the Spirit of God has never quickened him.

So the warning must be plain. Do not trust your form. Do not trust your title. Do not trust your family history, your church attendance, your doctrinal vocabulary, your outward morality, or your ministry involvement. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5). The question is not whether you can talk about God. The question is whether God has given you life. The question is not whether you know the language of faith. The question is whether you know Christ. The natural man can be religious, but he is still natural until the Holy Ghost makes him alive. And when God does that, religion in the flesh gives way to reality in Christ.

### **5 of 12: The Natural Man Exposed - Blindness in High Places**

**Main Passage: “If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matthew 15:14).**

One of the most dangerous lies ever believed by the human race is the idea that position produces perception. Men assume that if someone has a title, a platform, a robe, a desk, a degree, a following, or a seal from some institution, then he must surely see clearly. But the Bible does not teach that. The Bible teaches that a man can sit in a palace, a courtroom, a

senate chamber, a classroom, a pulpit, or a religious council and still be blind as a cave bat when it comes to the truth of God. Spiritual sight does not come from influence. It does not come from office. It does not come from applause. It does not come from academic recognition. It comes from the Spirit of God opening the eyes through the word of God. Without that, the man may lead millions and still not know where he is going.

This is why the world is constantly being shaped by blind men in high places. Some of them are rulers. Some are scholars. Some are religious authorities. Some are experts, commentators, educators, philosophers, and public intellectuals. The crowd assumes they must know better because they speak with confidence and stand in places of importance. But confidence is not sight. A title is not discernment. An office is not illumination. A microphone is not revelation. The scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat and rejected Moses' God standing before them in flesh. Pontius Pilate presided over a Roman judgment seat and could not recognize Truth when Truth answered him face to face. Festus sat in authority and called the apostle mad. Agrippa heard one of the clearest gospel presentations in the New Testament and walked away almost persuaded but still outside the kingdom. That is blindness in high places.

The tragedy is not merely that these men are blind themselves. The tragedy is that they influence others while blind. They shape law, culture, education, religion, and public thought while remaining strangers to spiritual reality. One blind judge affects a province. One blind teacher affects a generation. One blind preacher affects a congregation. One blind scholar affects a field of study. One blind ruler affects a nation. So this essay has to expose the myth that influence equals insight. It does not. In fact, power without truth often hardens blindness, because a man who is constantly admired begins to think he must be right. That is why many of the most influential men in history have been natural men who mistook darkness for enlightenment and then trained others to do the same.

### **1. Titles Do Not Give Spiritual Sight**

The natural man loves titles because titles help him hide behind borrowed authority. Men assume that if someone is called doctor, professor, bishop, governor, rabbi, senator, philosopher, or expert, then he must have special clarity. But the Lord never taught that. Jesus said of the scribes and Pharisees, "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind" (Matthew 15:14). Notice that carefully. Those men were leaders. They had recognition. They had institutional legitimacy. They had influence. And Christ still called them blind. That alone should cure any Christian of title worship.

A title can mark a function, but it cannot create life. It can indicate position, but it cannot produce revelation. A man may be called a teacher and still not know the Teacher. He may

be called a shepherd and still not know the Chief Shepherd. He may be called a ruler and still not know the King. The Jews had rabbis, priests, and lawyers who were trained in the law, but when the Messiah showed up they were threatened, offended, and furious. Why. Because outward office is no guarantee of inward illumination. A brass nameplate on a door cannot open a blind heart.

This matters because the crowd is easily impressed by credentials. People are often more willing to believe a blind authority than a plain Bible. They think a diploma outweighs a verse, a committee outweighs Scripture, and a consensus of scholars outweighs the testimony of God. But “the LORD seeth not as man seeth” (1 Samuel 16:7). Man gets hypnotized by titles. God looks for truth in the inward parts. If the Spirit of God has not opened a man’s eyes, all the honorifics in the world cannot help him see. He may sound official while heading for a ditch.

## **2. Pilate Had Authority but Not Truth**

Pontius Pilate is one of the clearest examples in history of blindness in high places. Here was a Roman governor, a man clothed in civil authority, empowered to judge, command, and pronounce sentence. He sat in a literal judgment seat. Yet in the greatest trial in history, the man on the bench was more blind than the Prisoner before him. Jesus said, “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth” (John 18:37). Pilate answered with that famous line, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). There is the wisdom of this world in one sentence. Truth standing in front of him, and he talks like a man at a symposium.

Pilate’s blindness was not intellectual lack. It was moral cowardice wrapped in political calculation. He knew Christ was innocent. The text says he knew that “for envy they had delivered him” (Matthew 27:18). He tried various maneuvers to avoid the issue. He sent Jesus to Herod. He offered Barabbas as an alternative. He symbolically washed his hands. But washing your hands in a basin does not cleanse your soul before God. Pilate had enough light to act rightly, but he loved his position more than the truth. That is the blindness of power. A man can see enough to know he is doing wrong and still choose darkness to preserve his standing.

How many men since then have followed Pilate’s path. They sit in offices, command institutions, and make judgments affecting thousands, yet when truth presses on their conscience they ask, “What is truth?” Not because truth is unavailable, but because truth is inconvenient. Pilate is the patron saint of respectable compromise. He represents every leader who knows better but caves for political survival. And that blindness does not stay private. One cowardly ruler condemned the Lord of glory and helped seal one of the

blackest acts in human history. High office did not produce sight. It magnified the consequences of blindness.

### **3. Festus Heard the Gospel and Called It Madness**

Festus stands as another monument to blind leadership. In Acts 26 the apostle Paul delivers a clear, powerful, reasoned testimony before rulers. He speaks of the heavenly vision, the resurrection, repentance, and the fulfillment of Moses and the prophets. It is not gibberish. It is not emotional chaos. It is sober truth laid out before an educated official. Yet Festus interrupts with, “Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad” (Acts 26:24). There is the reaction of worldly authority to spiritual light. When the natural man cannot explain truth, he pathologizes it.

Notice the irony. Festus thought Paul was the irrational one. Paul was the sane man in the room. Festus was the blind man calling sight madness. Paul answered, “I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness” (Acts 26:25). That is exactly what spiritual truth always is. Truth and soberness. But to a mind trained only by worldly categories, resurrection sounds like delusion, prophecy sounds like fantasy, and divine commission sounds like obsession. Festus was a ruler, but he had no category for truth from above. So he interpreted spiritual clarity as mental imbalance.

That still happens constantly. Men in high places hear preaching on sin, judgment, salvation, and eternal truth and react as though Bible believers are unstable fanatics. Why. Because the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. When he occupies a high office, his blindness often comes dressed in official language. He will call evil health, rebellion liberation, and truth extremism. He will use the vocabulary of moderation to dismiss what God has plainly said. Festus could preside over hearings and manage legal procedure, but when faced with apostolic truth, he exposed himself as spiritually clueless.

### **4. Agrippa Came Close but Stayed Blind**

King Agrippa is one of the saddest cases in Scripture because he did not react with the open contempt of Festus or the cowardice of Pilate. He came close. He listened. He followed Paul’s reasoning. He knew the prophets. Paul said, “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest” (Acts 26:27). Agrippa responded, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28). Almost. That word has probably dragged more souls into hell than open profanity. Almost saved is lost. Almost persuaded is still outside. Almost believing still dies without Christ.

Agrippa had knowledge. He had exposure. He had access to truth. He was not a barbarian hearing the gospel for the first time with no biblical background. He knew enough to feel the force of Paul’s argument. Yet he stopped short. Why. Because nearness to truth is not

the same as surrender to truth. A man may appreciate preaching, admire clarity, respect the Bible, and even be emotionally moved, yet still remain blind in the decisive moment because pride, reputation, pleasure, or fear keeps him from bowing the knee. Agrippa stands for every influential man who gets within arm's reach of the kingdom and still backs away.

This kind of blindness is especially deceptive because it looks thoughtful and civilized. Agrippa was not foaming at the mouth. He was not openly mocking. He was considering. But hell is full of considerate men who never came in. The devil does not care whether a man rejects Christ violently or politely as long as he rejects Him. Agrippa had status, education, and access, but he lacked the one thing necessary. Conversion. That is why you must never confuse proximity to truth with possession of truth. A king on a platform can be as lost as a thief in a gutter. High birth and courtly manners do not create spiritual sight.

### **5. The Philosophers of Athens Mistook Curiosity for Wisdom**

Acts 17 gives you a whole city drunk on intellectual curiosity. Athens was filled with philosophers, debaters, and cultured thinkers. The Epicureans and Stoicks encountered Paul and brought him to the Areopagus to hear this “new doctrine” (Acts 17:19). The text says, “all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). That is academia without repentance. Always chasing novelty, never submitting to final truth. Always discussing, never kneeling.

Paul preached the true God, man's accountability, repentance, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And how did the guardians of sophisticated thought respond. “And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked” (Acts 17:32). There it is. Refined blindness. Educated darkness. Men celebrated for their thought life mocking the very truth that could save them. They were not lacking intelligence in the ordinary sense. They were lacking light. Their culture had sharpened their vocabulary but not awakened their souls. Their minds were active, but their hearts were darkened.

That spirit is everywhere today. The modern world mistakes curiosity for wisdom and analysis for insight. Men think because they can keep discussion open indefinitely, they are somehow profound. But the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, not endless fascination with ideas. A man may know every argument on all sides and still die in his sins. Athens shows that a civilization can become highly articulate and remain spiritually infantile. The philosophers heard resurrection and mocked. And many of their descendants now sit on campuses and in editorial rooms doing the very same thing with better lighting and more expensive jackets.

## **6. The Scribes and Pharisees Were Experts in Darkness**

If any group should have recognized Jesus Christ, it was the scribes and Pharisees. They had the Scriptures. They copied the text. They studied the law. They taught the people. They knew the promises, the patterns, the prophecies, and the vocabulary. Yet when Christ came, they opposed Him at nearly every turn. Jesus said, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29). Imagine telling professional Bible men that they did not know the Scriptures. But the Lord was right. They knew the letters and missed the life.

Their blindness was made worse by their status. Because they were respected, they assumed they were safe. Because they were followed, they assumed they were right. Because they were trained, they assumed they were authoritative. Pride turned their learning into a weapon against the truth. They searched the Scriptures but would not come to Christ that they might have life (John 5:39-40). That is the disaster of blind scholarship. A man can handle the text, analyze the text, debate the text, and still refuse the Person to whom the text points. When that happens, education becomes camouflage for unbelief.

The Lord called them “blind guides” repeatedly because they were not merely blind themselves. They were leading others while blind. That is the horror of the thing. “Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte” (Matthew 23:15). They were active, zealous, organized, committed, and dead wrong. And when religious blindness gets institutional power, it can persecute truth with a clean conscience. The Pharisees thought they were defending God while fighting God manifest in the flesh. That ought to terrify every preacher, scholar, and church leader who thinks knowing the system is the same as knowing the Saviour.

## **7. Influence Magnifies Blindness When There Is No New Birth**

One blind man can hurt himself. A blind man in high office can damage multitudes. That is why blindness in high places is so serious. Leaders shape thought. Teachers shape minds. Rulers shape law. Scholars shape frameworks. Preachers shape consciences. If those people are natural men, then their blindness is not confined to their own souls. It spreads through policy, pulpits, classrooms, publishing, and public discourse. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Galatians 5:9). When blindness is influential, it becomes contagious.

This is why so much of history reads like a parade of blind men awarding one another medals. One generation celebrates its enlightened voices, and the next generation discovers how dark they really were. Men once praised philosophers who defended pagan vice, theologians who denied inspiration, scientists who mocked creation, rulers who

opposed the Bible, and educators who detached morality from revelation. The world called them brilliant because the world itself was blind. “If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matthew 6:23). The darkest darkness often appears as light to those who love it.

The answer is not cynicism about leadership itself. God ordains offices, teachers, rulers, and shepherds. The answer is to judge everything by Scripture and not be hypnotized by status. The Bereans were “more noble” because they searched the Scriptures daily to see whether those things were so (Acts 17:11). That is the test. Not the title, not the institution, not the reputation, not the applause. The Book. A man may sit in a high place and still need a lowly Bible believer to tell him the truth. Better to hear truth from a plain saint on a wooden bench than error from a blind dignitary under chandeliers.

Blindness in high places is one of the most destructive realities in human history because it turns influence into a weapon against truth. Pilate had power and no courage. Festus had office and no discernment. Agrippa had access and no conversion. The philosophers of Athens had curiosity and no repentance. The scribes and Pharisees had Scripture in hand and darkness in heart. In every case, status failed to produce sight. Titles failed to produce truth. Recognition failed to produce revelation. The natural man remained natural even when wrapped in authority.

That should strip every reader of the foolish idea that social importance equals spiritual clarity. It does not. A man may shape a nation and still not know God. He may shape a denomination and still not understand the new birth. He may shape a university and still be dead in trespasses and sins. He may shape public thought while being utterly blind to the deep things of God. Influence can make blindness more dangerous, but it cannot make blindness into sight. Without the Holy Ghost, the man in the high place is just a natural man with a larger shadow.

So the warning is plain. Do not follow a man because he is admired. Do not trust a voice because it is polished. Do not assume that a ruler, scholar, preacher, or expert sees clearly merely because others defer to him. “To the law and to the testimony” (Isaiah 8:20) remains the standard. If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. The child of God had better learn that quickly in an age where blind men in expensive suits call darkness progress and mock the very truth that could save them. High places do not guarantee vision. Only God gives sight.

