

1 Corinthians 2:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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.

Paul employs an argument from analogy: human self-knowledge parallels divine self-knowledge. *Tis oiden* (τίς οἶδεν, "who knows") emphasizes exclusive knowledge. *To pneuma tou anthrōpou to en autō* (τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ, "the spirit of man within him") refers to human consciousness—inner thoughts, motives, memories inaccessible to others.

The comparison—**even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God** (*houtōs kai ta tou theou oudeis egnōken ei mē to pneuma tou theou, οὕτως καὶ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐδεὶς ἔγνωνεν εἰ μὴ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ*)—establishes Spirit's unique epistemological position. Only divine self-disclosure makes God knowable. This undergirds Trinitarian theology: Spirit's comprehensive knowledge of God indicates full deity (contra Arian or subordinationist views). If Spirit were creature, He couldn't exhaustively know Creator. The argument also refutes mystical claims to direct divine knowledge apart from Spirit-given revelation.

Historical Context

Ancient philosophy debated knowledge's possibility. Skeptics doubted certain knowledge; rationalists trusted reason; Gnostics claimed secret illumination. Paul's analogy drew on common human experience: you can't read minds. Jewish thought

emphasized God's transcendence (Isaiah 55:8-9); Greek thought often made divine knowable through philosophical inquiry. Paul steers between extremes: God is knowable because He reveals Himself through Spirit; yet unknowable apart from that gracious revelation. The Spirit's deity becomes implicit apologetic.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does this verse challenge both rationalist confidence that humans can figure God out and mystical claims to secret knowledge?
2. What does the Spirit's comprehensive knowledge of God reveal about His divine nature and role in the Trinity?
3. How should recognizing that God is known only through His self-revelation shape your approach to theology and apologetics?

Interlinear Text

τίς	γὰρ	οἶδεν	ἀνθρώπου	τοῦ	τοῦ	ἀνθρώπου	εἰ
what	For	knoweth	man	the things	the things	man	G1487
G5101	G1063	G1492	G444	G3588	G3588	G444	

μὴ	τοῦ	πνεῦμα	τοῦ	ἀνθρώπου	τοῦ	ἐν	αὐτῷ
G3361	the things	the Spirit	the things	man	the things	is in	him
	G3588	G4151	G3588	G444	G3588	G1722	G846

οὕτως	καὶ	τοῦ	τοῦ	θεοῦ	οὐδεὶς	οἶδεν	εἰ	μὴ
so	even	the things	the things	of God	no man	knoweth	G1487	G3361
G3779	G2532	G3588	G3588	G2316	G3762	G1492		

τοῦ	πνεῦμα	τοῦ	θεοῦ
the things	the Spirit	the things	of God
G3588	G4151	G3588	G2316

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 20:27 (Spirit): The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

Proverbs 14:10 (Parallel theme): The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.

Jeremiah 17:9 (Parallel theme): The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

1 Corinthians 2:10 (Spirit): But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

Proverbs 20:5 (Parallel theme): Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.

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