

1 Corinthians 2:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. Believers (hēmeis, ἡμεῖς, "we") have received (elabomen, ἐλάβομεν, aorist—definite reception) to pneuma to ek tou theou (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ, "the Spirit from God"), not to pneuma tou kosmou (τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου, "the spirit of the world"). This "spirit of the world" isn't a personal entity but the prevailing mindset of fallen humanity—autonomous reason, carnal wisdom, opposition to God (Romans 8:5-7).

The purpose clause—**that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God** (hina eidōmen ta hypo tou theou charisthenta hēmin, ἵνα εἰδῶμεν τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ χαρισθέντα ἡμῖν)—reveals Spirit-indwelling's epistemological function. Charisthenta (χαρισθέντα) from charizomai emphasizes grace—these things are gift, not achievement. Spiritual understanding isn't optional advanced Christianity but essential: without Spirit-illumination, even Scripture remains opaque (2 Corinthians 3:14-16). Paul connects pneumatology and epistemology: right knowledge requires regeneration.

Historical Context

Paul contrasts Christian initiation with mystery cults that promised enlightenment through ritual but delivered subjective experience. Against Gnostic tendencies

(emerging in later 1st century), Paul democratizes spiritual knowledge—all believers receive the Spirit (Romans 8:9), not just elite "pneumatics." The "spirit of the world" reflects Ephesians 2:2-3: fallen humanity operates under satanic deception and fleshly lusts. The Spirit's work includes both initial regeneration (John 3:5-8) and ongoing illumination (Ephesians 1:17-18). Understanding Scripture is Spirit-dependent gift.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How can you discern whether your understanding of Scripture comes from "the spirit of the world" (cultural assumptions, human reasoning) or the Spirit of God?
2. What specific truths about grace has the Spirit made real to you that once seemed like mere religious concepts?
3. How does recognizing that spiritual understanding is grace-gift rather than intellectual achievement shape your attitude toward believers with less theological education?

Interlinear Text

ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐ τοῦ πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου ἐλάβομεν
we Now not which the spirit which of the world have received
G2249 G1161 G3756 G3588 G4151 G3588 G2889 G2983

ἀλλὰ τοῦ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἵνα εἰδῶμεν
but which the spirit which is of which God that we might know
G235 G3588 G4151 G3588 G1537 G3588 G2316 G2443 G1492

τοῦ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χαρισθέντα ἡμῖν·
which of which God the things that are freely given to us
G3588 G5259 G3588 G2316 G5483 G2254

Additional Cross-References

1 John 2:27 (Parallel theme): But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

1 John 2:20 (Parallel theme): But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

Romans 8:1 (Spirit): There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 4:4 (References God): In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Romans 8:32 (Parallel theme): He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

James 4:5 (Spirit): Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

Revelation 22:6 (References God): And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

1 Corinthians 3:22 (Parallel theme): Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's;

Ephesians 2:2 (Spirit): Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

1 Corinthians 2:6 (Parallel theme): Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

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