## **6 of 12: The Natural Man Exposed - Why Men Hate the Light**

**Main Passage: “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).**

There is a great difference between saying a man is ignorant and saying a man is hostile. A great many people like to talk about lost sinners as though they are merely uninformed, as though the main problem is a shortage of facts, a lack of exposure, or a gap in education. But the Lord Jesus Christ does not describe the problem that way. He says, “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light” (John 3:19). That is not merely intellectual deficiency. That is moral preference. That is not a mind that simply cannot locate the truth. That is a heart that does not want the truth because the truth shines on things the sinner wants hidden. The issue is not only that the natural man cannot see clearly. The issue is that he likes the room dark.

That truth cuts straight through the sentimental nonsense people tell themselves about human nature. Lost man is not neutral. He is not standing in the middle of a field waiting calmly for a fair presentation from both sides. He is fallen, biased, corrupted, and bent away from God. He does not merely fail to understand the light. He resents the light because the light exposes him. It unmask his hypocrisy, strips his excuses, reveals his lust, confronts his rebellion, and tells him the thing he hates most, which is that he is not basically good and does not run his own universe. So when divine light comes, he does not throw open the windows and say, “Wonderful, now I can see.” He ducks, covers, blames, rationalizes, and searches for a darker corner.

This is why the matter of spiritual blindness can never be reduced to an intellectual puzzle. It is not just that men do not grasp the truth. It is that they do not want what the truth will do to them when it takes hold. John 3:20 says, “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” There it is in black and white. Men hate the light. Why. Because the light reproves. It names things. It judges things. It shows things for what they are. It will not cooperate with the sinner’s self-image. It will not agree to keep silent. It will not let a man call filth freedom and rebellion authenticity. It insists on reality, and lost man cannot stand reality when reality comes from God.

### **1. The Light Is Not Rejected by Accident**

The first thing that must be settled is that men do not reject divine light by innocent mistake. The Bible does not say they were mildly confused by it. It says they “loved darkness rather than light” (John 3:19). That means the issue is affection. It is what they love. The sinner’s problem is not only what he knows or does not know. It is what his heart is attached to. He loves the environment in which his sin feels safe. He loves the

atmosphere where his rebellion can breathe. He loves the concealment that lets him pretend he is fine. So when God sends light, the light is not merely evaluated. It is resisted.

This is exactly why men can sit under clear preaching for years and never bow. It is not always because the message was too hard to understand. Sometimes it was plain enough for a child to grasp. Christ died for sinners. The soul is accountable to God. The wages of sin is death. Salvation is by grace through faith. The problem is not complexity. The problem is corruption. A man hears the truth, feels the truth press on his conscience, and still backs away because he does not want the truth to take command. He wants information on his terms, not revelation on God's terms.

Romans 1 says men "hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18). That means they suppress it. They restrain it. They push it down under the weight of their own sinful desires. That is not a neutral act. That is an act of resistance. It is moral sabotage. The light is not missing. The sinner is busy pushing it back because he knows very well that if it is allowed to shine where God intends, something in him will have to die. Pride will have to die. Self-rule will have to die. Secret sin will have to be named. The natural man does not fear ignorance nearly as much as he fears exposure.

## **2. Darkness Protects the Sinner's Lusts**

Men love darkness because darkness gives shelter to lust. That is one of the plainest truths in all the Bible, and one of the plainest facts in all of life. Sin likes privacy. Corruption likes secrecy. Lust likes shadows. The adulterer does not usually post his schedule on a church bulletin board. The liar does not usually ask for a trumpet blast before he starts twisting the facts. The hypocrite does not announce his double life with a parade. Sin likes curtains, dim rooms, hidden devices, secret accounts, private messages, locked doors, and selective disclosure. That is because darkness does for the sinner what mud does for a pig. It makes him comfortable in his filth.

The Lord says, "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light" (John 3:20). Why. Because light reveals what the sinner wants to keep operating without interruption. Whether the lust is sexual, financial, social, intellectual, or religious, darkness gives it room to breathe. A man may be addicted to praise, obsessed with control, enslaved to fantasy, drunk on resentment, or consumed with covetousness. Those lusts may look different on the outside, but they all thrive in the dark because they all depend on self-rule. The light says, "That is sin." The sinner says, "Turn that off."

This is why preaching that names sin directly is so hated in every generation. General moral talk is often tolerated. Inspirational fluff is applauded. Vague spirituality is acceptable. But let a preacher take the Book and start calling lust lust, pride pride, worldliness worldliness,

rebellion rebellion, and uncleanness uncleanness, and suddenly the room changes temperature. Why. Because the light has moved from the hallway into the bedroom. It is one thing for a sinner to discuss religion in the abstract. It is another thing entirely for God's truth to walk into the secret chambers of the heart and start turning over furniture.

### **3. Darkness Preserves Human Pride**

Another reason men hate the light is because the light does not merely expose bad actions. It exposes the sinner's whole false estimate of himself. Pride is the favorite disease of fallen man because pride lets him feel noble while remaining rotten. It lets him think of himself as misunderstood rather than guilty, independent rather than rebellious, strong rather than stubborn, enlightened rather than blind. Pride is the paint job on the casket. But the light strips that paint right off and shows the death underneath. That is why men hate it. It ruins their self-portrait.

The Pharisees are the standing example. They were not merely mistaken scholars. They were proud religionists. They loved "the praise of men" (John 12:43), broadened their phylacteries, enlarged the borders of their garments, and prayed to be seen. Outwardly they looked devout. Inwardly they were full of self-glory. So when Jesus Christ, who is the true Light, stood before them and exposed them, they did not rejoice in being corrected. They hardened. They plotted. They accused. They lied. Why. Because pride will defend itself like a rabid dog when the truth begins taking away its territory.

Proverbs 13:10 says, "Only by pride cometh contention." That is why so much hatred of truth has a quarrelsome spirit attached to it. When a man's pride is touched, he becomes argumentative, sarcastic, dismissive, and defensive. He is no longer calmly considering evidence. He is protecting his throne. The light tells him he is not as wise as he thinks, not as righteous as he claims, not as pure as he pretends, and not as independent as he imagines. Pride cannot tolerate that verdict. So it attacks the light, the preacher, the Scripture, the tone, the doctrine, the messenger, and anything else it can reach, all to avoid falling on its face before God.

### **4. Darkness Lets Men Keep Their Rebellion**

The sinner does not only want pleasure. He wants autonomy. He wants to be left alone as the god of his own little kingdom. That is why light is offensive. Light comes with authority. It does not merely illuminate. It commands. It says, "Thou shalt" and "thou shalt not." It says, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted" (Acts 3:19). It says, "God commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). Lost man does not mind discussing spirituality as long as it does not come with orders. Once the truth of God starts issuing commands, rebellion wakes up fast.

This was the problem from the beginning. In Eden the serpent did not tempt Eve merely with a piece of fruit. He tempted her with self-rule. “Ye shall be as gods” (Genesis 3:5). That spirit has not died. It has simply changed outfits. It now speaks through politics, therapy language, entertainment, academia, social rebellion, and false religion, but it is still saying the same old thing. You do not have to submit. You can define reality for yourself. You can write your own moral code. You can sit in judgment over what God said. That is why the light of Scripture is so hated. It not only informs. It dethrones.

The natural man is not comfortable under a King. He talks a lot about freedom, but what he means by freedom is freedom from God. He talks about authenticity, but what he means is the right to obey himself. He talks about progress, but what he often means is distance from biblical authority. The light of God shows all of that for the fraud it is. It says man is a creature, not the Creator. It says the soul belongs to God and will answer to God. It says self-government without submission to God is not liberty. It is rebellion with makeup on. No wonder men prefer darkness. Darkness lets rebels pretend they are free.

## **5. Darkness Gives Cover to Excuses**

Men also hate the light because the light destroys excuses. The sinner survives by self-justification. He has to keep telling himself a story in which he is not really at fault, not really guilty, not really in danger, and not really accountable. So he blames his parents, his upbringing, society, trauma, stress, the church, hypocrites, politics, biology, bad luck, or anything else that can help him dodge the central issue. Now those factors may explain pressures and circumstances, but they do not erase guilt before God. The light will not let the sinner hide behind secondary causes when the primary issue is sin.

Adam tried this the moment he fell. He blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. Nobody wanted to stand still and say, “I have sinned.” That instinct remains in every lost heart. Saul blamed the people. Aaron blamed the crowd and then talked as though a golden calf had jumped out of the fire by itself. Pilate washed his hands. Judas confessed but went out and hanged himself instead of coming to Christ. Men will perform astonishing mental gymnastics to avoid standing naked before God without an excuse in their mouth. The light hates those gymnastics, because the light keeps dragging the sinner back to the plain truth.

Romans 1 says men are “without excuse” (Romans 1:20). That phrase is devastating. It tells the sinner there will be no valid speech at the bar of God that overturns the verdict. That is exactly why he hates the light now. The light removes the fig leaves one by one. It says your bitterness is not righteousness. Your lust is not love. Your pride is not strength. Your

unbelief is not sophistication. Your excuses are not innocence. The sinner can keep his excuses only if he keeps the room dark enough that the evidence cannot be examined.

## **6. The Natural Man Is Morally, Not Merely Mentally, Corrupt**

At this point it should be plain that spiritual blindness is not merely a problem of mental limitation. It is rooted in moral corruption. Lost man does not simply need better data. He needs a new heart. He does not simply need a lecture. He needs repentance and regeneration. Scripture says the Gentiles walk “in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened” (Ephesians 4:17-18). But that darkening is tied to a deeper inward corruption. The blindness is not floating out there detached from the will. It is connected to “the blindness of their heart” (Ephesians 4:18). The heart is involved.

That is why clever sinners can remain lost despite extraordinary intelligence. They are not lacking mental horsepower. They are lacking moral willingness to bow to God. A man may have the IQ to learn languages, solve equations, and argue theology, yet still reject the new birth because he does not want the implications of it. He may understand enough of the gospel to know what it requires and still turn away because he loves his sin more than he loves the Saviour. The problem is not that he is too dumb to understand. The problem is that he is too corrupt to yield.

Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” That verse does not describe an innocent inner core waiting to be affirmed. It describes a treacherous center of corruption. This is why human beings can lie to themselves so effectively. The heart is not an objective judge. It is a defense attorney for sin. It twists facts, reinterprets motives, minimizes guilt, and protects idols. The light of God enters that courtroom and exposes the whole crooked process. That is why the natural man hates it. The light reveals that the corruption is not only in his conduct. It is in his core.

## **7. Only Grace Can Bring a Man to the Light**

If men hate the light at the level of love, lust, pride, and rebellion, then no merely human method can solve the problem. You cannot flatter a sinner into repentance. You cannot entertain him into the new birth. You cannot dim the truth enough to make darkness love it. Something supernatural has to happen. God has to break in. God has to convict. God has to draw. God has to grant repentance. That is why salvation is such a miracle. It is not simply a transfer of information. It is the mercy of God overcoming the sinner’s hostility and opening his eyes to the glory of Christ.

John 3:21 says, “But he that doeth truth cometh to the light.” Notice that there is such a thing as coming to the light. But no man comes rightly unless grace is at work. Jesus said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (John 6:44).

That does not excuse the sinner. It magnifies grace. It shows that the same heart which once hid from the light must be conquered by divine mercy if it is ever to stop running and start kneeling. When God works, the man who once hated exposure begins to cry for cleansing. The man who once defended himself begins to condemn himself. The man who once fled the light begins to seek it.

That is why true conversion involves confession, repentance, and a turning of the soul toward God. It is not a mere decision to add religion to one's schedule. It is a surrender to the truth one once resisted. It is the prodigal coming to himself. It is the publican smiting his breast. It is Saul of Tarsus falling in the dust. It is the sinner brought to the place where he says, in effect, "Lord, I am what Thou sayest I am, and my only hope is mercy." When that happens, the light that once seemed threatening becomes precious, because the sinner has stopped trying to preserve darkness at all costs.

The reason men hate the light is not hard to locate once the Bible is allowed to speak plainly. Men hate the light because the light exposes what they love besides God. It exposes lust, pride, rebellion, excuses, hypocrisy, and self-rule. It reveals that the sinner's problem is not merely intellectual confusion but moral corruption. He does not stand at a distance from truth as an unbiased observer. He stands against truth as a guilty rebel who wants the room dark enough to continue as he is. That is why Christ says men "loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19). The problem is love in the wrong direction.

This truth is essential because it keeps us from speaking about lostness in soft, misleading terms. The natural man is not an innocent seeker hindered only by complexity. He is a fallen sinner with a heart that resists the holy claims of God. He may be religious, educated, cultured, and admired, but if he loves darkness he will twist truth, dodge conviction, and cling to his idols until grace conquers him. That is why preaching must be sharp, why Scripture must be opened plainly, and why the work of the Holy Ghost is indispensable. Men do not simply need information. They need to be brought out of darkness.

And here is the mercy in the whole matter. The same Lord who exposes darkness also saves from it. "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8). That is not self-improvement. That is transformation. The man who once hated the light can be made to love it through Jesus Christ. The woman who once hid in the shadows can walk in truth. The rebel can become a worshiper. The liar can become clean. The proud can be brought low and then lifted by grace. But none of that happens until the sinner stops pretending darkness is harmless and admits what Christ said from the start, that men hate the light because their deeds are evil. Once that is faced honestly, the gospel becomes more than an idea. It becomes the only hope.

## **7 of 12: The Natural Man Exposed - The Natural Mind Cannot Know God**

**Main Passage: “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” (1 Corinthians 2:14).**

There are certain verses in the Bible that cut deeper than a theologian’s commentary and hit harder than a hammer on an anvil. First Corinthians 2:14 is one of them. It does not merely tell you that the natural man dislikes spiritual truth. It tells you that he cannot know it as it must be known, “because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). That means the issue is not just moral hostility, though that is present. It is also spiritual inability. The natural man is not only unwilling in his heart. He is unequipped in his nature. He is trying to handle heavenly truth with earthly tools, trying to judge divine revelation with fallen faculties, and trying to climb into the deep things of God with a ladder made out of his own mind. That will never get him there.

This is where a great deal of confusion enters the discussion. People assume that if a man is sincere enough, bright enough, well-read enough, or curious enough, he can eventually reason his way into spiritual understanding. But the Bible does not teach that. The Bible teaches that God must reveal the truth, the Spirit must illuminate the truth, and the sinner must be made alive to receive the truth rightly. “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him. even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:11). There is the line in the sand. The deep things of God are not lying around on the beach for clever men to collect like seashells. They are known by the Spirit of God, and unless He makes them known, the natural man remains on the outside looking in.

That does not mean Christianity is irrational. It means Christianity is revealed. There is a world of difference between those two things. The truth of God is not nonsense. It is simply above the reach of fallen man apart from revelation. The natural mind can operate in science, business, language, engineering, politics, and all sorts of earthly activities. It can even discuss religion in a formal sense. But when it comes to the person of Christ, the glory of the cross, the necessity of the new birth, the meaning of grace, the reality of eternal judgment, and the deep structure of divine truth, it hits a wall. Why. Because those truths are spiritually discerned. They are not properly received by fleshly instinct, worldly wisdom, or autonomous intellect. They come from above, and if a man is ever going to understand them, God will have to open his eyes.

### **1. The Natural Man Has the Wrong Faculty**

The natural man's greatest problem in approaching divine truth is that he is operating with the wrong faculty. He is trying to judge spiritual realities by natural equipment. Paul says, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14). Why not. Because the "things of the Spirit of God" belong to a realm that cannot be penetrated by fallen human powers alone. A man can know mathematics by natural reason. He can know chemistry by observation and experiment. He can know history by records and evidence. But "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11). That is a different category entirely.

This is why the natural man always ends up mishandling Scripture when he sits in judgment over it. He may admire some parts of it, despise other parts, reinterpret the miracles, dismiss prophecy, redefine the cross, and domesticate the holiness of God, but he never receives it as God gave it. Why. Because he is using a faculty damaged by the fall and limited to the natural sphere. He is like a blind man trying to judge colors or a deaf man trying to critique a symphony. The issue is not that the colors are unclear or the music is irrational. The issue is that the judge lacks the capacity to perceive what is there.

The Bible never flatters man's natural ability in this matter. Romans 8:7 says, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God. for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Notice that phrase "neither indeed can be." That is inability. The carnal mind is not merely stubborn. It is constitutionally unfit to subject itself rightly to God. So when men come swaggering up to divine revelation as though they are qualified to render a final verdict by sheer intellect, they expose their blindness before they ever open their mouths. They are using the wrong instrument on the wrong subject, and then acting surprised when the results are nonsense.

## **2. Spiritual Discernment Means Spiritual Evaluation**

The phrase "spiritually discerned" in 1 Corinthians 2:14 is one of the keys to the whole chapter. It means that the things of God must be spiritually evaluated, spiritually recognized, spiritually appreciated, and spiritually understood. The verse does not say the natural man is spiritually discerned. It says the "things of the Spirit of God" are spiritually discerned. That means the truth itself belongs to a realm that demands spiritual perception. It must be received on the level at which God gave it. It is not enough to inspect it externally like a museum artifact. It must be discerned inwardly by the Spirit.

This is why two men can hear the same sermon and walk away with totally different reactions. One man hears about the blood atonement, the deity of Christ, the authority of Scripture, and the necessity of the new birth, and says, "That is life. That is truth. That is the voice of God." Another hears the same message and says, "That is too extreme, too

dogmatic, too mystical, too much.” The difference is not always intellectual sharpness. The difference is spiritual discernment. One is hearing with more than natural ears. The other is still trapped inside the limits of fallen nature.

The Spirit of God does not bypass the mind, but He does illuminate the truth so the mind can receive it rightly. “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God. that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Corinthians 2:12). That is spiritual discernment in operation. It is not wild emotionalism. It is not mystical fog. It is not private imagination running loose in the attic. It is the Spirit of God enabling the child of God to understand and receive the truth of God as God intended it to be known. Without that work, the natural man remains outside the door rattling the handle.

### **3. Divine Truth Is Revealed, Not Discovered**

One of the great lies of the modern age is that man can discover ultimate truth by his own genius. He can search, compare, investigate, and eventually climb his way into the mind of God. But the Bible says otherwise. “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit” (1 Corinthians 2:10). That verse is plain enough to stop the whole parade of intellectual arrogance. The deep things of God are revealed. They are not invented by philosophers, discovered by psychologists, or extracted by autonomous reason. God must make them known.

This is exactly why Paul says, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). Those things do not arise naturally from observation, hearing, or inward intuition. They do not begin in man’s heart. They come from God. If God had not spoken, man would still be wandering around in religious darkness, building idols, guessing at eternity, and congratulating himself for asking deep questions while missing every answer that matters. Revelation is not a theological luxury. It is the only reason anyone knows anything truly about God.

That is why all man-made religion eventually collapses into speculation, works, ritual, and guesswork. It begins with man reaching upward rather than God speaking downward. Biblical Christianity begins with God revealing Himself. He reveals Himself in creation, in conscience, in Scripture, in prophecy, in the incarnation of Christ, and by the Spirit through the word. “No man hath seen God at any time. the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John 1:18). There is your answer. Christ is not man’s religious guess about God. He is God’s revelation of Himself to man.

### **4. Fallen Reason Cannot Climb Into the Deep Things of God**

Now reason has its place. God is not asking men to become irrational fools. But reason in a fallen man is not a throne from which to judge God. It is a tool that must bow before revelation. The trouble comes when fallen reason tries to act like supreme court over Scripture. Then the miracles become absurd, the resurrection becomes impossible, judgment becomes embarrassing, and grace becomes offensive. Why. Because fallen reason is trying to measure infinity with a ruler it carved itself. That is the problem with the wisdom of this world. It confuses analytical ability with spiritual authority.

Paul asks in Romans 11:34, “For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?” The answer is nobody. God does not ask permission from man’s intellect before speaking truth. He does not submit revelation to the review board of skeptics. The natural man loves to behave as though he can sit in judgment over God, but Job learned what happens when a creature gets too bold in that direction. “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?” (Job 38:4). That question would shut down a thousand talk shows and empty out half the theology departments in the country.

What fallen reason can do is very limited. It can identify contradiction on a human level, follow a line of argument, compare texts, and organize information. But it cannot generate spiritual life. It cannot produce faith. It cannot subject the heart to God. It cannot ascend into the counsels of heaven and come back with truth. “Canst thou by searching find out God?” (Job 11:7). No, not savingly. No, not deeply. No, not truly in the sense required for spiritual life. Fallen reason can lead a man to admire his own questions. It cannot bring him into living fellowship with the Lord.

## **5. Revelation and Regeneration Must Go Together**

This is why revelation alone, though perfect in itself, is not enough for the lost man unless God also works regeneration. The word is true whether men believe it or not. The Scriptures are inspired whether scholars approve or not. But a dead sinner still needs to be made alive if he is to receive the word as he ought. Jesus said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Notice again the language of sight. The problem is not merely information. It is vision. Without the new birth, the man cannot see rightly.

You can hand a blind man a flawless map, but if he cannot see, the map alone does not solve the problem. The map is perfect. The problem is in the man. So it is with Scripture and the natural man. The Bible is not defective. The sinner is. The answer, then, is not to water down Scripture to suit blindness. The answer is for God to open blind eyes. “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not” (2 Corinthians 4:4), but then in the very next verses Paul says, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out

of darkness, hath shined in our hearts” (2 Corinthians 4:6). There is regeneration meeting revelation.

This is also why preaching must never be reduced to mere data transfer. The preacher is not just giving a lecture. He is declaring revealed truth in dependence on the Holy Ghost, trusting God to do what no amount of human polish can accomplish. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth” (James 1:18). There is revelation. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). There is regeneration connected to revelation. The Spirit of God uses the word of God to make alive the child of God. That is not a classroom trick. That is a miracle.

## **6. The Natural Man Cannot Reason His Way Into Saving Knowledge**

A man may reason his way to certain conclusions about existence, morality, causation, design, and accountability in a broad sense. He may come to see that atheism is foolish, that creation points to a Creator, and that conscience testifies against him. But that is not the same as savingly knowing God. The devils know there is one God and tremble (James 2:19), but they are not redeemed. A man can know enough to be condemned and still not know God in the sense of spiritual life. Saving knowledge is more than deduction. It is revelation received under the work of the Spirit.

This is why the natural man may be able to discuss theology without ever having tasted grace. He may reason about the possibility of God, argue for theism over materialism, or defend certain biblical morals in society, and yet remain a stranger to the Lord Himself. He does not come by logic into union with Christ. He does not syllogize himself into the new birth. He does not philosophize himself into remission of sins. The gospel is not a math problem. It is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16). And believing in the biblical sense is not bare intellectual agreement. It is personal reliance upon the living Christ.

This should kill the foolish idea that one more clever argument will save the world. Arguments have their place, and apologetics can clear away rubbish, but only God can make a man know Him. Paul did not say, “I came with the most irresistible syllogisms.” He said, “And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 2:4). Why. “That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:5). The natural man’s confidence in reasoning must be broken if he is ever going to know God savingly.

## **7. The Mind of Christ Is Given, Not Achieved**

The glorious side of this truth is that what the natural man cannot achieve, God gives by grace. Paul ends the chapter by saying, “But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16). That is one of the most astonishing statements in the New Testament. It does not mean believers become omniscient. It means they are brought into a relationship with God where His thoughts, as revealed in Scripture, begin to govern their understanding. The child of God is given access to truth from above because the Spirit indwells him and illumines the word.

This is why a plain old saint with a worn Bible and a yielded heart can have more real understanding than a room full of proud scholars. The issue is not academic horsepower. It is spiritual light. The Spirit teaches the believer through the word. Jesus said, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). That is not a promise of private revelation disconnected from Scripture. It is a promise of divine guidance into God’s truth. The believer begins to think differently because he has been made alive and brought under heavenly instruction.

That is also why all true understanding should produce humility, not pride. If the mind of Christ is given, then no believer can strut around as though he discovered divine truth by his own brilliance. “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1 Corinthians 4:7). The answer is nothing. Every beam of light, every flash of understanding, every opened verse, every deepened conviction is mercy from God. The natural man cannot know God by native power. The spiritual man knows because God has stooped down in grace and made Himself known.

The natural mind cannot know God as He must be known because it is working with the wrong faculty, under the wrong condition, and in rebellion against the very light it needs. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. That means divine truth must be received on God’s terms, through God’s revelation, under the illumination of God’s Spirit. The natural man may discuss religion, analyze doctrine, and debate Scripture, but unless God opens his eyes, he remains on the outside of the very truth he handles. He is like a starving man describing a banquet he has never tasted.

That is why revelation and regeneration are both necessary. God must speak, and man must be made alive to hear rightly. The word of God is perfect, but the sinner is not. The truth is clear, but the natural heart is dark. So the answer is not to lower God’s truth to suit fallen reason. The answer is for God to raise the sinner by grace. “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Ephesians 5:14). That verse says exactly what the whole matter requires. The dead need light, but first they must be awakened by God.

So let no man boast in his intellect when dealing with divine truth. Let no scholar imagine that genius can replace grace. Let no religionist suppose that study can stand in for the Spirit. The natural man cannot reason his way into the deep things of God. God must reveal them, and God must make the sinner alive to receive them. When He does, the Bible opens, Christ becomes precious, grace becomes glorious, and what once looked foolish shines as the highest wisdom in the universe. Until then, the natural man remains what Paul said he was from the start, unable to know the things of God because they are spiritually discerned.

**8 of 12: The Natural Man Exposed - Natural Affection, Natural Reason, Natural Limits**  
**Main Passage: “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” (1 Corinthians 2:14).**

There is a dangerous mistake made by religious people, philosophers, counselors, educators, and sentimental churchgoers alike, and it is the mistake of assuming that whatever feels deep must therefore be spiritual. That is one of the oldest frauds in the devil’s playbook. Men feel strongly, therefore they imagine they are right. They suffer deeply, therefore they assume they are wise. They reason carefully, therefore they conclude they are safe. They love naturally, therefore they think they must be pleasing to God. But the Bible cuts straight across that whole swamp of confusion and tells you there is such a thing as “the natural man” (1 Corinthians 2:14), and that man may think, feel, desire, react, reason, and love on a natural level while remaining just as spiritually dead as a corpse in a funeral home.

That is what makes this subject so important. The natural man does not always operate like a foaming maniac, a drunken rebel, or an obvious blasphemer. Sometimes he is tender, affectionate, thoughtful, refined, wounded, compassionate in spots, and morally serious in appearance. He may have strong convictions. He may have deep emotions. He may have a code. He may have loyalty to family, concern for justice, and even tears over suffering. But none of that is the same as spiritual life. None of that is the same as the new birth. None of that is the same as being indwelt by the Holy Ghost. A man may feel deeply and still be dead spiritually. He may be sincere and still be sincerely wrong. He may be moved in his soul and still never once operate in true fellowship with the Spirit of God.

The great lie of the age is that if a thing is heartfelt, therapeutic, compassionate, authentic, or emotionally intense, then it must be valid. God says otherwise. He says, “There is a way

which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12). Notice that word “seemeth.” The natural man lives by what seemeth right. He trusts sentiment, instinct, trauma, desire, cultural conditioning, and self-preserving logic. He builds a whole worldview out of inward reactions and outward pressures, then crowns the whole arrangement with the word “truth.” But spiritual truth is not manufactured out of the soul. It is revealed by God. That is what this essay must expose. Natural affection is limited. Natural reason is limited. Natural morality is limited. Natural experience is limited. And every one of those limits shows the sinner’s desperate need for something above nature, which is divine revelation and spiritual life.

### **1. The Natural Man Lives by the Soul and the Flesh**

The natural man operates through the soul and the flesh, and that means he lives on a level that never rises into true spiritual life. He has thoughts, feelings, memories, instincts, appetites, preferences, fears, affections, and impulses, but all of those things are still functioning inside the fallen framework of Adam. The Bible says, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). Flesh may become cultured flesh, disciplined flesh, traumatized flesh, emotional flesh, conservative flesh, or religious flesh, but it is still flesh. It never graduates into spirit by self-development. It remains on the lower plane unless God intervenes.

This is where modern man gets fooled by his own inner life. Because he thinks, he imagines he knows. Because he feels, he imagines he discerns. Because he reflects, he imagines he has spiritual insight. But there is a great difference between being psychologically active and spiritually alive. A man may have a vivid inner world and still be completely blind to the things of God. He may write poetry, feel grief, cherish memories, defend principles, and wrestle with questions, yet remain what Paul calls “natural.” The activity of the soul is not proof of the life of the Spirit.

James 3:15 helps mark the line when it says, “This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.” That word “sensual” is tied to the soulish realm, the merely natural realm. It is not neutral. It is not holy by default. It is earthly and tied to fallen man. So when the natural man makes his soul the center of truth, he is not rising toward God. He is circling inside himself. He is trapped in the echo chamber of fallen humanity. That is why his conclusions keep coming back warped. He is reasoning, feeling, and reacting without the governing light of the Spirit of God.

### **2. Natural Affection Is Real, but It Is Not Saving**

The Bible recognizes natural affection as a real thing. Parents love children. Friends show loyalty. Families sacrifice for one another. Communities rally around the hurting. Even the

lost can display tenderness, generosity, sympathy, and devotion. Paul warns of men being “without natural affection” (Romans 1:31), which proves there is such a thing as natural affection in the first place. But you must never make the mistake of confusing natural affection with spiritual life. They are not the same thing. Natural affection can exist in an unregenerate man and often does.

This is why people get so confused when they say, “But he is such a loving person,” or, “She cares so deeply,” or, “They are wonderful parents,” or, “That person would do anything for family.” Very well. That may all be true on the natural plane. But none of it proves the new birth. None of it proves the presence of the Holy Ghost. None of it proves reconciliation to God. A mother bear protects her cubs. That does not make her regenerate. Men can have strong attachments and still hate the light when it exposes their sin. A lost man may cry over his child and laugh at the preaching of the cross in the same week.

The Lord Jesus made the distinction plain when He said, “If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye. for sinners also love those that love them” (Luke 6:32). There it is. Sinners also love in a natural sense. They can show reciprocal affection, tribal loyalty, family devotion, and selective compassion. But that is not the supernatural love produced by the Spirit of God. That is not charity rooted in divine life. The natural man may love what belongs to him, what flatters him, what comforts him, or what reflects his own image back to him, and still remain a stranger to the love that comes from above.

### **3. Natural Reason Can Build Systems but Not Spiritual Life**

The natural man also trusts natural reason. He watches, compares, evaluates, and concludes, then imagines that careful thought alone will safely guide him. But reason severed from revelation always operates under a fatal handicap. It may build impressive systems, organize ethical theories, produce political models, and create social philosophies, but it cannot breathe spiritual life into a dead soul. “The world by wisdom knew not God” (1 Corinthians 1:21). That verse shuts the mouth of every proud intellectual who thinks fallen logic can climb into heaven.

This does not mean reason is useless. It means reason is limited. A flashlight is useful in a cave, but it is not the sun. Fallen reason can process information, draw distinctions, and evaluate earthly matters. But when it attempts to sit in judgment over divine truth, it becomes a rebel tool. It starts trimming miracles, softening judgment, redefining holiness, and explaining away the need for the new birth. Why. Because the natural mind always bends toward self-preservation. It reasons in ways that protect the sinner’s throne. It can look very clever while doing that, but it is still corrupt.

Proverbs 3:5 says, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.” There is the issue. The natural man leans on his own understanding because that is all he trusts. He does not want revelation over him. He wants reason under him. He wants a worldview that leaves him in charge. So he builds systems out of his own conclusions, but the systems always end up shrinking God and enlarging man. They may be polished, coherent, and culturally admired, but they still fall under the condemnation of Scripture because they begin in the wrong place and aim at the wrong throne.

#### **4. Experience and Trauma Do Not Create Truth**

Another great idol of the natural man is experience. Whatever he has felt, endured, suffered, or survived becomes the lens through which he interprets reality. This is especially true when pain and trauma enter the picture. Men often begin to build entire moral and spiritual frameworks out of wounds, disappointments, betrayals, and emotional scars. Now pain is real. Trauma is real. Human suffering is real. But pain does not become a pope because it is intense. Experience is not infallible because it is personal. A man may bleed deeply and still reason wrongly from the wound.

This is where many modern value systems are born. Someone is hurt, therefore they decide authority is oppressive. Someone is betrayed, therefore they decide trust is weakness. Someone is wounded by hypocrisy, therefore they decide all biblical truth is suspect. Someone suffers under a counterfeit religion, therefore they conclude revelation itself is dangerous. Then the wound becomes the standard, and all future thought is filtered through it. But Scripture never tells a man to enthrone his pain. It tells him to bring it to God. “The entrance of thy words giveth light” (Psalm 119:130). Light comes from God’s word, not from untreated wounds becoming a theology.

You can see this in the way people defend error today. They often do not begin with “What hath God said.” They begin with “This is what I felt,” or “This is what happened to me,” or “This is what I saw growing up.” Those things may explain the emotional pressure, but they do not determine truth. If experience were the standard, every deceived person on earth would have his own private religion. The devil has given millions of people experiences. What they need is not merely validation of emotion. They need the truth. A sincere wound may cry loudly, but it is still a poor substitute for divine revelation.

#### **5. Natural Morality Can Restrain Behavior but Cannot Change Nature**

The natural man can also possess a form of morality. He may not steal openly. He may not cheat on his wife. He may work hard, tell partial truths, pay his bills, and maintain social order. He may have rules, boundaries, discipline, and a sense of civic responsibility. But natural morality, though useful in society, cannot change the sinner’s nature. It can groom

conduct. It cannot regenerate the heart. It can manicure the outside of the cup while leaving the inside untouched. That is why moral men die lost every day.

The Pharisee in Luke 18 is the perfect example. He was thankful he was not like extortioners, unjust men, adulterers, or publicans. He fasted. He tithed. He compared well against the obvious sinners. But he went home unjustified. Why. Because morality without mercy is still flesh. Outward restraint does not equal inward life. A man may not sleep in the gutter and still be spiritually dead. He may be clean, decent, disciplined, and hellbound if he has never come to God as a guilty sinner needing grace. The natural man often hides in morality because morality lets him look strong while avoiding the humiliation of repentance.

Isaiah 64:6 says, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” That verse does not merely condemn open vice. It reaches up into the cabinet of human righteousness and throws the whole collection onto the trash heap. The problem is not that moral deeds have no social value. The problem is that they cannot justify a sinner before a holy God. They cannot impart life. They cannot produce spiritual discernment. They cannot wash away sin. Natural morality may keep a man from scandal. It cannot take him into the kingdom of God.

## **6. Sincere Feelings Are Not the Same as Spiritual Truth**

This point must be hammered hard in a generation drunk on emotional authenticity. People think that if a thing is sincere, it must be sacred. But sincerity is not a compass. A man can be sincerely wrong, sincerely deceived, sincerely attached to a lie, sincerely committed to darkness, and sincerely dead in trespasses and sins. Saul of Tarsus was sincere when he persecuted the church. He said he had lived “in all good conscience before God” (Acts 23:1), yet he was kicking against the pricks before God knocked him down. Feeling strongly is no guarantee that a man is seeing clearly.

The heart is a treacherous guide when separated from God’s word. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). That verse should be stapled to the forehead of this entire generation. Men say, “Follow your heart,” and God says your heart is deceitful. Men say, “Speak your truth,” and God says there is truth already spoken. Men say, “Be true to yourself,” and God says you must deny yourself. Those are two different religions. One comes from the natural man worshiping his own interior life. The other comes from God.

This is why revivals of mere sentiment so often fizzle into nothing. People cry, sway, feel moved, and make speeches about what they experienced, but if the word of God has not cut, the Spirit of God has not convicted, and the truth has not been received, the emotional

wave passes and the old life comes rolling right back in. The soul was stirred. The spirit was not renewed. Tears are not always repentance. Excitement is not always conversion. A man may tremble and still not trust Christ. Felix trembled when Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come (Acts 24:25), yet he put Paul off. Feeling something deeply is not the same as bowing to truth.

## **7. The Natural Man's Limits Show the Need for Revelation and Regeneration**

All of this brings us to the central point. Natural affection, natural reason, natural morality, natural experience, and natural sincerity all have limits. They can operate powerfully on the human plane, but they can never rise into spiritual life by themselves. They can create systems, cultures, loyalties, habits, and emotional worlds, but they cannot produce the mind of Christ. They cannot open the deep things of God. They cannot make a sinner alive. They cannot turn flesh into spirit. That is why the natural man remains natural no matter how developed his inner life may seem to be.

This is exactly what Paul means when he says, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14). He may receive ideas, impressions, emotions, customs, and moral influences. But the things of the Spirit of God must be spiritually discerned, and that requires more than soul-life. It requires the Spirit of God. It requires revelation from above and regeneration within. The natural man may build a whole civilization out of his own inward resources and still not know God. He may become very impressive in his own sphere while remaining outside the kingdom.

That is why the answer is not to polish nature but to crucify the flesh and be born again. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). The Lord did not tell Nicodemus to get more in touch with his inner life. He told him he needed a new birth. The answer is not deeper soul analysis, cleaner natural morality, or more refined emotional language. The answer is life from God. The word of God must reveal truth, the Spirit of God must open the heart, and the sinner must come as a lost man rather than as a self-interpreter trying to baptize his own instincts.

The natural man can feel, think, remember, reason, love, fear, mourn, and construct value systems, but none of those things by themselves can bring him into the life of God. They are real on the natural plane, but they are limited. Natural affection may warm the heart, but it cannot save the soul. Natural reason may organize thoughts, but it cannot reveal Christ. Natural morality may restrain conduct, but it cannot wash away sin. Natural experience may shape a personality, but it cannot become a final authority. Natural sincerity may feel noble, but it cannot turn error into truth.

This is why lost men so often build religions of feeling, philosophies of trauma, moral systems of self-preservation, and ethical codes out of social conditioning and personal desire. They assume these things are enough because they are all they have. But the Bible keeps saying the same thing from different angles. What is born of flesh is flesh. The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. The carnal mind is enmity against God. The heart is deceitful above all things. Put all of that together and you get a devastating verdict. Nature can imitate depth without ever touching true spiritual life.

The conclusion, then, is not to despise affection, thought, or human experience as though they do not exist. The conclusion is to put them in their place under the authority of God's word and the necessity of the new birth. A man must stop trusting his instincts as final, stop worshiping sincerity as sacred, stop treating trauma as revelation, and stop leaning on his own understanding. He must come to Jesus Christ as a lost sinner in need of light from above. Until that happens, the natural man remains trapped inside his own limits. But once God gives life, the old prison of merely natural existence is broken open, and the sinner begins at last to know the things of God in the only way they can truly be known.

### **9 of 12: The Natural Man Exposed - False Converts and Fleshly Christianity**

**Main Passage: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14), "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal" (1 Corinthians 3:1).**

One of the most necessary distinctions a Bible believer can make is the distinction between the **natural man**, the **carnal Christian**, and the **spiritual Christian**. If you miss that line, you will make a wreck out of your theology, your preaching, your counseling, and your self-examination. You will start calling saved men lost every time they stumble, and you will start comforting lost church members as though they were merely immature believers who need a little polishing. That confusion is everywhere. It has filled churches with false assurance on one side and unnecessary despair on the other. It has made some preachers so careless they baptize goats and call them sheep, while others are so unbalanced they act as though every weak saint was never born again to begin with. The Book does not leave you there. Paul draws distinctions, and those distinctions matter.

In 1 Corinthians 2 and 3, Paul is not talking about one category of humanity with different moods. He is drawing real lines. In 1 Corinthians 2:14 he speaks of the **natural man**, the man who is unregenerate, unsaved, outside Christ, without the indwelling Spirit, and unable to receive the things of the Spirit of God as they must be received. Then in 1

Corinthians 3:1 he says, “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.” There is the second category. These Corinthians were not called natural men. They were called “brethren.” They were “in Christ.” But they were also carnal. They were saved men acting like babies, thinking too much like the flesh, and walking beneath their calling. Then beyond that stands the spiritual man of 1 Corinthians 2:15, the man walking under the rule of the Spirit through the word of God. Those distinctions are not decorative. They are doctrinally essential.

This essay must therefore do two things at once. First, it must expose false converts, men and women who have adopted the language, habits, and culture of Christianity without ever being born again. These are not merely weak believers. Many of them are still natural men. Second, it must also guard against the error of denying the reality of carnality in genuine Christians. A saved man can walk in the flesh. A born-again believer can act childish, jealous, worldly, stubborn, and shamefully unspiritual for a season. He can temporarily resemble the thinking patterns of the natural man in his conduct, though not in his standing before God. If you do not keep those truths together, you will either fill the church with false converts or tear up the assurance of true saints. The answer is not confusion. The answer is to let the Bible speak carefully where men love to speak carelessly.

### **1. The Natural Man and the Carnal Christian Are Not the Same**

The first thing that has to be nailed down is that the **natural man** and the **carnal Christian** are not identical categories. Paul uses different words because he means different things. The natural man in 1 Corinthians 2:14 is lost. He is unregenerate. He “receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.” He is outside Christ, without the Spirit, and spiritually dead. But in 1 Corinthians 3:1 Paul addresses the Corinthians as “brethren” and says they are “babes in Christ.” A babe is immature, but it is alive. A baby may cry, fall down, act selfish, and make a mess, but it is still part of the family. That is the distinction. Carnality is not the same as lostness, even though carnality is ugly and dangerous.

Romans 8:9 helps clarify the matter. “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” That verse settles the natural man. If he lacks the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But the carnal believer does belong to Christ, though he is grieving the Spirit, resisting the Spirit, and failing to walk in step with the truth he has received. Galatians 5:17 says, “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.” That conflict belongs to the believer. The lost man is not wrestling with the indwelling Spirit in that sense. The saved man is. The Christian life includes warfare, and sometimes the saint loses ground badly.

The great danger comes when men flatten those categories into one. Then every act of carnality is treated as proof of lostness, or every profession of faith is treated as proof of salvation regardless of fruit, doctrine, or reality. Both errors are common. The first error produces unstable saints who never rest in Christ because every failure is treated as evidence they were never saved. The second error produces churches full of unregenerate professors who were told that because they once repeated a prayer or walked an aisle, their total lack of spiritual life must simply mean they are “struggling believers.” The Bible allows neither mistake. It tells the truth straight.

## **2. False Converts Can Look Very Christian**

One of the most sobering facts in all of Scripture is that a man can wear the clothes of Christianity without possessing the life of Christ. He can attend services, sing hymns, quote verses, post devotionals, say “amen,” raise his hands, carry a Bible, and even teach others, while remaining a natural man. Jesus said, “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?” (Matthew 7:22). Notice those people were not open atheists. They were religionists. They used Christ’s name. They did works in His name. Yet He says, “I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23). That is not a carnal saint being corrected. That is a false convert being exposed.

This is why church culture can be such a dangerous hiding place for the natural man. He learns the vocabulary. He imitates the mannerisms. He adopts the tribe’s language, politics, dress code, and heroes. He knows when to look solemn, when to smile, when to speak about prayer, and how to sound doctrinal enough to blend in. But blending in is not the new birth. A goat standing in a flock of sheep is still a goat. Judas followed Jesus outwardly, heard the teachings, witnessed miracles, and was trusted enough to hold the bag. Yet the Lord called him “a devil” (John 6:70). Proximity to Christianity is not the same as possession of Christ.

The false convert often thrives where the emphasis is on appearance, performance, and social belonging rather than regeneration and truth. If the gospel is watered down, if the new birth is assumed, if membership matters more than conversion, and if people are praised for external conformity rather than inward reality, the natural man can sit undisturbed for years. He may never fight the Spirit because he never had the Spirit. He may never hunger for truth because he has no spiritual life. He may love the benefits of Christian culture and hate the offense of the cross. Yet people call him a believer because he looks respectable in the right circles. That is a church problem, not a Bible problem.

## **3. Some Professors Are Not Carnal Believers but Unregenerate Men**

This is where discernment is badly needed. There are people in churches who are not merely immature. They are unconverted. They do not just need stronger discipleship. They need the new birth. The problem is not that they are weak saints needing milk. The problem is that they have no life at all. First John is full of tests that help expose this. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14).

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin” in the sense of settled, unbroken practice as the ruling pattern of life (1 John 3:9). The point is not sinless perfection. The point is new direction. New life shows up.

Now that does not mean every inconsistent Christian is false. But where there is **no appetite for truth, no conviction over sin, no love for Christ, no submission to Scripture, no evidence of spiritual life, and no concern for holiness**, a man has no business comforting himself with the label “carnal Christian” as a shield against the possibility that he is lost. Some men use carnality as a theological hiding place. They say, “Well, I know I am worldly, prayerless, fleshly, bitter, and disobedient, but I’m just a carnal believer.” Maybe. Or maybe you are still a natural man who likes church better than the bar. That possibility must be faced honestly.

Paul told the Corinthians, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5). That would be a strange command if every profession were to be treated as final proof of salvation regardless of present reality. Self-examination is biblical. Not morbid introspection, but honest examination in light of the word of God. Some people have had emotional experiences, some have made professions under pressure, some were raised in church and never knew a day when they did not speak Christian language, but none of that automatically proves regeneration. If a man has adopted Christian culture without ever coming to Christ as a guilty sinner needing grace, he is not a weak saint. He is a lost professor.

#### **4. Genuine Believers Can Act Carnally**

Having said all of that, it is equally important to state the other side clearly. A genuine Christian can act carnally. He can grieve the Holy Spirit. He can walk after the flesh. He can become jealous, divisive, worldly, stubborn, and childish. The Corinthians proved it. Paul said, “For ye are yet carnal. for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (1 Corinthians 3:3). Notice that. These were real believers, yet Paul rebuked them because their conduct resembled the way ordinary unsaved men behave. “Walk as men” means they were acting on the merely human, fleshly plane rather than under the governing influence of the Spirit.

The New Testament is full of warnings to believers precisely because believers can fail badly. Peter was saved, yet he denied the Lord. The Galatians were saved, yet bewitched and flirting with legalism. The Hebrews were dull of hearing. The Corinthians were tolerating immorality, abusing spiritual gifts, dividing over personalities, and getting drunk around the Lord's Supper. Those are not small slips. They are disgraceful manifestations of carnality. So the Bible does not teach some fairy tale in which every Christian immediately becomes spiritually balanced, mature, and consistent in all things. Sanctification is real, but so is the flesh.

That is why Galatians 5:16 says, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." That command would be unnecessary if believers could not fulfil the lust of the flesh. Ephesians 4, Colossians 3, Romans 6, and a dozen other passages all call saints to put off, mortify, yield, walk, and stand, because the Christian can live beneath his privileges if he chooses the flesh. He remains secure in Christ, but his fellowship, testimony, usefulness, joy, and reward can all suffer. Carnality is not proof that salvation is false in every case. It may be proof that a real Christian is living like a fool.

### **5. Carnality Resembles the Natural Man in Conduct, Not in Standing**

Here is the distinction that must be kept sharp. The carnal Christian can resemble the natural man in behavior and mindset for a season, but he does not become a natural man again in his standing before God. He is still in Christ. He is still a child of God. He is still indwelt by the Spirit. But he is not yielding to that reality. He is walking "after the flesh" instead of "after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1, 4). His practical condition is out of joint with his positional standing. That is why he may think badly, choose badly, react badly, and even justify his flesh for a time.

This explains why some believers can sound shockingly worldly when they are under the control of bitterness, fear, lust, or pride. They begin to reason like lost men. They make choices based on self-preservation rather than truth. They can become man-centered, emotionally driven, jealous of others, attached to personalities, and resistant to correction. The Corinthians did that. They were saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos" (1 Corinthians 3:4). That is flesh talking. It is party spirit, ego, and childish comparison. Paul did not say they had ceased to be brethren. He said they were carnal.

This also helps explain why some true Christians can confuse people around them. An immature saint can behave so badly that observers begin to wonder whether he is lost. Sometimes that suspicion may be correct. Sometimes it may not. Only God sees the heart perfectly. But the biblical category of carnality means we must not jump to conclusions every time a saint stumbles or even crashes hard. David committed grievous sin. Lot lived

shamefully. Peter compromised publicly. Yet Scripture still distinguishes between the saved man's standing and the terrible folly of his flesh. That distinction is not an excuse for sin. It is a recognition of reality.

## **6. The Evidence of Life Is Different from the Perfection of Maturity**

One of the reasons this subject gets muddled is because people confuse **evidence of life** with **perfection of maturity**. A baby is alive without being grown. A child is part of the family without being strong. Likewise, a genuine believer may still be weak, inconsistent, and needing much correction. But there should still be some evidence of life. There should be some relation to Christ, some hunger for truth, some convicting work of the Spirit, some movement toward light, some capacity to be chastened, some grief over sin, some reality that goes beyond mere external culture.

Hebrews 12 is crucial here. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Hebrews 12:6). That means when a true child of God goes carnal, the Father does not shrug and ignore it. He deals with him. He chastens him. He corrects him. That chastening may be inward misery, broken fellowship, providential discipline, loss of joy, or severe consequences. The point is that the Christian who goes into the flesh does not do so in peace forever. God knows how to make His children miserable when they will not walk with Him. That chastisement is not hatred. It is love.

The false convert, on the other hand, may continue in religion with no real dealings of the Spirit, no true brokenness, no inward cry toward God, and no reality but habit and form. He may be offended by conviction rather than humbled by it. He may use grace as a shield against repentance. He may remain content with externals. The spiritual man is not sinless, and the carnal believer is not mature, but both differ from the false convert in that there is life there, and life responds when God touches it. A corpse does not respond to discipline. A child does.

## **7. Self-Examination Must Be Honest but Scriptural**

This brings us to the practical need for self-examination. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). That command does not mean a saint should live in constant panic, staring inward every five minutes to see if he still exists spiritually. But it does mean a man should not blindly assume all is well merely because he has religious memories, Christian vocabulary, or external associations. He must examine himself in light of Scripture. Has he come to Christ? Does he know the gospel? Has there been the new birth? Is there evidence of spiritual life? Is there conviction when he sins? Does he love the brethren? Does he desire the truth? Those are fair questions.

At the same time, self-examination must be scriptural, not theatrical. Some tender consciences are battered by preaching that treats every struggle as proof of lostness. A believer battling sin may conclude, "Since I am still fighting, maybe I was never saved." But the very battle may be evidence of life. The lost man is not indwelt by the Spirit in that way. The Christian may fail, but he cannot sin in peace forever. He may be miserable under conviction. He may feel broken, ashamed, and in need of restoration. Those are not signs of spiritual death. They may be signs of a saint under the rod of a faithful Father.

The answer is neither cheap assurance nor harsh suspicion. The answer is biblical clarity. The natural man needs conversion, not soothing. The carnal Christian needs repentance, obedience, and renewed walking in the Spirit, not the destruction of his assurance every week. The spiritual Christian needs to keep growing in grace and truth. So the preacher, the teacher, and the believer himself must learn to distinguish categories carefully. Otherwise, churches become places where goats are comforted and sheep are tormented. The word of God does better than that when it is handled rightly.

The distinction between the natural man and the carnal Christian is not a small technical point. It is a major biblical line that protects truth on both sides. It prevents us from mistaking false converts for weak saints, and it prevents us from denying the sad reality that true believers can walk shamefully in the flesh. The natural man is lost, without the Spirit, unable to receive spiritual truth as it must be received. The carnal Christian is saved, in Christ, indwelt by the Spirit, but behaving like a spiritual baby and walking after the flesh. The spiritual Christian is the believer yielding to God, governed by the Spirit through the word.

That distinction should make every reader honest. Some who have hidden behind church culture, doctrinal language, and outward conformity need to stop using the term "carnal Christian" as a blanket excuse and ask whether they have ever truly been born again. Others who are real believers but living in the flesh need to stop comforting themselves in disobedience and return to the Lord in repentance. Still others, tender and fearful, need to see that failure is not automatically proof of false conversion if there is genuine life, conviction, and chastening from God. The Bible is sharper and kinder than man-made confusion.

So let this chapter do its work. Let the false professor tremble. Let the carnal saint repent. Let the spiritual believer thank God for grace. And let every one of us keep Paul's categories straight, because the church desperately needs them. There are natural men in church suits, carnal believers with saved souls and messed-up lives, and spiritual Christians walking with God. When those categories are blurred, souls get hurt and truth gets

muddled. But when Scripture is believed, the line becomes clear. And once that line is clear, men can be dealt with honestly according to what they truly are before God.

### **10 of 12: The Natural Man Exposed - The Cross That Offends the Flesh**

**Main Passage: “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).**

There is no message on this earth that cuts deeper across the grain of fallen human nature than the message of the cross of Jesus Christ. Men will tolerate religion if religion leaves them some room to boast. They will tolerate moral reform if moral reform lets them feel superior. They will tolerate ceremony if ceremony gives them something to perform. They will tolerate spirituality if spirituality remains vague, flattering, and manageable. But the cross of Christ does none of those things. The cross does not flatter man. It exposes him. It does not reward his efforts. It condemns them. It does not tell him he is improving. It tells him he is ruined. It does not say he needs a boost. It says he needs to die. That is why the natural man recoils from it.

Paul does not say the preaching of the cross is mildly inconvenient to lost men. He says it is “to them that perish foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:18). That is not because the cross lacks logic in God’s plan. It is because the cross collides with everything the flesh loves. The flesh wants to rise. The cross says fall. The flesh wants to contribute. The cross says you bring nothing but guilt. The flesh wants to climb upward on a ladder of effort, morality, sacraments, penance, sincerity, and self-improvement. God takes that whole ladder away and plants a blood-stained cross in the ground. That cross says there is no way up for Adam’s race except through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So this chapter stands at the center of the whole issue. If you want to know why the natural man is blind, why worldly wisdom fails, why dead religion thrives, why men hate the light, and why spiritual things look foolish, you can bring all of it to Calvary. The cross is the great dividing line between man’s religion and God’s salvation. On one side stands everything man invents to save himself. On the other side stands what God has done through His Son. On one side stands merit. On the other side stands mercy. On one side stands boasting. On the other side stands blood. And no man ever comes to God on God’s terms until he abandons his ladder and bows before the cross.

#### **1. The Cross Declares the Total Ruin of Man**

The first reason the cross offends the flesh is because it declares the total ruin of man. If man could be repaired by education, improved by ritual, strengthened by discipline, or elevated by moral effort, then Calvary would have been unnecessary. God could have sent a teacher, a therapist, a reformer, or a legislator. But He sent His Son to die. That one fact tells you everything you need to know about the condition of the sinner. He was not merely weak. He was lost. He was not merely misguided. He was condemned. He was not merely sick. He was dead in trespasses and sins. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1).

The cross says that sin is not a surface problem. It is not a personality issue, a social inconvenience, or a minor stain that can be polished away. Sin is such an outrage against the holiness of God that nothing less than the death of the sinless Son of God could answer it. Men do not like that diagnosis. They want to think they are basically decent, occasionally flawed, and in need of guidance. The cross says otherwise. It says man is so corrupt, so guilty, and so far gone that only divine intervention through blood atonement can save him. That is why the flesh hates the cross. It destroys the sinner's preferred biography.

This is why the preaching of the cross does not sound uplifting to the natural man. It sounds like an insult. It tells him that all his imagined goodness is insufficient. It tells him that his best efforts could not spare Christ from the tree. It tells him that when God evaluated the human race, the answer was not a ladder but an execution. "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Romans 3:11). The cross takes those verses and nails them into history. It is God's public declaration that man cannot save himself because man is far worse than man wants to admit.

## **2. The Cross Destroys Human Boasting**

The second reason the flesh recoils from the cross is because the cross leaves no room for boasting. Fallen man wants some part of the credit. He wants to say he sought harder, climbed higher, gave more, suffered more, or obeyed better than others. He wants a salvation story in which he remains one of the main characters. But the cross strips him of that fantasy completely. Paul asks, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded" (Romans 3:27). Excluded by what. By the gospel of grace centered in the finished work of Christ.

At Calvary, the rich man and the poor man stand equally bankrupt. The scholar and the simpleton stand equally guilty. The church member and the outcast stand equally in need of mercy. Nobody gets to the foot of the cross carrying medals. Nobody gets to Calvary with a list of achievements that improved his standing before God. The blood of Jesus Christ levels the whole human race. That is why the natural man prefers systems of religion that

preserve distinctions of status, effort, and ritual performance. He likes a plan where he can point to what he did. The cross tells him the only thing he contributed was the sin that made the sacrifice necessary.

This is why grace and pride are such bitter enemies. Grace says God did the saving. Pride says man must have a share in it. Grace says Christ finished the work. Pride says there must be something left for me to complete. Grace says eternal life is a gift. Pride says I want wages. But “if by grace, then is it no more of works” (Romans 11:6). The cross stands there as the everlasting rebuke to human self-congratulation. It tells the moralist, the religionist, the philosopher, and the self-improver the same thing. Shut your mouth, lay your crown in the dirt, and receive mercy like a beggar, or perish in your pride.

### **3. The Cross Condemns Human Righteousness**

Nothing enrages the natural man like the suggestion that his righteousness is unacceptable before God. He may admit he is not perfect, but he still believes there is something in him worth presenting as a recommendation. The cross wipes that whole file clean. Isaiah said, “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). Not just our sins. Our righteousnesses. That means the very things men polish, display, and rely upon are unclean in the sight of a thrice holy God when used as grounds of acceptance before Him.

The cross proves that point in the strongest possible way. If human righteousness could save, then Christ died in vain. If sacraments could save, He died in vain. If church membership could save, He died in vain. If family heritage could save, He died in vain. If law-keeping could save, He died in vain. Paul says, “if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Galatians 2:21). There is no softer way to put it. Every system that adds human righteousness as a contributing cause of justification is an insult to Calvary. It treats the blood of Christ as helpful rather than absolutely necessary.

That is why the flesh prefers religion to the gospel. Religion lets a man remain dressed in his own garments. The gospel strips him and clothes him in Christ. Religion lets him point to fasting, ceremonies, alms, ordinances, holy days, and personal discipline. The gospel points only to Jesus Christ and Him crucified. “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). The cross says your righteousness is not enough, but Christ is enough. And the flesh hates that because it would rather stand in filthy rags of its own making than in a spotless robe it did not earn.

### **4. The Natural Man Wants a Ladder, but God Gives a Cross**

Man’s instinctive religion is always ladder religion. He wants steps, stages, levels, rituals, disciplines, merit badges, and progress reports. He wants something to climb because

climbing preserves the illusion of self-salvation. From Babel to Rome, from pagan temples to modern self-help religion, the instinct is the same. Man wants to ascend. He wants to rise by effort. He wants to achieve spiritual standing through process. But God does not hand the sinner a ladder. He hands him a cross. That is the scandal.

The tower of Babel is a perfect early picture of this instinct. Men said, “let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven” (Genesis 11:4). That is the religion of the flesh in one sentence. Let us build. Let us ascend. Let us make us a name. Every false gospel says the same thing in different language. Some say climb through moral effort. Some say climb through ceremony. Some say climb through mystical experience. Some say climb through penance. Some say climb through inner enlightenment. God comes down, confounds the project, and later reveals the one true way through His Son crucified.

Jacob saw a ladder in Genesis 28, but the true fulfillment of that picture is not man climbing up to God. It is God providing access through Christ. Jesus said, “Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man” (John 1:51). Christ is the access. Christ is the meeting place. Christ is the way. And that access is secured not by our ascent but by His descent, humiliation, suffering, death, and resurrection. The natural man hates that because he wants a religion of achievement. God gives him a Saviour who bleeds. Man says, “Tell me what to do.” God says, “Look what My Son has done.”

## **5. The Cross Demands Death and Resurrection, Not Improvement**

The flesh wants improvement. It wants management strategies, positive reinforcement, and religious upgrades. It wants to keep the old man alive and make him more respectable. But the cross does not offer a makeover for Adam. It pronounces death upon him. Jesus said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). Paul says believers are “crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20). That is not language of mere adjustment. That is language of execution.

This is where the offense becomes unbearable to the natural man. He is willing to be coached, but not crucified. He is willing to be inspired, but not slain. He is willing to adopt a spiritual lifestyle, but not abandon faith in himself. The cross says the old man is not fixable. He must die. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him” (Romans 6:6). The flesh wants God to improve what He has already condemned. God does not rehabilitate the old nature. He judges it in the cross of Christ and brings the believer into new life through union with the risen Saviour.

That is why salvation is not self-improvement but new creation. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The natural man hears that and objects

because he wants continuity with his pride. He wants to remain the same basic person, only spiritually accessorized. But the gospel does not work that way. It breaks him down before it builds him up. It buries before it raises. It ends the reign of self before it begins a life in Christ. That is why the cross is such a dividing line. It offers no treaty with the flesh. It declares war on it.

## **6. The Cross Leaves No Hope Except the Blood of Christ**

The cross is offensive because it leaves the sinner with no hope except the blood of Jesus Christ. That is humbling beyond words. Man wants multiple options. He wants backup plans, secondary paths, and partial credits. He wants to be told that if he does his best, God will meet him halfway. The cross burns all of that to ashes. It says plainly that without the shedding of blood there is no remission. "And without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). That is final. That is narrow. That is offensive to every religion of human effort on earth.

The natural man especially hates the blood because the blood reminds him that sin is costly, judgment is real, and death is deserved. He does not mind spiritual language in the abstract, but blood is too vivid. Blood means violence against his fantasy of innocence. Blood means substitution. Blood means guilt being answered by sacrifice. Blood means God did not overlook sin or grade it on a curve. So modern religion, when it goes soft and apostate, starts trimming the blood out of the hymnbook, out of the preaching, out of the doctrine, and out of the public vocabulary. Why. Because a bloodless religion is far easier on proud flesh.

But Scripture will not permit that retreat. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14). "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold" but "with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19). The sinner has no other hope. Not baptism. Not good works. Not liturgy. Not law. Not tears. Not resolutions. Not promises. Blood. The cross says so, and that is why the flesh gnashes its teeth at it. The cross shuts every other door and leaves one way only, the crucified Saviour.

## **7. Christ Crucified Is the Great Dividing Line**

The final point is that Christ crucified is the great dividing line between man's religion and God's salvation. Paul did not say he came proclaiming Christ as a moral example primarily, or Christ as a social reformer, or Christ as an uplifting teacher. He said, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). That is not because the resurrection, ascension, and second coming do not matter. They

do. But the cross stands at the center because it is there that the issue between God and sinful man is dealt with.

Every false system stumbles right here. Some want Christ without blood. Some want morality without substitution. Some want spirituality without atonement. Some want a kingdom without a cross. Some want a Jesus who inspires but does not redeem. But the apostolic gospel will not allow it. "We preach Christ crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:23). Not Christ merely admired. Not Christ merely discussed. Christ crucified. That message is what divides saved from lost, grace from works, revelation from speculation, and God's way from man's way. The Jew stumbled. The Greek mocked. The apostle preached it anyway.

And it still divides. It divides denominations. It divides pulpits. It divides families. It divides hearts. One man hears Christ crucified and falls at His feet. Another hears the same message and stiffens in offense. One sees wisdom and power. Another sees foolishness and weakness. What makes the difference. Not the message itself, but the condition of the hearer. The cross is a revealer. It reveals whether a man wants God's salvation or his own religion. It reveals whether he is willing to abandon merit and trust mercy. It reveals whether he will glory in the Lord or cling to himself.

The cross offends the flesh because the cross tells the truth about man, and man hates that truth until grace breaks him. It tells him he is ruined, not repairable. It tells him he is guilty, not merely struggling. It tells him he is powerless to save himself and that every ladder he has built toward heaven must be kicked away. It tells him his righteousness is filthy, his boasting is excluded, his merit is worthless, and his only hope is the blood of Jesus Christ. That is why the natural man recoils. He does not hate the cross because it is irrational. He hates it because it is fatal to his pride.

This also explains why the world loves every version of religion except the gospel. It will tolerate ethics, spirituality, ritual, tradition, inspiration, ceremony, and mysticism as long as man gets to keep a piece of the throne. But the preaching of Christ crucified rips the throne out from under him. It says salvation is of the Lord. It says grace reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ. It says the sinner comes empty-handed or not at all. That message has never been popular with the flesh, and it never will be. It is still "unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:23).

But for the man who has been brought to the end of himself, the cross is not foolishness. It is life. It is peace. It is wisdom. It is the place where mercy and truth meet, where righteousness and peace kiss each other, where sin is judged and the sinner can go free. The natural man wants a ladder, but God gives a cross. The natural man wants improvement, but God gives death and resurrection. The natural man wants merit, but God

gives grace. Blessed be God for that cross. For without it, there would be no gospel, no pardon, no hope, and no way home for any sinner on this earth.

### **11 of 12: The Natural Man Exposed - From Natural to Spiritual**

**Main Passage: “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you” (Romans 8:9).**

After exposing the natural man from every angle, there comes a point where the spotlight has to turn from diagnosis to deliverance. It is one thing to say that the natural man is blind, dead, proud, hostile, and unable to receive the things of the Spirit of God. It is another thing to show what God actually does to rescue a sinner out of that condition. Thank God the Bible does not stop with ruin. It does not merely describe the grave and then walk away. It tells you about resurrection. It does not merely expose darkness and then leave the sinner in the dark. It tells you about light from heaven. It does not merely pronounce the sentence. It reveals the Saviour who steps into the courtroom, pays the debt, breaks the chains, and gives life to the dead.

That is the turning point of this whole series. Up to now we have seen what the natural man is and why he cannot fix himself. He cannot educate himself into life. He cannot discipline himself into regeneration. He cannot reform himself into sonship. He cannot reason himself into the new birth. He cannot therapize himself into spiritual understanding. He cannot wash the corpse, dress the corpse, and then call it alive. The problem is too deep for that. The natural man is not merely damaged. He is dead in trespasses and sins. “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). When the Bible says dead, it means dead. Dead men do not collaborate in their resurrection. God must act.

So this chapter is full of hope, but it is not the hope of self-improvement. It is not the hope of turning over a new leaf, joining a church, cleaning up habits, or becoming more sincere. It is the hope of a supernatural act of God. The Lord can take a blind sinner and give him eyes to see. He can take a deaf sinner and give him ears to hear. He can take a dead sinner and make him alive. He can take a rebel who hates the light and make him love the truth. He can take a natural man and make him spiritual, not by polishing Adam, but by putting him in Christ through the miracle of the new birth. That is not psychology. That is not moralism. That is not religion. That is salvation.

#### **1. The New Birth Is Not Improvement but New Life**

The first truth that must be settled is that the answer to the natural man is not improvement but new birth. Jesus did not tell Nicodemus to study more, try harder, or become more devout. He said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). That statement cuts across every religious system in the world. Christ did not offer Nicodemus a ladder. He offered him life from above. The issue was not whether Nicodemus was respectable. He was. The issue was not whether he was religious. He was. The issue was not whether he knew Scripture language. He did. The issue was that he had never been born again.

That new birth is not a figure for emotional excitement or outward religious affiliation. It is a real spiritual miracle whereby God imparts life to a sinner who was dead before Him. Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). Flesh does not evolve into spirit. Flesh does not educate itself into a higher state. Flesh remains flesh until God does something supernatural. The natural man can become polished flesh, disciplined flesh, religious flesh, wounded flesh, conservative flesh, even theological flesh, but it is still flesh. Only the Holy Ghost can produce spiritual life.

This is why the new birth is such an offense to human pride. It tells a man he does not need a minor adjustment. He needs a miracle. He does not need God to help the old man become acceptable. He needs God to create something new. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17). That is not rehabilitation of the old nature. That is a new creation union with Jesus Christ. And unless that happens, the sinner may have religion, morality, tradition, and ceremony, but he is still natural.

## **2. Regeneration Is the Work of God, Not Man**

The second thing that must be nailed down is that regeneration is God's work, not man's achievement. Scripture says plainly, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). That verse alone ought to shut down every religion of merit. Regeneration is not earned. It is not deserved. It is not purchased by personal effort. It is not given because a man has improved enough to qualify. It is an act of divine mercy.

This is why the sinner's hope can never rest in self-discipline, spiritual exercises, better habits, or therapeutic insight. Those things may alter behavior on the surface, but they cannot produce life. A dead sinner does not need coaching. He needs quickening. He does not need a cleaner record. He needs a new nature. James says, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth" (James 1:18). First Peter says we are "born again, not of corruptible

seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). In both places the begetting work is God’s. He uses His word, but the power is His.

That truth destroys boasting and fills the gospel with hope at the same time. It destroys boasting because no man can say he regenerated himself. But it fills the gospel with hope because if salvation depended on man’s ability, nobody would ever be saved. The natural man cannot climb out of his grave. But the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead is fully able to speak life into a dead heart. That means the worst sinner, the hardest skeptic, the coldest religionist, and the most hopeless rebel are not beyond the reach of God if He chooses to work in power.

### **3. Quickening Means the Dead Sinner Is Made Alive**

The Bible does not merely say the sinner is helped. It says he is quickened. “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:5). Quickening is life-giving action. It is not a motivational boost. It is not a temporary emotional lift. It is not a religious thrill. It is the impartation of life where there was death. That is why salvation is so much more than moral reform. Reformation can clean up manners. Quickening changes nature. Reformation can restrain outward conduct. Quickening raises the soul into living relation with God.

Think about Lazarus in John 11. The Lord did not stand outside the tomb and offer him a plan for self-recovery. He cried, “Lazarus, come forth” (John 11:43). Life came by divine command. So it is spiritually. The sinner in himself is dead, bound, helpless, and unable to respond until God works. When the Lord speaks life, the dead hear. Jesus said, “The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (John 5:25). That is not poetry. That is reality. The gospel is the vehicle through which God calls dead sinners into life by His Spirit.

This is why a true conversion is such a radical thing. The man who once had no appetite for truth begins to hunger for the word of God. The man who once hated the light begins to come to it. The man who once shrugged at Christ begins to see His beauty. The man who once defended his sin begins to confess it. The man who once loved darkness begins to desire holiness. That change is not explained by personality adjustment alone. It is explained by quickening. Life has entered where death once ruled.

### **4. The Gift of the Holy Ghost Changes Everything**

When God saves a sinner, He does not merely forgive him and leave him empty. He gives him the Holy Ghost. “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts” (Galatians 4:6). Romans 8:9 says, “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” That means the indwelling Spirit is not an optional extra for

advanced believers. He is the mark of belonging to Christ. The difference between the natural man and the spiritual man is not a difference in education, background, or temperament. It is the indwelling Spirit of God.

This is where the whole thing turns. The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God because he lacks the Spirit. The saved man begins to know those things because he has received “the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Corinthians 2:12). The Holy Ghost illuminates the word, convicts of sin, testifies of Christ, produces spiritual fruit, and leads the believer into truth. He does not make the Christian omniscient, but He does bring him into a real living relation with divine truth that the natural man has never known.

That is why a true convert is more than a forgiven sinner on paper. He is a man indwelt by God. He becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost. He has new capacities, new desires, new warfare, and new light. He may still struggle. He may still need growth. He may still battle the flesh. But he is no longer alone inside the prison of fallen nature. The Spirit of God has taken up residence. That changes prayer, changes understanding, changes affection, changes conviction, and changes the whole direction of life. The answer to the natural man is not simply information. It is the indwelling Holy Ghost.

## **5. God Opens Blind Eyes, Deaf Ears, and Hardened Hearts**

The natural man is blind to spiritual truth, deaf to spiritual appeal, and hard in heart toward God. Only the Lord can reverse that. Jesus said, “For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see” (John 9:39). Paul testified that he was sent to the Gentiles, “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light” (Acts 26:18). That kind of language is not exaggeration. It is exact. The sinner does not merely need additional information. He needs the Lord to open what is shut.

Lydia is a beautiful example. In Acts 16, Paul preached, but it was the Lord “whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Acts 16:14). There it is. The preacher spoke, but the Lord opened. That is why no preacher can brag when souls get saved, and no sinner can save himself by sheer willingness. God must work. The word must be preached, but the Lord must open the heart. When He does, the truth that once seemed foolish becomes clear and glorious. When He does not, a man may hear the same sermon and walk away unchanged.

This is also why Ezekiel’s promise is so precious. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you” (Ezekiel 36:26). Though given in a covenant setting to Israel, the principle of divine heart work stands plain. God knows how to take the stony heart and deal with it. He knows how to soften what sin has hardened. He knows how to make a rebel

tremble and a mocker listen. He knows how to stop a Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road and turn a persecutor into a preacher. The answer is not that man finally sees clearly on his own. The answer is that God gives sight.

## **6. Salvation Is Not Therapy, Reform, or Religious Makeover**

At this point it must be said plainly that salvation is not therapy, not religious improvement, and not moral adjustment. Modern man wants every problem interpreted in manageable terms. If the issue is trauma, perhaps counseling alone can heal it. If the issue is bad habits, perhaps discipline alone can cure it. If the issue is social environment, perhaps relocation can solve it. If the issue is ignorance, perhaps education can fix it. But the Bible says the deepest human problem is sin and death. That cannot be cured by a makeover. It must be met by the saving work of God.

Now some of those outward helps may have a place in their proper sphere. A man may need counsel. He may need accountability. He may need to break destructive habits. He may need practical help. But none of those things can regenerate him. A pig can be washed. It is still a pig. A Pharisee can be polished. He is still lost without Christ. A church member can adopt cleaner behavior and still be dead spiritually. That is why Jesus was not impressed by external religion. He said, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). Not advised. Not inspired. Born again.

This matters because many people mistake religious reform for salvation. They stop drinking, start attending church, clean up their speech, change their friend group, and assume they have therefore been converted. Perhaps they have been. Perhaps they have not. The real question is whether God has made them alive in Christ. Has there been the new birth. Has there been saving faith in the finished work of Christ. Has the Spirit of God entered and begun His work. “Therefore if the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). That is deeper than self-management. That is deliverance.

## **7. From Natural to Spiritual Happens Through Christ Alone**

The movement from natural to spiritual does not happen through human development. It happens through union with Jesus Christ. The sinner is brought out of Adam and into Christ by faith in the gospel. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). Adam is the realm of nature, death, flesh, and condemnation. Christ is the realm of life, righteousness, grace, and the Spirit. The only way out of the old realm is through the crucified and risen Son of God.

That is why the gospel must stay central. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). The sinner who believes on Him is justified, forgiven, reconciled, and made alive. The issue is not whether

the sinner can climb toward God. The issue is whether he will receive the Saviour God has provided. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12). That verse is wonderfully simple and terribly final. Life is in the Son.

This should make the whole matter intensely evangelistic. There is hope for the natural man, but not in himself. There is hope in Christ. There is hope for the blind, the dead, the proud, the bitter, the religious, the immoral, the broken, and the hardened, because the Son of God still saves. He still quickens. He still regenerates. He still gives the Holy Ghost. He still opens hearts. He still brings sinners from darkness to light. And He does it in such a way that all the glory belongs to Him. The natural man becomes spiritual only because God in Christ does what man never could.

The answer to the natural man is not a better environment, a higher education, a stricter code, a cleaner habit list, or a more religious routine. The answer is the supernatural saving work of God. The sinner must be born again. He must be quickened from spiritual death. He must receive the Holy Ghost. He must be brought into Christ. Until that happens, he remains what he has always been by nature. But once God acts, the whole story changes. The dead live. The blind see. The deaf hear. The rebel bows. The darkness breaks.

That is why no case is hopeless when God is in it. If salvation depended on man's reason, some men would be too confused. If it depended on man's morality, some men would be too filthy. If it depended on man's willpower, some men would be too enslaved. If it depended on religious merit, every man would be lost. But because salvation is of the Lord, the door of hope stands open. "For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). Grace means God can reach the unreachable. Grace means Christ can save to the uttermost. Grace means the natural man is not beyond rescue if the Lord moves in power.

So let this chapter stand as a trumpet blast in the middle of the series. The natural man is not left to rot in his darkness if he will come to Christ. The same God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness can shine in the sinner's heart (2 Corinthians 4:6). The same Christ who called Lazarus from the grave can call dead souls into life. The same Holy Ghost who opened Lydia's heart can open others still. From natural to spiritual is not a human climb. It is a divine rescue. And blessed be God, it is still happening wherever the gospel is preached and the Spirit of God gives life.

## **12 of 12: The Natural Man Exposed - The Mind of Christ**

**Main Passage: "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16).**

The series has spent its strength exposing the natural man from every side. We have seen him in his blindness, his pride, his religion without life, his worldly wisdom, his love of darkness, his inability to receive spiritual truth, his fleshly reasoning, and his offense at the cross. We have watched him wear a suit and remain dead, carry a Bible and remain blind, speak of morals and remain lost, admire religion and remain outside the kingdom of God. But the Christian faith does not end with the wreckage of Adam. It does not stop with the diagnosis. It does not leave a man standing in the ruins of his natural state wondering whether there is anything greater than exposure. Thank God, there is. The answer to the natural man is not simply that his darkness has been identified. The answer is that God gives light. The answer is not that folly has been condemned alone. The answer is that wisdom from above has been given in Jesus Christ.

This is why 1 Corinthians 2 closes so gloriously. Paul does not merely say the natural man cannot know the things of God because they are spiritually discerned. He goes on to say, “But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16). That is one of the most staggering statements in the whole New Testament. It means the believer is not left crawling around in the old darkness with a warning label pinned to his chest. He is brought into a new realm. Through the word of God and the Spirit of God, he is given access to truth from above. He is taught to think in line with divine revelation. He is not made omniscient, but he is made alive. He is not turned into a little god, but he is brought into living fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ through whom the wisdom of God is made known.

That means the Christian life is more than escaping what we once were. It is entering what God has provided. It is more than rejecting error. It is receiving truth. It is more than leaving darkness. It is walking in light. It is more than ceasing to be merely natural. It is learning to be spiritual. It is more than being warned about the folly of this world. It is being taught by the One who is “Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24). So this final essay must bring the series to its highest point. The answer to the natural mind is not self-improvement. The answer is the mind of Christ. The answer is not a better version of Adam. The answer is transformation by union with the Son of God.

### **1. The Natural Mind and the Mind of Christ Stand in Total Contrast**

The natural mind is earthbound, self-protecting, proud, and darkened. It judges by sight, values by self-interest, reasons from fallen assumptions, and recoils from whatever humbles the flesh. It hears the cross and calls it foolishness. It sees grace and calls it weakness. It hears of holiness and calls it extremism. It hears the authority of Scripture and calls it narrowness. It hears judgment and calls it primitive. The natural mind is not neutral. It is tilted away from God. Romans 8:7 says, “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God.” That means the old mind is not merely out of step with God. It is hostile to Him.

By contrast, the mind of Christ is perfectly aligned with the will, truth, holiness, and wisdom of God. Christ did not think as fallen man thinks. He did not react out of self-exaltation. He did not judge according to appearance. He said, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). That one line alone is enough to expose the natural man from top to bottom. The natural man lives for self. Christ lived in perfect obedience to the Father. The natural man seeks self-glory. Christ "made himself of no reputation" (Philippians 2:7). The natural man preserves self. Christ humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8).

So when Paul says, "we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16), he is not speaking about a little religious upgrade to natural thinking. He is speaking about a radical new relationship to truth through Christ. The believer is brought into a realm where he begins to see things from God's side instead of the flesh's side. He begins to value what the world despises and despise what the world values. He begins to interpret reality through the revelation of God rather than through the instincts of fallen nature. That is a total contrast. That is why a saved man thinking spiritually can no longer feel at home in the old darkness.

## **2. The Mind of Christ Is Given Through the Spirit and the Word**

The mind of Christ is not manufactured by human effort. It is not achieved by personality type, educational attainment, or emotional intensity. It is given through the ministry of the Holy Ghost using the word of God. Earlier in the chapter Paul says, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God. that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12). There is the source. The believer has received the Spirit of God. That is why he can begin to know the things of God. The mind of Christ is not self-generated wisdom. It is Spirit-given understanding.

At the same time, the Spirit does not work apart from the Scriptures He inspired. The Lord Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth. thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The Christian does not drift into the mind of Christ by chasing impressions detached from the Bible. He receives the mind of Christ as the Spirit of God illumines the word of God and conforms him to the Son of God. That is why Bible reading, doctrine, meditation, preaching, and obedience matter so much. The believer is not trying to become mystical. He is being taught to think according to revelation.

This is also why spiritual discernment is not reserved for a tiny elite class of Christians. The weakest true believer has access to the same Christ, the same Spirit, and the same Book. He may not be mature. He may not understand everything at once. He may stumble badly. But if he is truly born again, the Spirit of God is at work in him, opening truth, correcting error, exposing flesh, and drawing him into the thought world of Scripture. The mind of

Christ is not a human trophy. It is a divine gift, and it grows as the saint yields himself to the truth.

### **3. The Christian Life Is Entering Light, Not Merely Escaping Darkness**

One of the dangers in a series like this is that a reader might come away thinking the whole Christian life is mainly about what we are no longer. We are no longer natural, no longer dead, no longer blind, no longer under wrath. Thank God that is true. But the New Testament goes further. The Christian life is not merely subtraction. It is addition. It is not merely deliverance from darkness. It is entrance into light. Paul says, “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord” (Ephesians 5:8). That is an astonishing change. He does not merely say they left a dark room. He says they were darkness and now are light in the Lord.

That means the believer’s calling is not simply to keep looking backward at the pit. It is to walk forward in light. “Walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8). The mind of Christ is the practical expression of that calling. The believer is learning to think in the light, choose in the light, judge in the light, suffer in the light, and obey in the light. He is no longer ruled by the old instincts of self-preserving darkness. He is being taught to see reality as it truly is before God. That is a glorious change. The Christian is not just less blind than he used to be. He has been brought under heavenly illumination.

This also means the believer should never be content merely to avoid open worldliness while remaining mentally shallow and spiritually dull. God did not save a man just so he could stop doing the worst things and then sit in neutral. He saved him to bring him into truth, wisdom, discernment, and conformity to Christ. The mind of Christ is active. It studies, receives, discerns, loves, obeys, and worships. It is not sleepy. It is not passive. It is not content with clichés. It wants reality. It wants the deep things of God because the Spirit of God has given the believer an appetite that the natural man never had.

### **4. The Mind of Christ Teaches the Believer to Value What Heaven Values**

The natural mind values applause, power, control, appearance, ease, reputation, and earthly success. The mind of Christ values truth, holiness, obedience, humility, faithfulness, and the glory of God. That difference is enormous. Jesus said, “I receive not honour from men” (John 5:41). That sentence alone would dismantle half of what passes for ministry in this age. The natural man feeds on the praise of men. Christ was not governed by it. The natural man asks, “What will this do for me.” The mind of Christ asks, “What glorifies the Father.”

This shows up in every area of the Christian life. The world asks whether something is popular. The mind of Christ asks whether it is true. The world asks whether something feels

affirming. The mind of Christ asks whether it is righteous. The world asks whether a path protects self-interest. The mind of Christ asks whether it is faithful. The world calls the cross a loss. The mind of Christ sees obedience unto death as victory. That is why believers often look strange to the world. They are operating by a different set of values because they have been taught by a different wisdom.

Paul captures this when he says in Philippians 2:5, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” He then points to Christ’s humility, obedience, self-emptying, and submission to the Father’s will. That is the exact opposite of the age’s spirit. The age says promote yourself. Christ humbled Himself. The age says demand your rights. Christ took the form of a servant. The age says preserve your image. Christ endured the shame of the cross. If a believer is going to walk in the mind of Christ, he must learn to value what heaven values, even when earth mocks him for it.

## **5. The Mind of Christ Produces Spiritual Discernment**

Spiritual discernment is not mere doctrinal vocabulary. It is the ability to judge things according to God’s revealed truth. Paul says, “But he that is spiritual judgeth all things” (1 Corinthians 2:15). That does not mean the spiritual man becomes arrogant and omniscient. It means he is brought into a position where, by the Spirit and the word, he can evaluate matters with heavenly light rather than fleshly instinct. The natural man judges by appearance, sentiment, public pressure, and worldly logic. The spiritual man judges by Scripture.

This is one of the great blessings of having the mind of Christ. The believer is no longer left to drift with the age, tossed to and fro by trends, personalities, emotional manipulation, and spiritual counterfeits. He has a standard. He has a Book. He has the Spirit of truth. He can test the spirits, examine teachings, weigh motives, and discern the difference between the wisdom that is from above and the wisdom that is earthly, sensual, devilish (James 3:15-17). That is not because he is naturally sharper than others. It is because he has been brought into the light of divine truth.

This matters tremendously in a world overflowing with religious confusion. There are false teachers using Bible words with false meanings, movements built on emotional excitement without scriptural substance, polished personalities who know how to move crowds while starving souls, and cultural voices that repackage rebellion as enlightenment. The Christian who has the mind of Christ is not safe because he is suspicious of everything. He is safe because he is grounded in the truth. He can recognize the counterfeit because he knows the real. He can identify the spirit of the world because he has received the Spirit which is of God.

## **6. The Mind of Christ Is Formed in Humility, Obedience, and Fellowship**

The mind of Christ is not merely an intellectual possession. It is formed in the context of living fellowship with the Lord through humility, obedience, and yieldedness. A man may accumulate facts and still remain shallow if he is proud, self-willed, and resistant to correction. The Lord gives grace to the humble. He teaches the meek. “The meek will he guide in judgment. and the meek will he teach his way” (Psalm 25:9). That means the mind of Christ grows best in a heart that is willing to bow.

This is why carnality clouds discernment. A saved man walking in pride, bitterness, lust, envy, or stubbornness will find his spiritual understanding choked and dulled. The mind of Christ is not enjoyed in full by a believer clinging to the flesh. The Spirit is grieved. Fellowship is disrupted. The saint may still be saved, but his practical enjoyment of spiritual light is badly hindered. That is why confession, repentance, submission, and obedience matter so much. God does not reveal the riches of His truth to feed curiosity in rebels. He teaches those who are willing to walk with Him.

The Lord Jesus said, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine” (John 7:17). There is a moral element in spiritual understanding. A willing heart receives light that a defiant heart resists. This does not mean obedience earns revelation in a meritorious sense. It means that God’s truth is not given merely as data to be admired from a distance. It is given to govern life. The mind of Christ grows where there is humble fellowship with Christ. It is not merely downloaded into a proud spectator. It is formed in a disciple.

## **7. Christ Himself Is the Wisdom of God and the Believer’s Final Hope**

The highest point of this whole series is not merely that the believer thinks differently. It is that he has Christ. Paul says, “But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24). The mind of Christ is not some detached principle floating around in the air. It is bound up in the person of Christ Himself. He is not only the teacher of wisdom. He is wisdom incarnate. He is not only the revealer of truth. He is “the truth” (John 14:6). He is not only the giver of light. He is “the light of the world” (John 8:12).

That means the Christian’s final hope is not in his own level of maturity but in the Lord Jesus Christ who remains his wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30). Believers grow, learn, and are transformed, but their safety is not in how flawlessly they perform spiritual thought. Their safety is in Christ. He is the source, the center, and the end of all true discernment. He saves the sinner, indwells the believer by His Spirit, teaches him through the word, and will one day perfect him completely. That is why this series must end with Christ magnified, not man improved.

And one day the conflict between the natural mind and the mind of Christ will end in full victory. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2). There is the final triumph. The believer who now struggles, learns, repents, grows, and often stumbles under the burden of remaining flesh will one day be perfectly conformed to the image of Christ. The mind of Christ, now possessed truly but imperfectly in practice, will then be unhindered, whole, and complete. That is where grace is carrying every child of God.

The natural man is a wreck of blindness, pride, hostility, and folly. He judges by darkness and lives by self. He cannot know the things of God because they are spiritually discerned. Left to himself, he remains trapped within the prison of fallen nature. But the gospel does not leave the sinner there. In Christ, God rescues, regenerates, quickens, indwells, teaches, and transforms. The believer is not merely warned away from the natural mind. He is brought into the mind of Christ. That is the glory of salvation.

This means the Christian life is not a bare escape from judgment, though it certainly includes that. It is an entrance into truth, light, wisdom, and fellowship with the Son of God. It is not just a cancellation of guilt. It is a transformation of thought. The believer begins to think in line with divine revelation, to value what heaven values, to discern what the world cannot see, and to walk in the light that once exposed him. That is not human improvement. That is spiritual transformation. That is not Adam polished. That is Christ formed.

So let this final chapter stand as the triumphant conclusion to the whole series. The answer to the natural man is not found in psychology, philosophy, education, ritual, self-discipline, or moral effort. The answer is Jesus Christ. He is the wisdom of God. He is the source of all true discernment. He gives His people the Spirit, the Scriptures, and the mind of Christ. And because of Him, the series does not end merely with darkness exposed. It ends with the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shining above it all (2 Corinthians 4:6). That is where all true wisdom begins, all true discernment grows, and all true victory ends.

### **Series Conclusion - The Natural Man Exposed**

As this series comes to a close, the great lesson should now stand plain. The natural man is not misunderstood merely because he lacks information. He is fallen, blind, proud, resistant to God, and unable to receive the things of the Spirit of God as they must be received. Throughout these studies, we have seen that this natural condition shows itself in

many forms. Sometimes it appears in open worldliness. Sometimes it hides behind education, culture, philosophy, or public respectability. Sometimes it wears religious language, attends church, quotes Scripture, and carries itself with moral seriousness. But whatever shape it takes, the root problem remains the same. Man by nature is alienated from the life of God, hostile to divine truth, and helpless to raise himself above the ruin of Adam. The natural man may appear refined, thoughtful, and sincere, but sincerity cannot regenerate him, intellect cannot enlighten him spiritually, and religion cannot make him alive.


We have also seen that the issue is far deeper than outward conduct. The natural man does not merely fail to understand truth by accident. He loves darkness because his deeds are evil. He recoils at the cross because it destroys his boasting. He resists grace because grace leaves him no room for merit. He stumbles at holiness because holiness exposes his corruption. He mistrusts Scripture because Scripture speaks with authority over him. In every chapter of this series, one truth has returned again and again - the answer is not in man. The answer is not in his wisdom, his morality, his feelings, his traditions, his systems, or his efforts. The answer is not a better natural man. The answer is a new man in Christ. The answer is the new birth, the quickening power of God, the indwelling Holy Ghost, and the mind of Christ given through the word of God.

So let the final note of this series be one of both warning and triumph. Let every lost man be warned that religion without regeneration will damn him just as surely as open rebellion. Let every false professor be warned that outward form cannot replace inward life. Let every carnal believer be warned that walking after the flesh will cloud his discernment and dishonor his Lord. But let every child of God rejoice that the story does not end with the natural man exposed. It ends with Christ exalted. Jesus Christ is still the wisdom of God and the power of God. He still saves sinners, opens blind eyes, raises the dead, gives the Spirit, and teaches His people to walk in truth. The darkness has been exposed in this series, but the final word belongs to the light. And that light shines in the face of Jesus Christ, who alone can take a natural man and make him a new creature for the glory of God.































# THE NATURAL MAN EXPOSED

A KJV Rightly Divided Study Chart

1 Corinthians 2:14 — "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God..."



VERSEQUEST  
MINISTRIES

<h3>1. The Natural Man Defined</h3>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsaved man in Adam</li> <li>• Unregenerate, spiritually dead</li> <li>• May be moral, educated, or religious</li> <li>• Lacks the indwelling Spirit</li> </ul> <p><i>"dead in trespasses and sins"</i> (Eph. 2:1)</p> <p><i>"That which is born of the flesh is flesh"</i> (John 3:6)</p> <p><i>"the natural man receiveth not..."</i> (1 Cor. 2:14)</p>	<h3>2. Why He Rejects Truth</h3> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">             Spiritual things         </td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;"> <i>"foolishness unto him"</i> (1 Cor. 2:14)         </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">             Moral reason         </td> <td style="text-align: center;"> <i>"men loved darkness"</i> (John 3:19)         </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">             Mental limit         </td> <td style="text-align: center;"> <i>"they are spiritually discerned"</i> (1 Cor. 2:14)         </td> </tr> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not only unwilling</li> <li>• Also unable in his natural state</li> <li>• Judges divine truth with natural reason</li> </ul>	 Spiritual things	<i>"foolishness unto him"</i> (1 Cor. 2:14)	 Moral reason	<i>"men loved darkness"</i> (John 3:19)	 Mental limit	<i>"they are spiritually discerned"</i> (1 Cor. 2:14)	<h3>3. Two Wisdoms Compared</h3> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">             Wisdom of This World         </td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">             Wisdom of God         </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proud</li> <li>• Earthly</li> <li>• Human-centered</li> <li>• Cannot know God</li> <li>• Ends in folly</li> </ul> <p><i>"the world by wisdom knew not God"</i> (1 Cor. 1:21)</p> <p><i>"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools"</i> (Rom. 1:22)</p> </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revealed by the Spirit</li> <li>• Centered in Christ</li> <li>• Humbles man</li> <li>• Saves the sinner</li> <li>• Leads to truth</li> </ul> <p><i>"Christ the... wisdom of God"</i> (1 Cor. 1:24)</p> <p><i>"God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit"</i> (1 Cor. 2:10)</p> </td> </tr> </table>	 Wisdom of This World	 Wisdom of God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proud</li> <li>• Earthly</li> <li>• Human-centered</li> <li>• Cannot know God</li> <li>• Ends in folly</li> </ul> <p><i>"the world by wisdom knew not God"</i> (1 Cor. 1:21)</p> <p><i>"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools"</i> (Rom. 1:22)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revealed by the Spirit</li> <li>• Centered in Christ</li> <li>• Humbles man</li> <li>• Saves the sinner</li> <li>• Leads to truth</li> </ul> <p><i>"Christ the... wisdom of God"</i> (1 Cor. 1:24)</p> <p><i>"God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit"</i> (1 Cor. 2:10)</p>	<h3>4. Religious but Lost</h3>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form without power</li> <li>• Church culture without new birth</li> <li>• Bible words without Bible life</li> <li>• Outward profession is not regeneration</li> </ul> <p><i>"Ye must be born again"</i> (John 3:7)</p> <p><i>"a form of godliness"</i> (2 Tim. 3:5)</p> <p><i>"I never knew you"</i> (Matt. 7:23)</p>	<h3>5. Blind Leaders</h3>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilate — "What is truth?" (John 18:38)</li> <li>• Festus — "much learning doth make thee mad" (Acts 26:24)</li> <li>• Agrippa — "Almost thou persuadest me" (Acts 26:28)</li> <li>• Athens — "some mocked" (Acts 17:32)</li> <li>• Pharisees — "blind guides" (Matt. 23:16)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Position does not equal discernment.</p>	
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A clear VerseQuest chart summarizing the whole Natural Man Exposed series, showing the natural man's blindness, pride, false religion, worldly wisdom, and God's answer in Christ.